

# Architects: If You're Not Using Your Mobile Device, You're Missing Out.

How architects can make the most of mobile devices and transform their productivity



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Architects have a lot on their plate: from client meetings, proposals, design work, site inspections and field reports, to communicating with contractors, completing administrative tasks like invoicing, managing sub consultants, and managing project details. It never ends.

Architects often juggle dozens of tasks and can spend a lot of time on the road between client visits and job sites. It all adds up, making it difficult to stay efficient and effective throughout the day.

## Many architects are stuck working in the business rather than working on the business.

And for those running small or solo architecture firms, the pressures are even greater – with many fitting project deadlines around the constant pressures of managing a business.

That's why so many architects are stuck working in the business rather than working on the business. Instead of building a company that can thrive, many architects operate in survival mode. They're on a treadmill of constant busyness and stress. They spend so much time delivering projects that they never take the time to build an efficient, profitable and sustainable business.

But how do you stop spending so much time fighting deadlines, answering calls and responding to emails, and start making progress toward larger, more meaningful goals?

A good first step is to set aside time to evaluate, improve and automate your daily business processes. For architects that want to take this step successfully, there's one tool you simply cannot ignore– and it could be in your pocket right now.



**The modern mobile device is an irreplaceable tool for busy architects.**

### SMALL DEVICES, SMALL RECURRING TIME SAVINGS, BIG RESULTS

The modern mobile device is an irreplaceable tool for busy architects. Architects spend so much of their time on the road, consistently communicating with clients and contractors, accessing designs, performing site inspections, taking notes during meetings, etc. Mobile devices can help accelerate *all* of these processes.

Even the smallest time saving on daily recurring tasks can add up to huge wins over a long period. For example, by saving just 15 minutes entering or reviewing expenses and timesheets, you could save up to a dozen hours every year. Even if you have just a handful of architects in your firm, that's a lot of time that can be invested in more valuable tasks, by simply streamlining one process.

Or, to give another example, switching from manual note-taking and printed documents to digital site inspections doesn't just save valuable time; it also helps you reduce the risk of human error, eliminate miscommunication from reviewing outdated drawings and deliver a better and more professional service to clients.



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This white paper will look at how the right approach to mobile technology can streamline many of the tasks architects have to complete in a typical day. We'll also explore what to look for when purchasing mobile hardware and how to get the most from your mobile devices.

## A day in the life of a modern, mobile architect

For many architects, a big part of their work does not happen within the office. It happens on project sites, on the road, and in meetings with clients and contractors. So, if their productivity stops away from their desk, the inefficiency stacks up quickly.

### Architects have two options when they need to work outside the office:

1. Rely on traditional, manual processes with pen, paper, and printed documents and drawings
2. Use modern, mobile devices and digital alternatives

This decision isn't to be taken lightly, as it can have a profound impact on nearly every part of an architect's day.

## Before leaving the office

Let's say you've been at your workstation working out the design details for your latest project. You're getting ready to meet with your client to discuss the project. But what's the best way to show your work to the client?

Do you print out the design and hope it captures the full scope of your work? Or do you save the file on a portable USB drive and hope your laptop can render the 3D design at the client's office?

### PREPARING AND MANAGING DOCUMENTS

The right mobile apps can offer a better way to take your work with you. For basic documents and plans, some architects use online storage solutions like Acrobat, Dropbox and Google Drive to access their files at any time across all their devices. Without a robust cloud-based file management solution, you could be left with no access to relevant floor plans, specification documents, contracts, or 3D models when you are out of the office.

Many industry-standard CAD and 3D modelling solutions offer mobile apps that make it easy to take designs with you. For example, AutoCAD Mobile is a mobile app extension for AutoCAD that helps architects review drawings and designs with clients on site – bridging the gap between the design studio and the construction site. It's much the same with BIMx for Archicad users, iRhino 3D, or Sketchup Mobile Viewer. With apps like these, you can view, zoom and query your plans, drawings or models – all without ever needing to print and carry stacks of drawings to the site. All the relevant model data is at your fingertips for easy access and sharing.

Of course, a tablet will never have the raw power to replace a desktop workstation for BIM, CAD, 3D rendering and other resource-intensive tasks. But tablet screens are large enough to comfortably share designs with clients, making them an invaluable way to transport your designs – without relying on print outs or having to lug around your laptop all the time.

## During the client meeting

### NOTE-TAKING

When you're in the flow of the project meeting and discussing changes with the client, a mobile device can also help you streamline the way you capture notes and design feedback from the client.

If you use a tablet with a keyboard, you can easily document your notes digitally so you don't have to waste time re-typing handwritten notes once you get back in the office.

Or, a stylus combined with note-taking or writing apps let you write notes down just like you would with a pen, but they can be easily stored and shared digitally. Note-taking apps like GoodNotes, Nebo, and OneNote can make documenting meetings and storing notes far smoother and easier.

