



# The modern builder playbook

An exclusive industry report on how top contractors win in 2026 – and beyond



Includes insights from hundreds of construction professionals, revealing how top builders are using systems, data and smarter operations to win in an increasingly complex market.



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Inside is data from builders managing \$1M–\$50M+ in annual revenue

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# Foreword

## A note from our CEO and co-founder

Over the past 20 years, I've had the privilege of working alongside thousands of construction professionals. In that time, I've learned something simple but powerful about this industry: builders are some of the most resilient, resourceful and forward-thinking entrepreneurs out there.

Buildertrend started in 2006 in the basement of my two best friends' house with one goal in mind: to change the way the world builds.

Like many of the businesses we serve, we started small. And like many of you, we had to navigate uncertainty early on. We pushed through the recession, expanded into new markets, built the first mobile app designed for field crews working on residential job sites and continued investing in tools that help builders run stronger businesses – from financial management to takeoff software and, more recently, AI-powered capabilities.

Today, now two decades later, more than 20,000 construction companies rely on Buildertrend. But while the industry has evolved and our platform has grown, one thing has remained exactly the same: Buildertrend exists to serve builders. From day one, our mission has been to help our customers build better businesses, and that commitment continues to guide every decision we make.

This report reflects that same commitment. The construction industry is facing new complexities – from economic uncertainty and labor shortages to changing client expectations and evolving technology. At the same time, many builders are experiencing incredible growth and opportunity. We created this report to better understand how today's most successful builders are navigating those challenges and positioning themselves for the future.

Inside, you'll find insights from hundreds of construction professionals who generously shared how they plan projects, manage finances, lead their teams and deliver exceptional client experiences. Their openness speaks to something I've always believed about this industry: builders are stronger when they learn from each other.

While this report focuses on how builders are operating today, it's clear the next wave of transformation is already beginning. Emerging technologies like AI are starting to reshape how builders estimate, forecast and make decisions – and the companies that have already built strong systems will be best positioned to take advantage of what comes next. At Buildertrend, we're beginning to integrate these capabilities into our platform in ways that help builders turn their data into faster, more informed decisions.

**My hope is that the insights in these pages give you new ideas, renewed confidence and practical strategies you can put to work in your own business.**

**Because when builders succeed, communities grow, families thrive – and the industry we all care about becomes stronger.**

**– Dan Houghton**

*CEO and Co-founder of Buildertrend*



# 02

## Industry issues and insights



### Builders are operating under historic pressure

Residential construction today is operating in one of the most complex environments the industry has faced in decades. Builders aren't just managing projects – they're navigating a housing shortage, workforce constraints and rising operational pressure while demand for new homes remains high.

**Hi Brianna!**  
Here's a look at 4266 L St.

**What's happening**

- To-do's
- Messages **2**
- Change orders
- Upcoming selections
- Invoices **1**
- Recent daily logs

**75°F**

14 15 16 17 18 19 20

# The biggest headwinds builders are facing today

## Housing shortage

The U.S. housing market is currently short roughly 1.5 million homes\*, creating significant pressure on builders to increase supply and close the gap between demand and available housing.

Source: [NAHB](#)

## Labor shortage

The construction industry needs approximately 723,000 new workers every year\* just to meet current demand and replace those leaving the workforce.

Source: [HBI](#)



## Economic impact of workforce gaps

Labor shortages are costing the industry more than \$10.8 billion annually\* through lost productivity, delayed projects and reduced housing output.

Source: [Builder Online](#)

## An aging workforce

Nearly 41% of the construction workforce is expected to retire by 2031\*, intensifying the already significant labor gap facing the industry.

Source: [HBI](#)

## Project delays

Workforce constraints are adding nearly two months to construction timelines on average\*, making it harder for builders to deliver projects on schedule.

Source: [HBI](#)



To understand how today's most successful builders are navigating these challenges and positioning their businesses for growth, Buildertrend surveyed hundreds of residential construction professionals across the industry.

# The four big insights shaping the next era of residential construction

The residential construction industry is evolving quickly. The companies that succeed are adopting new ways of running their businesses. **Across the Buildertrend survey, four clear insights emerged** that reveal how leading builders are adapting – and where the industry is headed next.

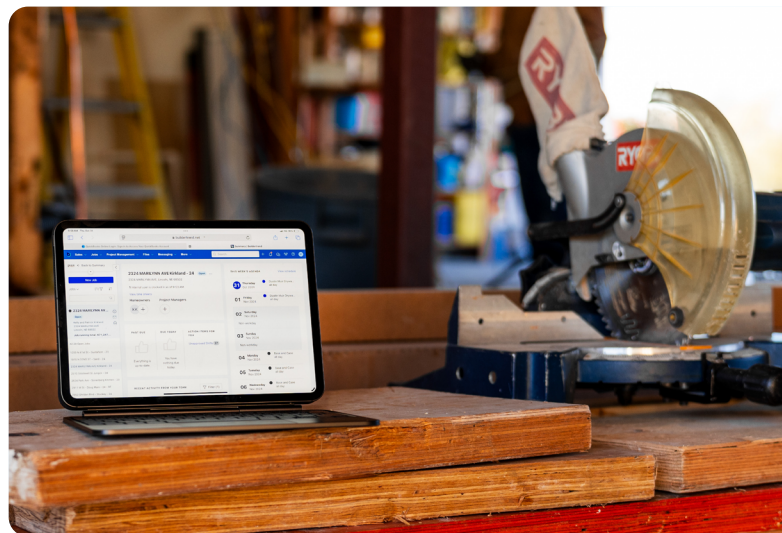


## 1. The industry is professionalizing faster than ever

The best builders aren't just builders anymore. They're tracking financial performance, job costs, budget variance, schedules and broader business KPIs. What used to be managed by instinct is increasingly managed by numbers. This shift marks a major evolution for the industry as residential construction moves away from informal processes and toward more professional, data-informed business operations.

## 2. The operating system of construction is changing

For decades, construction companies ran on a patchwork of spreadsheets, point systems, email threads, phone calls and whiteboards. That model is beginning to break down. Builders are rapidly adopting centralized platforms that connect job site activity, financial tracking, schedules, client communication and reporting in one place. In other words, construction companies are moving toward true operating systems in the form of platforms designed to run the entire business. With everything connected, builders gain something that's historically been difficult to achieve in construction: visibility.





### 3. The next competitive edge isn't craftsmanship – it's profit control

Margins are becoming the defining challenge of modern construction. The survey reveals a surprising tension: builders are tracking their finances more closely than ever before, yet maintaining predictable margins remains difficult. Labor costs, change orders and material volatility continue to disrupt profitability. The builders who succeed in this environment aren't just the best craftspeople. They're the ones who can predict job costs, monitor budgets in real time and prevent margin erosion before it happens. In today's market, financial control is becoming the industry's next competitive advantage.

### 4. The industry still runs on trust

Even as construction becomes more digital and data-driven, one thing hasn't changed: relationships remain the foundation of the industry. The survey shows that most builders still generate the majority of their work through referrals and word-of-mouth. This is a powerful reminder that reputation continues to drive growth. Those relationships extend far beyond clients, including trade contractors, suppliers, architects, designers, and real estate professionals. In an industry built on collaboration, trust is often the difference between a smooth project and a difficult one. The most successful builders understand that systems and technology don't replace relationships, but strengthen them by improving communication, transparency and coordination.

