WHITE PAPER

Project Management VS Project Controls

What's the Difference?

While 'project management' is an umbrella term to describe the planning and management of a project across many industries, 'project controls' is more specific to the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry, describing cost and budget management via project-specific, cloud-based applications within operations. Understanding the difference will help you direct your energy and resources more productively by exploring the best digital transformation technology available for your specific needs.

Shohreh Ghorbani, Founder and Technical Director of Project Control Academy, describes **project controls** as project management focused on managing costs and schedules. It is especially prevalent in **the AEC space**.

continued

What's the Difference?

People

Unlike project managers (PMs), who direct project team members, project controllers advise team members (including PMs) of possible cost, schedule, or recovery plan issues. Project managers also analyze generated data and make future project decisions based on that data, while project controllers focus primarily on developing each project's cost and schedule.

Process

'**Project management**' describes the planning, initiation, execution, monitoring, and closing of a project. While it is a broad term, methodologies apart from traditional project management include 'lean,' 'agile,' and 'waterfall' techniques.

In contrast, 'project controls' describes the processes used to gather and analyze project data to control costs and stay on budget in the cloud. Cloud project controls are budgeting, forecasting, bidding, and estimating program applications that enable the integration of project data from one centralized cloud platform. Project controls also provide **iterative** methods centered around repeated review and testing—essential to the evolutionary development and improvement of data or product deliverables.

Which application features matter to AEC leaders?

We recently surveyed leaders in the AEC industry who said **availability, performance, security, data ownership, and support are critical to project controls**. Let's examine how each factor differs from basic project management and why they're essential to reducing costs and improving schedules in the cloud.

FEATURE 1

Availability

Availability refers to whether the ideal **cloud-hosted software solution or program application** can be easily accessed and integrated via project portfolio management. Not only should the program be available via desktop or mobile, but people should be able to utilize apps via any company device or workstation—regardless of location or network parameters.

Whereas project management is concerned with accessibility and availability of necessary updates and licensing, project controls necessitate a speedy turnaround due to the competitive nature of bidding and the fast-paced schedule of estimating. Therefore, near-real-time availability and cloud-platform accessibility are integral to project controls due to the high financial risks involved in lag-time or inaccurate calculations.

IT department heads may struggle to procure the best applications for specific project needs and maintain in-house networks or hardware. The difficulty can increase if data center capabilities are limited or if maintenance updates are extensive for on-premise legacy applications.

FEATURE 2

Performance

Performance refers to how quickly data can be uploaded and integrated into network and system databases. Application performance also refers to specific program application functions and whether they update in real-time without interfering with an application's ability to do its job. This efficiency rate reflects time-to-work, and slow performance hurts your bottom line.

Project management is concerned with the performance of software program applications individually. Still, because the programs aren't necessarily dealing with budgetary factors, it's not always necessary for data to be available to various stakeholders in different geographic locations at the same time. Consequently, the applications may not all be cloud-integrated from the same platform.

However, because cloud project controls are so high-stakes, various applications are often integrated within one platform. As a result, data for cost assessment, budgeting, forecasting, estimating, and bidding are connected. Cloud performance can be challenging to predict when combining complex project software with larger systems—otherwise known as **software performance tuning**. We recommend finding a partner skilled in PPM integration and monitoring.

FEATURE 3

Security

It may seem straightforward, but **cloud security** requires both strict user provisioning and reliable customer support to succeed. You can't have one without the other.

Most project management applications tend to be complex. However, it's especially critical to protect private data when handling client-sensitive financials like budget forecasts and estimates via cloud project controls. If your system crashes, you could face a disaster unless you have a fast, dependable data recovery system—even in a complete data center outage.