And when it comes to switching from meeting notes to recording more specific information about your clients and opportunities, most CRM providers also offer mobile applications that make it easy to update your customer records.

## THE DIGITAL SKETCHBOOK

If you need to quickly sketch a change, concept or idea, great sketching apps – like Morpholio, Concepts, and Procreate – combined with an accurate stylus give a great drawing experience on your tablet.

These sketch apps allow you to scale, work with layers, and choose from brushes to accurately capture the sketch. The options to have an ‘undo’ button while sketching, or to be able to work with layers and even scaling tools, are pretty powerful aids that are transforming the way architects can sketch idea and concepts. Or think about using a photo from the current situation or Augmented Reality as a basis to start sketching on top of that.

Used by millions of architects, an iPad in combination with a stylus and a sketch app like Morpholio definitely helps bridge the gap between analogue and digital work.

Another app that architects like to use during early conceptual phases is Shapr3D, a 3D CAD app for iPads, combining finger-based interactions with the more precise input offered by the Apple Pencil. This app lets architects sketch 2D concepts with the Apple Pencil with mathematical precision. Once concepts are complete, the app’s intuitive toolset makes it easy to transform those concepts into 3D shapes.

## SPLIT SCREEN

You can take your meeting productivity even further with small tricks like splitting your screen. All major mobile operating systems have a feature to run two apps side by side, so you can get more done in less time. For example, you can update a contractor on changes a client has requested while double checking your meeting notes at the same time to ensure you send over the right information.

## Working on-site

Next, you head to a site inspection for another client.

## SITE INSPECTIONS AND FIELD REPORTS

If you’re still writing notes on paper in the field and then deciphering and writing them up when you get back to the office, you’re wasting valuable time.

If manually building field reports takes just one hour extra per report compared to doing it with a professional field report app, architects making three reports a week could waste up to 12 hours – nearly two whole billable days (!) – each month.

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Manually managing photos is another area that can be a significant time sink for architects. You might be taking hundreds of photos each week across your projects and work sites. And if they’re all saved on the same camera roll on your phone, not organized by project, and not backed up to the cloud automatically, you have to spend the time manually transferring and organizing them.

And if you have to wait until you’re back at the office to transfer site photos and write up field reports, you’re not just wasting time keying in data twice; you could be putting project deadlines at risk. With so many architects constantly juggling multiple projects and deadlines, it’s all too easy for important tasks like completing and sending field reports to get delayed, or even fall through the cracks.

Dedicated mobile tools like ArchiSnapper can streamline site inspections by helping you record text, take photos and annotate floor plans while you’re on site. Doing so, a professional and branded field report is basically ready by the time you leave the construction site.

## VOICE TO TEXT

Did you know that many architects already use speech-to-text features to ‘write’ text hands-free? All Android and iOS devices have speech-to-text features that let you dictate notes by voice, and your device will take care of the rest. Just think about it. This could also transform the way you approach punch list meetings and other times where you need to quickly take notes.

## MEASUREMENT AND SCANNING TOOLS

Other apps like CamToPlan or RoomScan can also accelerate fieldwork, using augmented reality technology and your device's camera to take measurements and generate floor plans almost instantly. This proves useful for architects looking to rapidly draft rough plans.

If you're using the latest generation of iPhones and iPads, you also have access to LiDAR technology that makes the scanning and measuring process faster and even more accurate. A LiDAR scanner gives apps more useful and accurate information about their surroundings, for smoother, more reliable augmented reality. Architects can use apps that are equipped with this new LiDAR technology to quickly scan a reasonably accurate 3D model of any location.

The RoomScan LiDAR app for example, is as easy to use as tapping each wall and swiping for doors and openings. LiDAR does the rest, enabling you to create an accurate 3D model in minutes.

Another example is Polycam, a 3D scanning app that uses the LiDAR sensor to enable you to quickly create color 3D scans of spaces.

## VIRTUAL DESKTOP APPS

A mobile device will never be able to stack up to the raw power of your workstation back at the office. But with a virtual desktop app like Citrix, Amazon WorkSpaces or Azure Virtual Desktop, you can use your device to log in to your workstation remotely. While it relies on rapid internet speeds to offer a true workstation-like experience, slower connections will still help you quickly grab files you might have only saved locally.

Bottom-line, some of the most significant work in an architect's day happens on-site and mobile devices and apps can make almost all of it more streamlined, automated and efficient.

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## Finishing up for the day

Even if you've used an efficient, digital process throughout all your field work, there are still a few administrative tasks like updating your to do list, managing and editing photos, or managing time sheets and expense reports to take care of before you wrap up for the day.