What follows is a behind-the-scenes look at how today's most successful builders plan their businesses, run projects, manage finances and build lasting companies.

Each section of this report is paired with a real customer story, bringing the data to life and showing how these insights play out in practice.



## INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

## From craft to system: How Cardinal Crest Homes scaled with intention

When Cardinal Crest Homes began scaling its custom home business, the team realized something many builders eventually discover: great craftsmanship alone isn't enough to run a great construction company.

As projects multiplied and budgets grew more complex, the leadership team needed a better way to manage schedules, finances, subcontractors and client communication. Their systems at the time – spreadsheets, email threads and scattered files – simply weren't built to support a growing operation.

"We were using Excel and Google Sheets trying to organize budgets, draws, email messaging and file management," said Joe Christensen, founder and owner of Cardinal Crest Homes. "I got frustrated on a couple things and said, 'There's just got to be a better way.'"

Instead of continuing to patch together tools, the team implemented Buildertrend as the central operating system for the business – creating a more connected way to manage projects, people and information.

**With everything from scheduling and budgeting to selections and client communication flowing through one system, the company gained something every builder needs, but few achieve, at scale: visibility.**

Today, Cardinal Crest Homes runs a highly organized, data-driven operation where everyone stays aligned through one platform. The Kansas City design-build firm completes 15 to 20 custom homes each year – projects known for the kind of thoughtful design and craftsmanship that leave clients' jaws on the floor.

But the real transformation didn't come from technology alone. It came from adopting systems that support the way modern construction businesses need to operate: organized, transparent and built for growth.

And Cardinal Crest Homes isn't unique. Across residential construction, the most successful builders are rethinking how their businesses operate by investing in systems that enhance clarity, improve communication and give their teams the structure needed to scale.

“

Construction is so prone to human error because there are so many moving parts," Joe said. "It's not if mistakes will happen – *it's when.*"

**One of the biggest returns on investment for us is being able to manage those mistakes, and Buildertrend really helps with that.**

**- Joe Christensen**

*Founder and Owner,  
Cardinal Crest Homes*

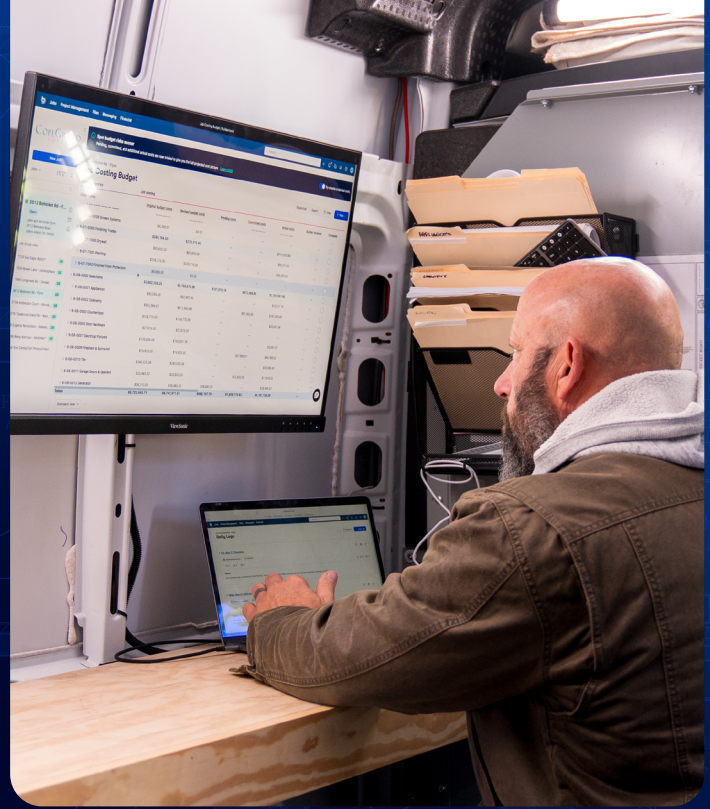


Scan the QR code to read the full case study or visit [buildertrend.com/case-study/cardinal-crest-homes/](https://buildertrend.com/case-study/cardinal-crest-homes/)



# 03

## Planning the business



### The new blueprint: From operator to leader

For decades, many residential construction businesses ran largely on experience and instinct. A strong reputation, a steady stream of referrals and a full schedule were often enough to keep projects moving and companies growing.

#### Today's environment demands something more.

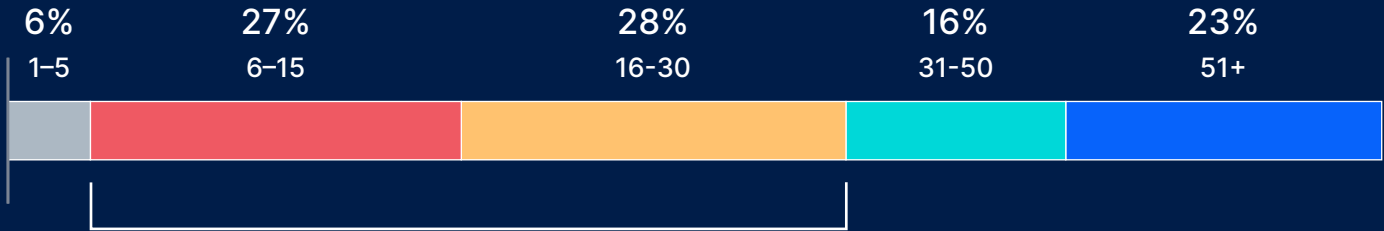
Builders are operating in one of the most complex markets the industry has seen in years. Shifting housing demand and tighter margins are forcing construction companies to think differently about how they run their businesses.

The encouraging news is builders are responding by becoming more strategic.

Survey results show that many residential construction companies are no longer planning project by project, but by their businesses as a whole. Instead of simply reacting to incoming work, builders are setting clearer revenue goals, managing structured project pipelines and building systems that give them greater visibility into future capacity.

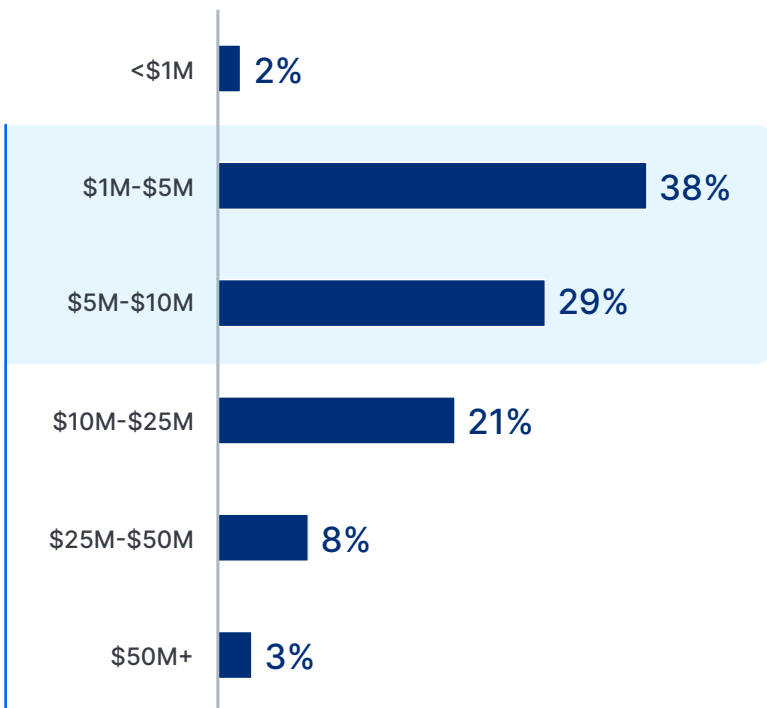
In other words, the role of the builder is evolving. Today's successful construction leaders are operating more like CEOs by balancing craftsmanship with financial planning, operational oversight and long-term growth strategy.

