

Elevating Efficiency with Innovation and Best Practices

Forward-thinking electrical companies are going outside the box to find ways to maximize labor hours in the field and improve the productivity of their greatest asset — their workforce. Here are eight ways electrical contractors and engineers can boost efficiency in the field and in the office.

1. Discover new technologies.

In the world of electrical contracting and engineering, new products and services spring up in the market at a rapid rate. By investing in these new technologies, electrical companies can improve the safety of their workers while at the same time, streamlining their project schedules. For example, electrical contractors serving the utility industry can use drones to patrol overhead lines or assess

storm damage to overhead infrastructure. Companies specializing in commercial work can fly drones over construction sites to monitor the progress of a job and identify any potential challenges.

2. Install time-saving products.

On nearly any electrical construction project, professionals are faced with tight deadlines, change orders, and hurdles. When working on a project with a quick turnaround, companies can [#contractorbetter](#) by turning to products like ABB's [ReliaGear Merchandised Lighting Panelboard](#). This panelboard comes unassembled so electricians can customize it to fit an application for an emergency project or on a job with a time crunch. Other [products](#) are also available to help electrical contractors meet deadlines and get work done on time and within budget.

3. Explore software.

Electrical contractors and engineers can transform an overwhelming mountain of paperwork into an organized, streamlined work management system. Technology is now available to help keep tabs on everything from manhours to materials and equipment. By leveraging the power of software for estimating and design, they can strive to avoid cost overruns and create more accurate bids for work in the field.

4. Download mobile apps.

Electrical professionals have the power to pump up their productivity right in their pocket. Apps are now available for electricians and electrical engineers to track time and



materials, monitor the progress of projects, and perform calculations in the field. Check out some apps recommended by the field workforce to Mike Holt [here](#).

In addition, electrical contractors can download apps from manufacturers to ease the installation of certain products in the field. For example, [ABB's EPiC mobile app](#) allows installers to complete the commissioning of circuit breakers in just a few clicks and remotely monitor conditions outside the arc flash boundary.

5. Consider prefabrication.

Rather than preparing all the materials for installation in the field, electrical contractors can save time and improve efficiency through prefabrication. Both prefabrication and modular construction are becoming more popular as the construction industry is searching for ways to boost safety, productivity, and quality while considering cost, schedule, and sustainability, according to the SmartMarket Report: "[Prefabrication and Modular Construction](#)" by Dodge Data & Analytics.

6. Get organized.

A key way to save time and increase productivity is to focus on organization. For example, contractors can invest in the same type of work vehicles and service beds used by employees in the field, says James Justus of High Quality Electric in Oklahoma.

"A well-stocked truck saves money since time is money," Justus says. "This offers the customer a better value since time is not wasted locating materials, and this type of service is worth more profit per hour, so net income goes up. This is a key factor that a company I used to work for implemented and an idea that I strive to implement in my company."

To further save on labor hours, electrical contractors can stock the same supplies in the same location within each vehicle and service bed for a particular specialty within the electrical trade. Making sure each journeyman electrician is responsible for stocking his/her work truck each morning eliminates the need for the service crews to go to the supply store.

7. Build a positive work culture, secure good field leadership, and focus on safety.

To further improve productivity, electrical contractors should try to create an environment where workers belong to a group that cares about them and their families and wants them to succeed, Justus says. Offering bonuses, incentives, and training for advancement are some ways to create a sense that the employee is a vital part of the work culture.

As part of that positive work culture, they should not overlook the importance of selecting the right team members to lead field crews. Effective leaders spur the workers to work — not from the fear of the leader, but from excellence and professionalism and a "lead from the front" type of character, Justus explained. "It's easy to follow someone who is worthy of following."

Contractors should also have strict safety procedures and safety training sessions. "Productivity drops when someone gets hurt, so it's best to avoid that situation altogether, if possible," said Justus. "Additionally, we should care about employee health, and an employee getting home safely should be a top priority."

8. Learn from others.

Rather than investing undue time and effort into reinventing the wheel, electrical contractors can discover best practices and methods to improve productivity online. Case in point: ABB offers an audio series called "[#Contractor Better in 60 Seconds](#)" on its YouTube channel. By listening to one-minute audio clips, they can get expert advice on commercial construction products, solutions, and applications to help them complete projects on time, on spec, and on budget.

Finally, electrical professionals can also connect on social media platforms like Reddit to join online forums, where they can pose questions about everything from prefabrication to running a successful business and get feedback from other professionals in the electrical industry.

Through these eight tips, electrical companies can maximize their profitability and minimize expenses. At the same time, they can ensure a bright future for not only their company's bottom line, but also for their office and field workforce by focusing on improving the work culture, level of organization, and safety practices.