But what if you could tie up some of these loose ends using your mobile device while out of the office? When you get back in the office, there will be many other priorities and tasks that will require your attention, like questions from colleagues, new emails, or missed calls, making it harder to focus on outstanding tasks from your time out of the office.

## TIME AND EXPENSE MANAGEMENT

In the past, it was all too common for architects' time and expense management to be a cumbersome, laborious process based on spreadsheets and fistfuls of paper receipts. We've come a long way since then.

Today, dedicated time and expense apps can help replace manual time and expense tracking with sleeker, automated digital alternatives. And some project management solutions even offer mobile apps that provide time and expense management functionality on the go. For example, Deltek users can enter timesheet information from anywhere and take photos of receipts to automate expense entry using a time and expense app.

After a challenging day on the road, the last thing an architect wants is to close it out with tedious manual work. But with the right applications in hand, timesheets and expense reports don't have to wait until the end of the day or timesheet period, making it easier for project managers to keep abreast of project progress and less likely that architects forget where their hours were spent.



## MANAGING AND EDITING PHOTOS

Are you still manually transferring photos from your mobile device to your workstation and then from there in the right network folder? There are many solutions out there that can automate this, for example, Google Workspace, SharePoint, or ArchiSnapper. When you get back to the office, your photos are immediately available from any workstation or laptop via the cloud; they are even organized by project.

There are many situations where architects will need to further edit photos they've taken and images they've been sent. Traditionally, this task would have to wait until back at a powerful, but immobile workstation.

But many apps are available that bring photo editing into the mobile space. Adobe's Lightroom and Photoshop Express, along with others like Fotor and Canva, unshackle image editing from the desktop, so architects can make simple edits quickly as they wrap up their work for the day.

## TO-DO LISTS

Staying organized doesn't mean scrawling to-do lists on paper anymore to then digitize them when you're back in the office or at home. It can all be done on your phone or tablet to help you stay organized wherever you go.

Apps like Any.do and Todoist make to do lists easy and intuitive to manage across all your devices. And they offer a cleaner look and feel than crossing out items on paper.

## DIGITAL ASSISTANTS LIKE SIRI AND GOOGLE ASSISTANT

To take this even further than updating to do lists on the go, why not try Google Assistant, Siri, or another digital assistant to complete various other simple tasks while you are on the road?

By speaking to the digital assistant on your device, you can send emails, set reminders and make quick calculations without ever touching your screen.

Many Android and Apple devices can also turn text into voice and read the contents of your screen aloud. So, if you're spending hours per week in traffic you could get your digital assistant to read emails and documents aloud as needed.

Another way to check off some tasks before you get back at the office, by simply adopting available technology.

## One device, constant time savings

Mobile technology helps architects save time across their entire day by cutting down on low-value tasks like printing out floor plans, typing up hand-written notes and manually filling in time sheets.

By cutting out the humdrum tasks, architects can spend more of their time doing fulfilling, meaningful and billable work. While it might only seem like a few minutes saved here and there, these add up to multiple hours per week – and even entire weeks per year!

## Start your mobile journey today

If you're ready to start streamlining parts of your day with a mobile device, all you need to do is follow these three steps:

1. Find the right device
2. Consider these 3 handy accessories
3. Make time to start bringing mobile apps into your workflow

### 1

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MOBILE DEVICE

With so many mobile devices available, it can be tough to know exactly where to start. Your first step to narrowing down your search criteria is to decide whether a smartphone, a tablet, or even a mix of the two is the right fit for your workday.

Both device types have a lot in common, with the same operating systems and applications available on phones and tablets alike. The main trade-offs are in screen size and portability.

The small size of a smartphone makes them easier to carry around, and phones are much better geared for texting and calling.

But for those regularly annotating plans, drafting long pieces of text, and showing designs to contractors and clients, the tablet's larger screen and potential for an external keyboard make it more comfortable to use and potentially more versatile.

Once you've narrowed down the type of device best suited to your workday, you'll want to consider what features and performance you need. We recommend you make sure you find a device that offers:

- » **A high-quality camera:** The average architect might take hundreds of photos each week across different site inspections, so it pays to invest in a device with a durable, high-quality camera. **Look for devices with a 12MP camera or higher.**
- » **A long battery life:** When you're on-site or on the road for extended periods, the last thing you want is your

device running out of power during a client meeting or site visit. **Look for devices with at least 9 hours of battery power on a single charge.**