## How many projects does your company typically run per year?



55% of builders run **between 6 and 30 projects** per year.

## How much gross revenue do you expect your company to generate in 2026?



67% of builders expect **between \$1M and \$10M** in revenue.

The data reveals that most builders participating in this survey run established companies with stable operations and predictable workflows. They understand how many projects they can realistically manage, how their teams operate and how their business performs financially.

That level of clarity changes how decisions are made. Hiring becomes more intentional. Project selection becomes more strategic. Growth becomes something that can be planned rather than simply hoped for.

As the residential construction industry continues to evolve, **planning is becoming one of the most important competitive advantages a builder can have.** The companies that thrive in the years ahead won't just build great homes – they'll build businesses designed to scale.

**3.96 / 5** ●●●●○

Builders report an average confidence level of nearly 4 out of 5 **in hitting their revenue goals.**

## INSIGHTS IN ACTION

## Planning with precision: Saving 40+ hours a week on project setup

In residential construction, most delays, cost overruns and stress don't happen in the field. These troubles start long before the first shovel hits the dirt. For many builders, they have a directionless concept that is a scattered mix of spreadsheets and emails that slow progress and increase cost.

### Every successful build starts with one clear differentiator: preconstruction.

When Louisiana-based custom builder Chris Ledet Homes began growing its portfolio, the team faced a familiar struggle. They were bogged down because selections lived in emails, schedule updates were manual and clients often requested changes mid-build. Without a centralized process, it was hard to maintain consistency across jobs and keep clients aligned from concept to completion.

To stay ahead, Chris' son Paul who took over leadership, onboarded Buildertrend to unify preconstruction planning, client communication and job management in one connected system. By using Buildertrend's templates, selection tools and scheduling features, his team created a standardized way to plan and execute every project.

Immediately after adopting Buildertrend, **Chris Ledet Homes saved 40+ hours each week** on setting up new projects which helped them complete 5 extra projects for the year.

That efficiency didn't just improve timelines; it elevated the homeowner experience. Paul's clients now feel more engaged during preconstruction, with a clear understanding of timelines, selections and costs before work begins.

Builders who standardize preconstruction processes gain control over costs, schedules and client satisfaction. When every project starts with precision planning, builders can focus less on putting out fires and more on delivering elite results.

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I think customers want to go with someone they trust, and Buildertrend allows us to deliver that with its transparency."

– Paul Ledet

Owner, Chris Ledet Homes



Scan the QR code to read the full case study or visit [buildertrend.com/case-study/chris-ledet-homes](https://buildertrend.com/case-study/chris-ledet-homes)

# 04

## Winning the work



### Trust still wins the work

Despite the rise of digital marketing and online discovery, residential construction remains one of the most relationship-driven industries in the economy. While technology has transformed how businesses convert customers, the path to winning work in construction still begins with trust.

Survey results reinforce this reality.

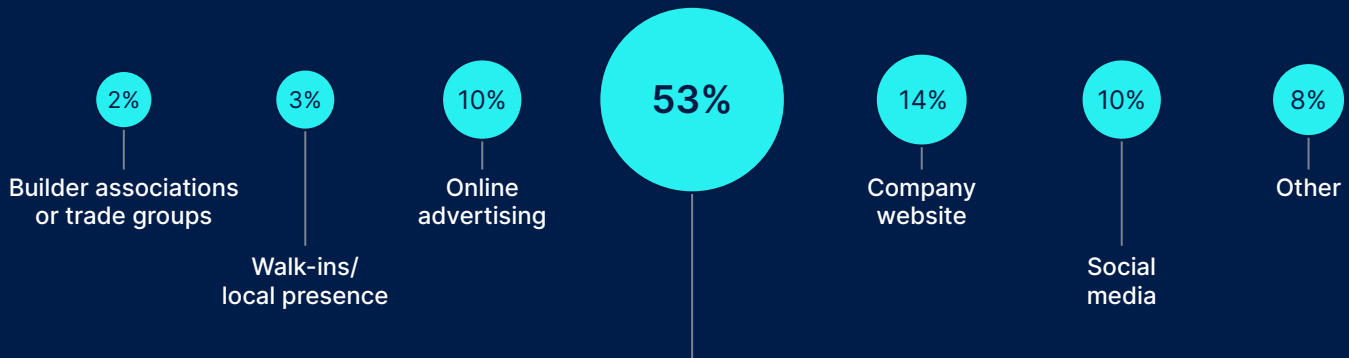
**More than half of builders report the majority of their new projects come from referrals or word-of-mouth.**

Recommendations from past clients, trade partners and community networks continue to serve as the industry's most powerful growth engine.

The reason is simple: building or remodeling a home is one of the largest financial and emotional investments many people will ever make. Homeowners place enormous trust in the professionals they hire, and they often rely on the experiences of others when choosing who to work with.

That doesn't mean digital tools have no role to play. Websites, social media and online advertising increasingly help builders showcase their work and connect with new audiences. But the data suggests these channels often act as amplifiers of reputation rather than replacements for it.

## How do you typically generate new leads for your business?



53% of builders rely on **referrals or word-of-mouth** to generate new business.

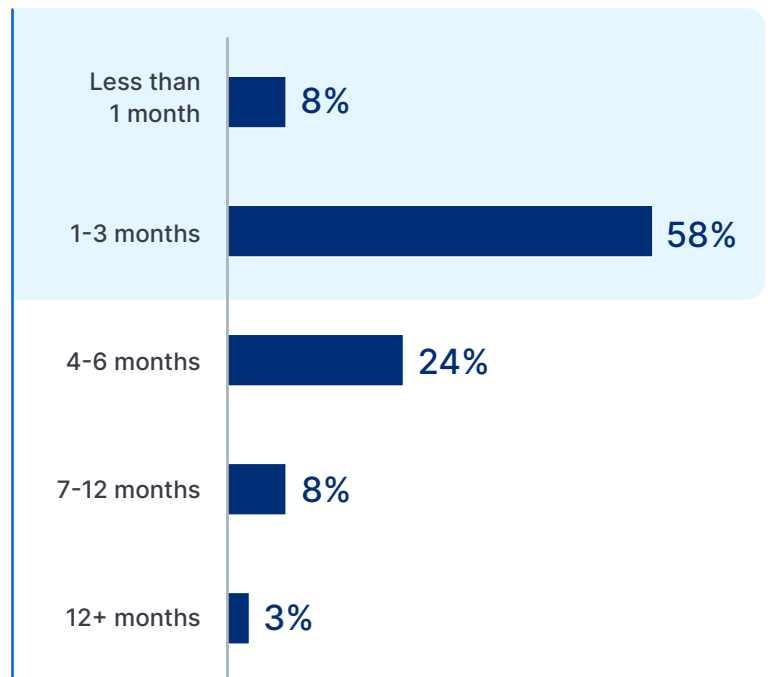
For builders operating at scale, this highlights the importance of delivering exceptional client experiences. Clear communication, transparent project updates and well-managed timelines don't just keep current clients satisfied. They also generate the referrals that fuel future growth.