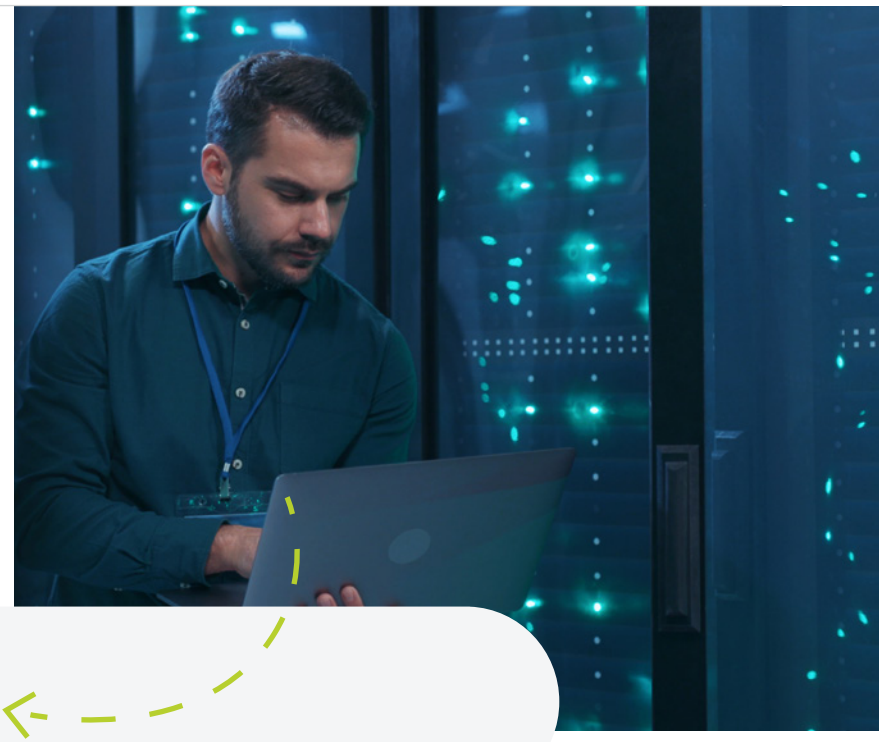
To deter even the savviest of hackers, arm yourself with **Zero Trust** protocols and nationally certified security standards backed by a trusted security team.

FEATURE 4

Data Ownership

Most executives and team leaders in the AEC space want their cloud-based project management applications to enable DIY-level independence and data ownership.

Data ownership is essential to everyone in project management. Still, it is vital for financial data housed in cloud project controls to be both readily available and kept away from the wrong hands. Because of this, managed Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) clouds tend to be more popular among project controls professionals than separate on-premises legacy/enterprise software or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) clouds. More than 70% of those we surveyed said their **ideal solution is a single cloud platform** with access to all their project management controls.



FEATURE 5

Support

Essential project management may not require as much IT or security support due to not constantly being updated or shared between multiple parties across significant geographical distances, as with cloud project controls-housed financial data.

When managing multiple applications in the cloud, **IT support** is critical to projects running on schedule and under budget. If your in-house IT team must provide in-house user support and technical support, they won't have time to deal with application updates or disaster recovery.

Ideally, project controls implement in-platform IT support to maximize IT-related investments. Otherwise, your cloud platform may force in-house IT support to deal with program application upgrades and integration issues—rather than concentrate on assisting employees and fixing hardware or network issues on-site.

How can you elevate project controls to a whole new level?

Are you searching for more powerful, diverse options for managing project controls?

When considering cloud options, it's a good idea to maximize flexibility by implementing PaaS-based project controls. You may need to sit down and discuss your cloud maturity level with a team of professionals who can assist you with knowing which project controls work best for you.

Project management in the cloud doesn't have to be complicated. Choose managed options that will allow you to easily integrate all the tools necessary to get the job done well and on time. That way, project controllers can update data and report forecasting recommendations to project managers, department heads, and C-suite executives without worrying about whether you're all on the same page.

We may not be circling Earth from outer space, but we still have a 50,000-foot view.

LoadSpring is made up of experts in project management and project controls. Listen to our team members and LoadSpring partners discuss the future of project controls in any one of these exciting podcasts:

- **The PROCON podcast**, hosted by Paul Vogels of Primaned & featuring LoadSpring CEO Eric Leighton on **cloud transitions**
- Hugh Seaton's podcasts **Data in Construction** and **Constructed Futures**:
  - CEO & Founder Eric Leighton on the importance of **data governance**
  - Managing Director Asif Sharif on **digital transformation & data analytics**
  - Executive Vice President & Founder Jim Smith on **managed cloud solutions**

The future of the AEC industry and project controls looks bright—regardless of distance or perspective—thanks to new cloud technology enabling simple, efficient project and portfolio management. That's **LoadSpring** for you: project controls made easy.

Contact us for a free cloud-readiness assessment today!