- » **At least 4GB of RAM:** RAM is the primary factor in how quickly your device can render images and models, so it's a vital thing to look out for when purchasing a device. 3GB is the bare minimum you'll need to avoid slow rendering, poor performance and frequent app crashes. But the more you can get, the better. Don't limit yourself, and the way you can use the apps and tools available for architects by selecting a device with insufficient RAM. If you want a tablet that will render images and models in full resolution in a snap, **consider high-end options with at least 4 GB RAM.**
- » **Mobile data connections:** While architects can connect to Wi-Fi at a client's office, they won't always have that luxury on the road or on-site. Considering architects may need to access plans and other data-intensive files from their device while out and about, **we recommend getting a mobile data connection.**
- » **Storage:** No one wants to be stuck without the storage space they need to work effectively. But as more of our applications and file storage moves to the cloud, the need for massive amounts of room on our devices has decreased. So, while you'll want enough space on the device to download the apps you need, you don't require a huge amount of memory and **you might only need as little as 16 GB of built-in storage.**
- » **Price:** Of course, price will always play a decisive part in how you choose a device. **We recommend being open to higher end, often more expensive devices, as budget options can create a false economy.** Budget devices tend to sacrifice raw power to offer a lower price tag, and this lack of power can mean architects are left waiting minutes at a time for files or drawings to load. Over time, the cost of this lost time is far more than the sticker price of a high-end mobile device.
- » **Operating System (OS):** As for OS, **many architects that use their tablet for drawing and ideation prefer an iPad over Android or Windows devices.** The drawing experience of the iPad Pro in combination with a stylus is seen by many architects as offering a high-quality, responsive and natural drawing experience.

## 2

### THREE USEFUL ACCESSORIES FOR ARCHITECTS

Once you've selected a mobile device, there are a few extra pieces of hardware that will help take your mobile productivity to the next level.

1. **A robust case and screen protector** can help protect your device from the often unpredictable, rugged environments you'll encounter while working on-site. Given the importance of mobile devices for architects and their often-high cost, it's worth investing in a case that offers bump and scratch protection. Cases from Griffin, Spigen and Otterbox are well regarded across different industries. Similarly, a matte screen protector offers a balance between protection and usability – with protectors from brands like Tech Armor, Mr. Shield and iCarez proving popular with many architects.
2. **A wireless keyboard and mouse** are ideal for architects that need office-like productivity while on the go. With these peripherals at hand, you can instantly turn your tablet or smartphone into a laptop-like device for more admin-intensive tasks like typing up notes or formatting reports.
3. **A stylus** can also help transform your mobile productivity if your work sees you frequently drafting sketches or drawing up and annotating plans. While any modern touch screen device can support drawing features, a stylus is more accurate and often faster. They're also great for handwriting notes and signing digital documents. Many architects are pairing an iPad Pro with a second-generation Apple Pencil to get a highly accurate, sensitive digital drawing experience. For those that rely on drawing or handwriting, the Apple Pencil is quickly becoming a must-have accessory.

## 3

### INTEGRATE MOBILE APPS INTO YOUR WORKFLOW

Wondering how to swap manual processes for more streamlined mobile alternatives?

We recommend taking the following steps:

1. **Set some time aside.** You can't make vital improvements to your business and its mobile productivity if you're constantly fighting fires elsewhere. Make it a habit to step out of the business and set some time aside for structural improvements.
2. **Start researching the tools and technologies that will be most useful for your business.** Beyond papers like this, it's also worth looking around architecture forums and online resources. Why not ask your peers what tools they use and what works well for them.
3. **Start exploring the world of apps designed with architects in mind.** Download a few trials, check out the reviews, see what works, and iterate until you have the tools you need to achieve those recurrent time savings.





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## Transform your productivity – wherever you are

With the right device, applications, and accessories your productivity is no longer tied to an office and workstation – it goes wherever you go during your day.

General-purpose apps, such as file-sharing tools, have successfully transformed mobile productivity for other industries. And as the suite of mobile solutions available for architects continues to grow, architecture firms can get the same benefits.

Mobile extensions to popular industry tools, like AutoCAD and Deltek solutions, are helping architects stay productive on the go. Dedicated solutions like [ArchiSnapper](#) help automate previously manual on-site work, such as creating field reports and punch lists, saving valuable time and increasing efficiency.

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**“ArchiSnapper is saving hours of time and making site visits easier for our teams.”**

Dan Sigler, business technology manager, Jordan & Skala Engineers

**Experience the time-saving benefits of ArchiSnapper for free!**

**Sign up for your free trial today**

## Deltek.

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## Deltek and ArchiSnapper: mobile apps designed for architects

If you're exploring architecture tools in the app marketplace for the first time, you might be wondering where to start.

Both ArchiSnapper and Deltek offer applications designed to support specific processes that can often drain time if you rely on manual processes.

ArchiSnapper is a mobile app that helps architects save hours on their inspections, site reports and punch lists. Over 10,000 architects rely on ArchiSnapper to help them make efficient site inspections, view drawings from any device, generate reports in seconds, and reduce busywork.

Deltek offers ERP solutions designed around the needs of project-based architecture firms. All Deltek customers can access mobile apps designed to support project and financial management, including a time and expenses app that helps streamline timesheets and move expense forms out of spreadsheets.