The survey also shows that residential construction sales cycles are often shorter for these high-performing, high-revenue companies surveyed. Most builders report **converting leads into signed contracts** within one to three months. Many homeowners approach builders after already conducting research or receiving a trusted recommendation, which means prospects often arrive partially pre-qualified.

Even so, managing incoming opportunities still requires organization. Builders juggling multiple conversations, proposals and project start dates must maintain clear pipelines and consistent communication to move leads forward efficiently.

In an industry built on relationships, reputation still wins the work. But the builders who succeed are pairing that trust with systems that help them manage opportunities and deliver great experiences – from the first conversation to the final walkthrough.

## On average, how long is your sales cycle? (from first contact to signed contract)



66% of top builders close projects **within three months**.

## INSIGHTS IN ACTION

## Achieving 300%+ revenue growth with a strong CRM tool and a systemized sales process

For growing builders, success means not only finding more leads, but also creating a reliable system that turns those leads into profitable projects.

Take McManus Kitchen and Bath in Tallahassee, Florida for example. When founder Paul McManus started his remodeling business, his team relied on Google Sheets and a separate CRM tool to track leads. But as his project load grew, so did the chaos. He needed a single, connected system that could support both his pipeline and his projects.

After switching to Buildertrend, Paul integrated CRM, estimating and project management into one workflow – and the results speak for themselves.

**His team scaled from completing about 10 renovation projects per year to 45, achieving over 300% growth in revenue.**

By managing leads, estimates and jobs in the same platform, Paul gained visibility into every stage of the sales and production process.

Heading into 2026, builders who treat sales like a system, rather than a guessing game, will have the advantage.



I think customers want to go with someone they trust, and in order to take on more projects, I was interested in finding an all-in-one platform that would meet our project management and CRM needs. Once we adopted Buildertrend, we used the solution as a guide and designed our processes around its features.”

**– Paul McManus**

*Owner and Operator,  
McManus Kitchen and Bath*



Scan the QR code to read the full case study or visit [buildertrend.com/case-study/mcmanus-kitchen-and-bath/](https://buildertrend.com/case-study/mcmanus-kitchen-and-bath/)



# 05

## Running the modern job site



### The connected job site

The modern job site looks very different than it did just a decade ago. While craftsmanship remains at the heart of residential construction, the way projects are managed day to day is rapidly evolving. Builders are increasingly turning to digital tools to track progress, update schedules, coordinate teams and keep homeowners informed throughout the build.

This shift reflects a broader transformation across the industry. Instead of relying on fragmented communication, like phone calls, handwritten notes or scattered messages, many builders are adopting centralized systems that keep field and office teams aligned.

01-23 Hufnagel Custom Home  
**Schedule**

Schedule | Baseline | Workday Exceptions

Calendar | List | Gantt | Day | Filter | New Schedule Item

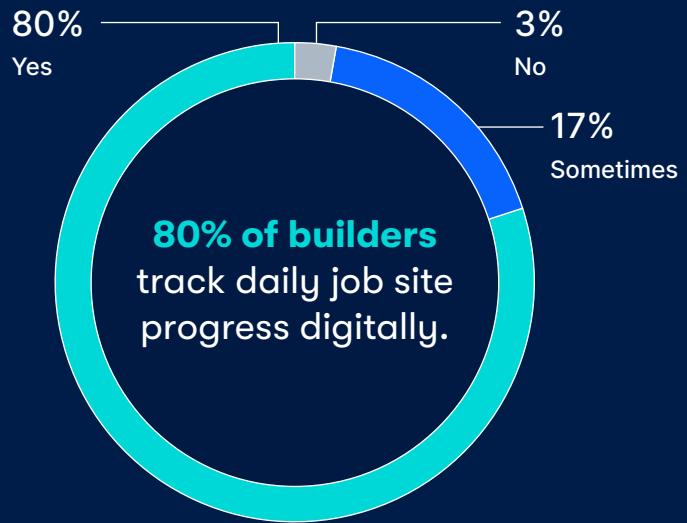
Title	Start	August 2026
Concrete	Aug 22	[Gantt bar]

- ▼ **Action Items**
  - Flooring  
Selection • Aug 22 - 24
  - Backsplash  
Change Order • Aug 23
- ▼ **Upcoming**
  - Electrical rough in  
Schedule item • Aug 26 - 28
  - Plumbing rough in  
Schedule item • Aug 27 - 29
- ▼ **In progress**
  - Concrete  
Schedule item • Aug 22 - 24
- ▼ **Completed**
  - Clean landscape  
To-do • Aug 20

**Daily job site tracking** has become one of the most important operational practices for modern builders.

The majority of survey respondents report documenting project activity digitally, allowing teams to record progress, share updates and maintain visibility across multiple jobs at once. For companies managing several projects simultaneously, this kind of digital record creates accountability and ensures everyone involved understands what's happening onsite.

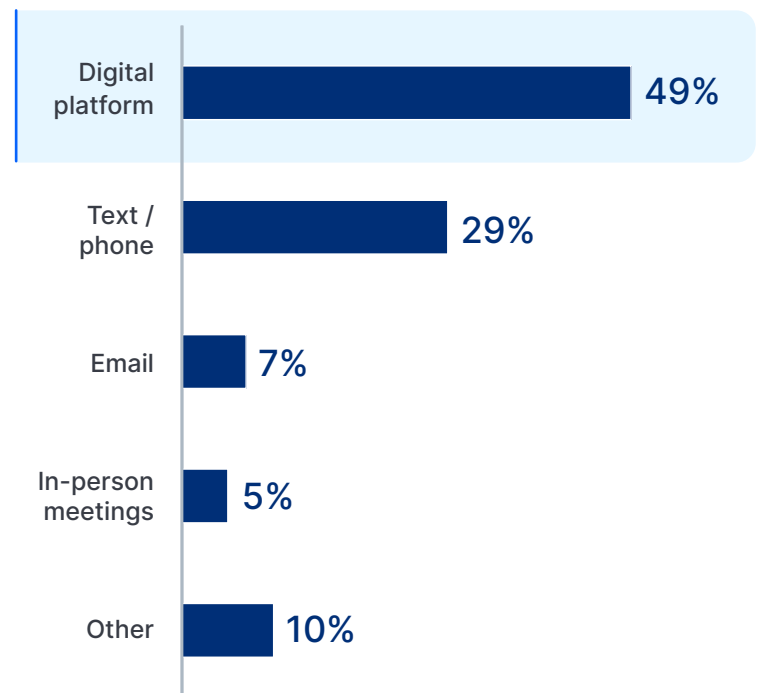
### Do you track daily job site progress digitally?



### Nearly half of builders now use **digital platforms to communicate schedule changes.**

**Scheduling** has also become more connected. Construction timelines are constantly evolving, and communicating those changes quickly is critical to keeping projects on track. Nearly half of builders now rely on digital platforms to share schedule updates with their teams, subcontractors and clients. At the same time, many still use familiar tools such as texts, phone calls and email, highlighting an industry in transition as builders move toward more structured communication systems.

### When schedules change during a project, how do you update your team, subcontractors or clients?

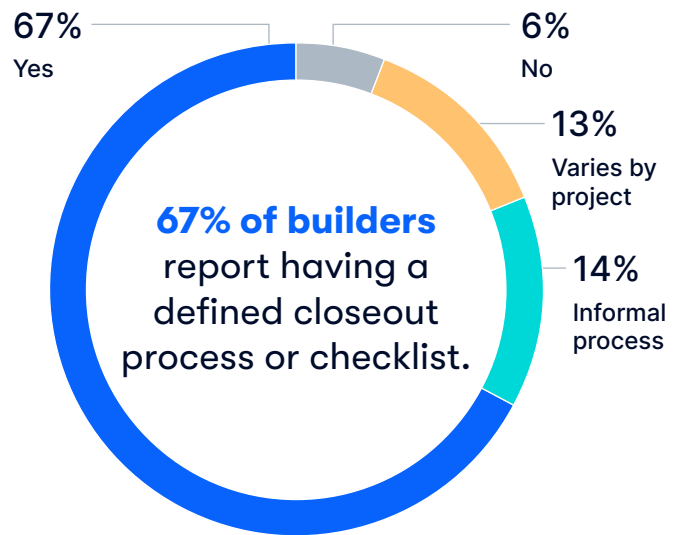


As construction companies grow and manage larger project pipelines, repeatable systems become increasingly important. A clearly defined closeout process helps teams transition efficiently from one project to the next while ensuring every job finishes with the same level of care and attention as it began. The data shows how builders approach project completion today – and how structured closeout processes are becoming an essential part of running a disciplined, scalable construction business.

Homeowners are also playing a bigger role in this connected environment. Today's clients expect far greater visibility into their projects than in the past. Many builders now provide homeowners with real-time access to schedules, updates, photos and messages through digital platforms, [giving clients a clear view of progress throughout the build.](#)

As transparency becomes the norm, connected job sites are helping builders reduce miscommunication, coordinate teams more effectively and deliver a smoother experience for homeowners.

## Do you have a defined closeout process or checklist for your jobs?



## Do your clients have real-time visibility into project status during construction?







**67% of builders** give clients real-time visibility into project progress.

### Client Comments

**Stairs03.jpg**  
Photos



I love the way the front stairs turned out! Great job. Will those railings be painted on 3/01?

### Recent Photos

[View All Photos](#)

### Recent Videos

[View All Videos](#)

### Job Price Summary

Contract Price:	\$780,000.00
Job Running Total:	\$345,455.61

## INSIGHTS IN ACTION

## Saving 20 hours per week with smart project management

In construction, efficiency is a competitive edge. Builders who centralize schedules, communication and daily updates are finishing jobs faster, aligning teams better and keeping clients informed every step of the way.

Just ask Heather and Steve Tankersley, co-founders of their general contracting firm in Rancho Cordova, California. After years of managing \$100–300 million commercial projects, they were stunned by how fragmented residential construction could be when they moved into this space.

Getting bids back took forever, communication was scattered and there was no real structure.

That's when they brought their commercial-grade mindset to residential building – and used Buildertrend to improve their project management.

By managing everything in one platform, the Tankersleys created a collaborative approach that keeps their entire team, including subs and clients, aligned and informed in real time.

**Less chaos. More control. That's how great builders get the job done.** Because when every detail stays connected, you can spend less time chasing updates – and more time running the job right.

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**The Schedule feature is your biggest bang for your buck** if you're looking to impress clients and make your business run better. Even if you're just using the Schedule and Daily Logs in Buildertrend, you're already 70% ahead of your competition."

– Steve Tankersley

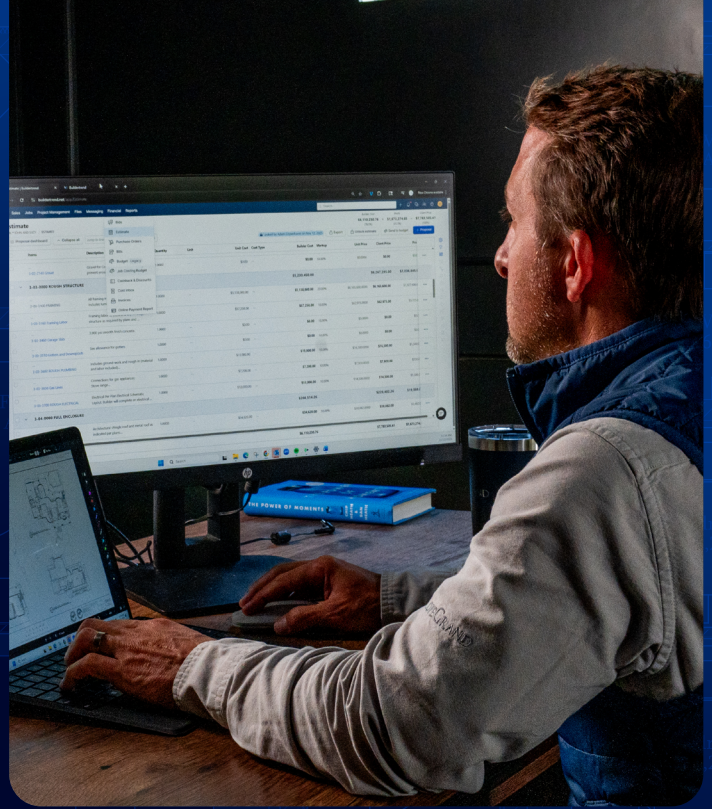
Co-owner, Tankersley Construction



Scan the QR code to watch a webinar led by Steve or visit <https://buildertrend.com/webinars/tankdemo/>

# 06

## Controlling the numbers

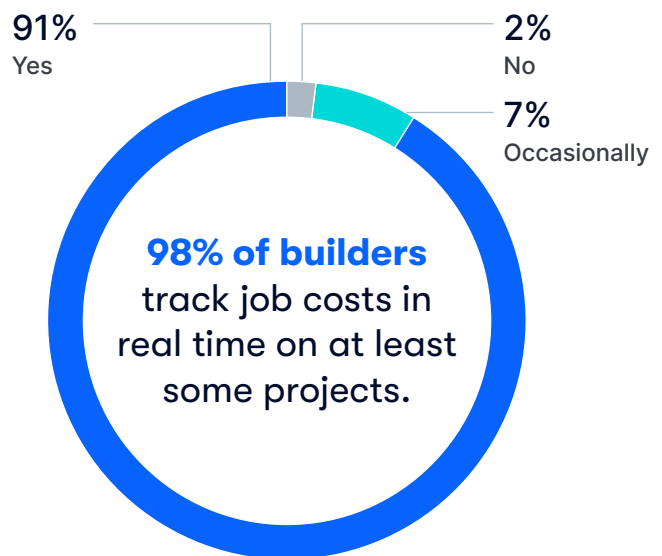


### The profitability gap

Builders today have more financial visibility than ever before. Modern construction software, integrated estimating systems and real-time job costing tools give companies the ability to track budgets and monitor performance in ways that weren't possible even a decade ago. Yet despite these advancements, maintaining consistent and predictable profit margins remains one of the industry's most persistent challenges.

One of the most revealing insights from this year's survey is that builders are paying closer attention to their numbers than ever before. Most report directly linking their estimates to project budgets and **actively monitoring job costs throughout construction**. This level of integration allows the industry's top teams to compare planned costs with actual spending in real time, helping them identify potential issues early and make adjustments before problems escalate.

### Do you actively track job costs in real time during construction?

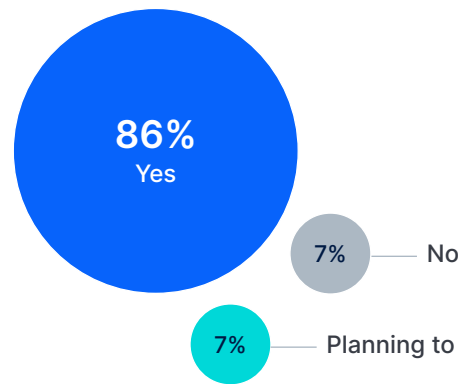


For companies managing multiple projects at once, this financial visibility is critical. Connecting estimating with job costing provides a clearer picture of how each project is performing and allows leaders to spot trends across their entire pipeline of work. Real-time tracking helps builders stay proactive rather than reactive when costs begin to shift.

However, stronger financial tools don't eliminate the realities of construction. Labor shortages continue to drive wage pressure, material costs can fluctuate quickly and change orders remain a common part of many projects. Even small variations in these areas can create meaningful differences between projected and actual margins.

The result is what many builders experience as a "profitability gap": the difference between the margin they plan for and the margin they ultimately achieve. The data in this section explores how builders are tracking financial performance, where margin variability occurs and the **factors most likely to influence profitability across today's construction businesses.**

### Do you integrate estimating directly into job costing or budgeting?



### What's your biggest challenge when it comes to staying on budget?



### On average, how close do your actual profit margins come to your planned or target margins?



## INSIGHTS IN ACTION

# Improving financial control and vendor relationships with reliable bill payment software

Paying subs and vendors efficiently while keeping financial data accurate and up to date is a challenge many growing builders face.

Southerly Homes is a perfect example of overcoming it. Nick Quijano, owner and operator, was managing 12 to 14 projects at a time and paying 40–60 subs and vendors each month using a mix of checks, manual bank transfers and disconnected systems. While the process worked, it required duplicate entry, manual updates and constant reconciliation between platforms. As the company grew, keeping everything aligned became increasingly difficult.

Looking ahead, the team knew they needed a better system. **One that could scale with them, rather than slow them down.**

When Buildertrend introduced the opportunity to pilot its new Bill Pay feature, the timing felt right. Because Buildertrend already served as the hub for project and invoice management, keeping payments inside the same system was a natural next step.

The impact was immediate. By eliminating duplicate entry and manual processing, the team significantly reduced the risk of missed or delayed payments while gaining clearer insight into each project's financial health.

Subs and vendors now appreciate faster, more consistent ACH payments – and the Southerly Homes team experiences fewer payment questions and issues.

If you already use Bills in Buildertrend, Bill Pay completes the system. It saves time, reduces errors and improves financial control and vendor relationships.

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“Bill Pay allows us to handle more projects and vendors without adding administrative staff, supporting scalable growth.”

– Nick Quijano

Owner and Operator,  
Southerly Homes



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# 07

## Managing materials and supply chains



### Relationships still power the supply chain

The supply chain has come a long way since the disruptions of the pandemic years. Lead times have improved, material availability has stabilized in many categories and builders have regained a degree of predictability when planning projects. Yet sourcing materials remains a complex and strategic part of running a construction business. Builders must balance cost, quality, availability and timing – often across multiple suppliers and projects at once.

**The survey results suggest that while conditions have improved, one factor continues to matter more than any other when making purchasing decisions: relationships.**

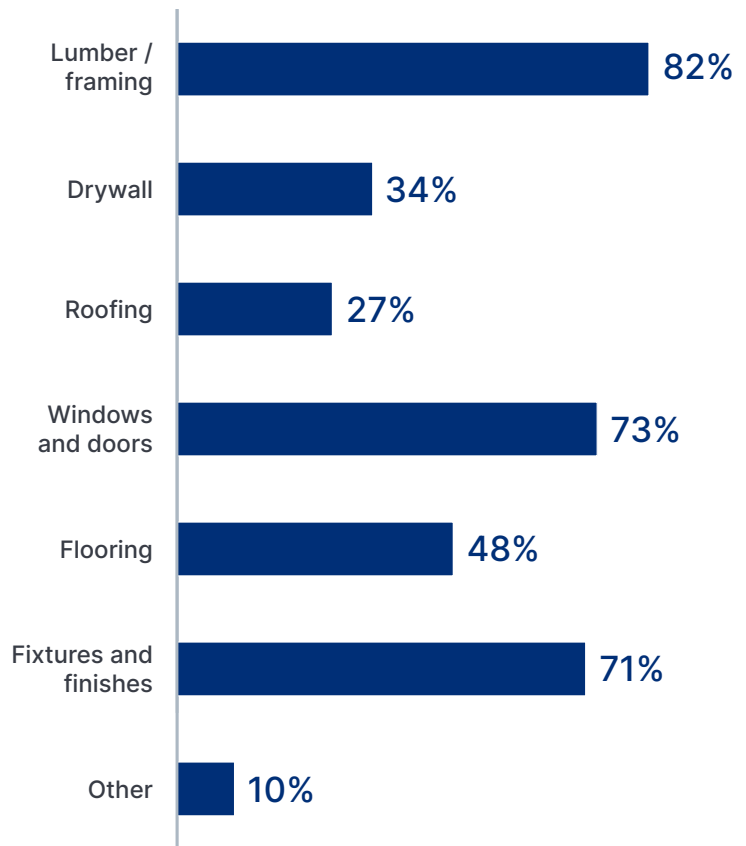
Residential construction has always been a relationship-driven industry, and that reality is especially clear in how builders manage their supply chains. Rather than relying solely on subcontractors to source materials, many builders take a hands-on approach to purchasing key components of a project. Lumber and framing are among the most common materials sourced directly, along with windows, doors and interior finishes. These are all categories that can significantly affect project budgets and schedules.

By purchasing these materials directly, builders maintain greater control over product quality, delivery timelines and overall project costs. Just as importantly, it allows them to strengthen long-term partnerships with suppliers and distributors who play a critical role in keeping projects moving.

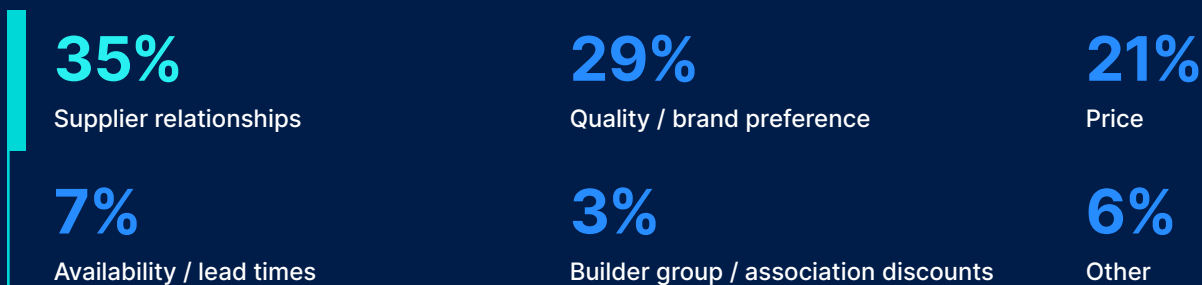
Those relationships often extend beyond simple transactions. Suppliers frequently provide logistical coordination, product expertise and problem-solving support when challenges arise during construction. In an industry where delays in one material can stall an entire project, reliable supplier partnerships can make a meaningful difference.

The data in this section explores **how builders manage material purchasing today**, which products they most commonly source themselves and what factors most influence buying decisions. Together, the results show how strong supplier relationships continue to anchor the construction supply chain, even as the industry evolves.

### Which of the following categories do you primarily purchase directly (vs. through subcontractors)?



### What most influences your material purchasing decisions?



**Supplier relationships are the most important factor influencing purchasing decisions.**

## INSIGHTS IN ACTION

## Materials in motion: Saving \$10,000 per home by turning purchasing into a profit driver

Most builders treat purchasing as routine, something that's simply part of the job. However, the most effective builders turn purchasing into a profit strategy.

Rather than buying project by project, they structure purchasing – leveraging volume, supplier relationships and systems to drive down costs at scale.

That shift is evident at Brightwater Homes, an Atlanta-based semi-custom builder focused on quality and disciplined cost control. While already sourcing materials directly, the team identified untapped value in how those purchases were structured.

By partnering with CBUSA, a national builder purchasing network and subsidiary of Buildertrend, **Brightwater accessed pre-negotiated pricing while maintaining local supplier relationships.**

The impact was immediate and material: approximately **\$10,000 in total savings per home** – split between upfront cost reductions and back-end gains – translating to **\$350,000 to \$400,000 in annual savings**. On top of that, they generate **tens of thousands in annual rebates**, turning everyday purchasing into incremental profit on every build.

Beyond cost savings, procurement became more predictable and efficient with CBUSA, with standardized pricing and less time spent negotiating.

Builders who operationalize purchasing as a strategy – not a task – unlock consistent, repeatable margin across every project.

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Every home we build has a unique estimate and takeoff,” said Steven Sanders-Meyer, purchasing manager at Brightwater Homes. “Knowing key products are already negotiated saves us from starting from scratch every time.”

**– Steven Sanders-Meyer**  
*Purchasing Manager,  
Brightwater Homes*



Scan the QR code to read the full case study or visit [cbusa.us/case-studies/brightwater-homes/](https://cbusa.us/case-studies/brightwater-homes/)

# 08

## From builder to business leader



### The builder becomes the CEO

Running a construction company today requires far more than managing job sites.

While craftsmanship and project management remain essential, the role of the modern builder increasingly resembles that of a business executive. Today's most successful builders are responsible for overseeing financial performance, operational efficiency, team productivity and customer satisfaction, often across multiple projects at once.

The survey results point to a clear shift in how builders are approaching that responsibility. More companies are adopting the same performance discipline seen in other modern industries, using data and measurable benchmarks to guide business decisions.

**One of the clearest indicators of this evolution is the growing use of key performance metrics.**

#### Work in Progress

Job Name	Revised Client Price	Projected Cost	Amount Invoiced	Gross Profit Earned
Maple Grove	\$645,748	\$540,362	\$259,407	\$45,292
Cedar Ridge	\$800,000	\$620,639	\$280,000	\$101,110
Pine Valley	\$500,000	\$393,832	\$149,197	\$33,825
Willow Creek	\$600,000	\$392,690	\$226,560	\$35,804
<b>4</b>	<b>\$2,545,748</b>	<b>\$1,947,524</b>	<b>\$915,164</b>	<b>\$216,032</b>

Builders report regularly tracking financial performance and job costing accuracy, which are two of the most critical indicators of business health. Many are also monitoring schedule performance, workforce productivity and customer satisfaction, giving leaders a more complete picture of how their companies are operating beyond any single project.

Alongside these metrics, dashboards and reporting tools are becoming standard features in construction businesses. A majority of surveyed builders say they actively use dashboards to monitor budgets, margins, revenue and operational performance across their project pipeline. Having this information centralized allows leaders to identify trends, spot issues early and make decisions based on real-time data rather than guesswork.

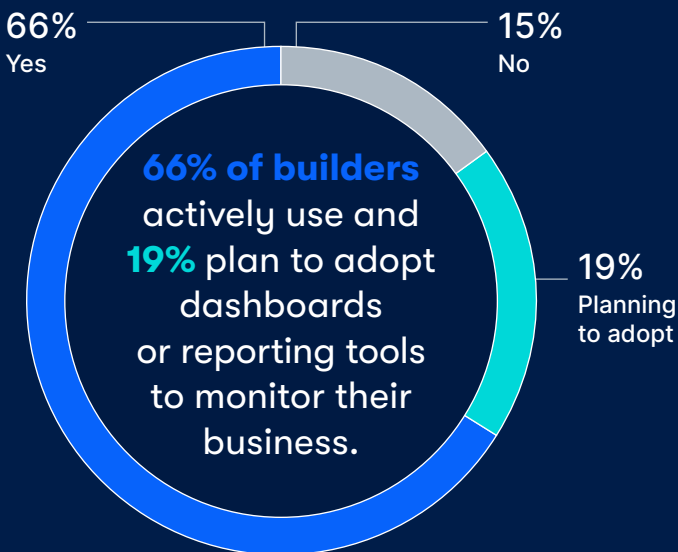
Leadership itself is also evolving. As companies grow and project workloads expand, builders increasingly rely on delegation and structured management systems to keep operations running smoothly. This allows business owners to shift their focus from day-to-day firefighting toward more strategic planning and long-term growth.

The data in this section explores how builders are adopting metrics, dashboards and leadership practices that reflect a broader transformation: the builder is no longer just managing projects; they're running a modern business.

### Which KPIs do you regularly track?

Financial performance / profitability	79%
Job costing accuracy	69%
Client satisfaction	59%
Schedule adherence	48%
Employee productivity / turnover	24%
Safety metrics	16%
Other	1%
I don't currently track KPIs	12%

### Do you use any dashboards or reports to monitor financial or business health?



**3.82 / 5** ●●●●○

Builders report strong confidence in their **ability to lead and delegate responsibilities.**

## INSIGHTS IN ACTION

## From builder to business leaders: Earning \$40M+ in revenue through system-driven operations

Many builders start with a hands-on approach, reviewing estimates, scheduling crews and managing daily details to keep projects moving. But as a company grows, the same hands-on approach that once fueled success can start to hold it back.

That's when great leaders recognize it's time to evolve.

The best builders know when it's time to shift from working in the business to leading it. They move from managing every task to building systems, empowering teams and maintaining clear visibility across projects. Running multiple jobs, teams and clients requires structure – not just effort. Without that evolution, owners hit a ceiling where hard work alone can't drive growth.

That realization hit home for Tyler Farrell, owner and founder of Utah-based Killowen Construction, whose growth came fast. Known for high-end, design-forward homes, Tyler recognized that to keep scaling, he needed to stop being the bottleneck and start being the leader his company needed to fuel future success.

To create space for strategy, Killowen turned to Buildertrend to unify project management, financial tracking and communication. With Buildertrend being used across departments, Tyler gained real-time visibility into every project without being in every meeting.

Tyler used Buildertrend to transform his once small, one-man operation into a mid-sized home-building powerhouse generating **\$40-\$50 million in annual revenue.**

Data-driven decision-making reduced chaos, improved accountability and turned operational clarity into a competitive advantage.

Builders who embrace structured systems can step back from the daily grind and start steering their companies toward sustained growth. Buildertrend helps them evolve from job managers to business leaders – scaling smarter, faster and with confidence.

66

I used to have my hands in everything. Now, I'm focused on where the business is going, not where it's been. Buildertrend's tools were important with helping me scale."

**– Tyler Farrell**

*President, Killowen Construction*



Scan the QR code to read the full story or visit [buildertrend.com/blog/scaling-to-50-million](https://buildertrend.com/blog/scaling-to-50-million)

# 09

## Conclusion



### The builders who win in 2026

Earlier in this report, we looked at the story of Cardinal Crest Homes – a company that represents a growing shift in how modern builders operate. Their success isn't simply the result of strong craftsmanship or a busy pipeline of projects. It reflects something larger happening across residential construction.

**Today's leading builders are no longer relying on intuition alone.**

Instead, they are building companies powered by systems, data, transparency and disciplined operations. They are investing in tools that give them clearer visibility into their numbers, stronger processes for managing projects and better ways to communicate with clients and teams.

The survey insights throughout this report reinforce one central idea: the builders who succeed in today's market are the ones who treat construction as a business, **not just a craft.**

Invoices	
● <b>RK-0003</b> 1831 Park St.	Due: <b>\$0.00</b> <b>PAID</b>
● <b>HC-0004</b> 5800 S 86TH CIR	Due: <b>\$0.00</b> <b>PAID</b>
● <b>552988</b> 710 Lilac Circle	Due: <b>\$22,424</b> <b>UNRELEASED</b>

**Across every section of the survey, a clear playbook for the future begins to emerge:**

### **Construction is becoming a data business**

Builders are tracking financial performance, job costs and operational metrics more closely than ever before. **Access to real-time information** is becoming a core part of running a competitive construction company.

### **Trust still drives the industry**

From relationships with suppliers and subcontractors, **to the experience delivered to homeowners.**

### **The spreadsheet era is dead**

As companies grow and manage more projects, disconnected tools make it harder to maintain visibility and control. **Builders are increasingly turning to integrated platforms that bring their operations together.**

### **Profit control is becoming the industry's new competitive edge**

Builders who can track budgets, manage costs and respond quickly to financial changes are **better positioned to maintain healthy margins.**

As the industry continues to evolve, the need for connected systems that unify project management, financial visibility and client communication will only grow.

Buildertrend has established itself as a trusted leader in construction technology by helping builders move beyond disconnected point solutions and run their entire business from one centralized platform.

By continuing to invest in AI and other innovative tools designed to help construction professionals stay ahead in a rapidly evolving industry, Buildertrend empowers builders to work smarter and deliver exceptional client experiences.

For more than twenty years, Buildertrend has worked alongside builders who are redefining how construction companies operate. **The future of construction belongs to builders who build more than homes – they build better businesses.**

# 10

## Participant demographics



### About the survey participants

The insights in this report come from experienced residential builders actively running construction businesses today. More than two-thirds of respondents have been in business for at least eight years, and over 40% report operating for fifteen years or more. This depth of experience means the perspectives captured here reflect builders who've navigated multiple housing cycles and understand the operational realities of managing a construction company.

Most participants work in residential construction, particularly in custom home building and remodeling. These segments often require detailed client collaboration, complex project coordination and careful financial oversight, making strong operational systems especially important.

The survey also reflects the perspective of company leadership. Nearly half of respondents are owners or presidents, while others hold key operational roles such as finance leaders, operations managers and estimators. Together, they represent builders managing active project pipelines across the United States, as well as Canada, Australia and New Zealand – many completing multiple projects each year.

# Methodology

Findings are based on nearly 300 survey responses, delivering results with a 95% confidence level and an approximate ±5% margin of error. Survey participants were drawn from Buildertrend customers who demonstrate extensive use of the platform across both financial and operational workflows.

## 73% of builders have been in business for more than eight years.

How long has your company been in business?

Less than 1 year	2%
1-3 years	7%
4-7 years	17%
8-15 years	31%
15+ years	42%

## 84% of respondents are custom home builders or remodelers.

What kind of business do you run or work for?

Custom home builder	45%
Remodeler	39%
Specialty contractor	6%
Production home builder	4%
Spec home builder	2%
Commercial contractor	3%
Trade contractor	1%

## Nearly half of respondents are company owners or presidents.

Which of the following most accurately reflects your role in the company?

Owner / President	48%
Finance / Controller / Accountant	26%
Project manager	4%
Operations manager	8%
Estimator / Preconstruction manager	8%
Superintendent / Field manager	2%
Other	4%

**Respondents represent builders across the United States and several international markets.**

Where is your company primarily located?

U.S. Southeast	<b>29%</b>
U.S. Midwest	<b>18%</b>
U.S. West	<b>10%</b>
U.S. Northeast	<b>11%</b>
U.S. Southwest	<b>9%</b>
Canada / Australia / New Zealand	<b>17%</b>
Other	<b>5%</b>

**67% of builders manage more than six projects per year.**

How many projects does your company typically run per year?

Less than 1 year	<b>2%</b>
1-3 years	<b>7%</b>
4-7 years	<b>17%</b>
8-15 years	<b>31%</b>
15+ years	<b>42%</b>



# About Buildertrend

Great builders don't simply manage projects; they run successful businesses. That's where Buildertrend comes in. As the leading residential construction management platform, we give contractors the power to control their financials, schedules, team workflows and client relationships: all in one system. No more juggling disconnected tools or guessing on profitability. With nearly two decades of industry expertise, Buildertrend helps builders work smarter, scale faster and stay ahead of the competition. Learn more about Buildertrend by visiting [buildertrend.com](https://buildertrend.com) and on our socials [@buildertrend](https://twitter.com/buildertrend).

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