

# How to improve the efficiency of your **cost management fees at scale**

A guide for client-side cost consultants & quantity surveyors.



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# 01. Who is this guide for?

This guide is written for client-side cost consultants, particularly those that regularly work with procurement routes that have a propensity to create post contract change.

In fact, I can be more precise, and narrow down the target readership further – this guide is for individuals interested in innovation, digitisation and **improving the efficiency of their professional fees**. But that should be all of us, right?

# 02. Introduction

I started my career some 15 years ago at Davis Langdon (now Aecom) and over the years I have been involved with hundreds of projects of varying sizes, in various sectors.

When we talk about the 'efficiency' of professional fees we need to look at where in the project life cycle we are expending our fees to identify what (if anything) can be done to improve those processes.

On most projects, a large proportion of a project's cost management fee will be expended pre-contract, mainly during cost planning stages culminating with a pre-tender estimate.

Unfortunately, the potential to automate cost planning stages is somewhat limited given the bespoke nature of each project. (Although progress is being made with advances in BIM and innovations from software providers like Cost Ex & Causeway.)

With that in mind, the biggest opportunity to improve fee efficiency sits with the post contract phases of a project, and the processes there in.

The biggest difference with post contract services is that these are typically more standardised and similar from project to project. This means there is a far greater potential to create automation and reduce manual, time consuming processes.

However, if we look at the current state of the industry and the key components of post contact activities

(change control, interim valuations, client cost reports) these are all still typically being managed using outdated manual excel spreadsheets.

An element of post contract change is inevitable on most projects, bringing with it a set of manual processes that are repeated time and time again, wasting thousands of fee hours a year across your organisation.

1. Cost consultant and contractor often running duplicate change logs which invariably do not match causing uncertainty and delay
2. Manual excel change logs prone to error, with formatting and formula issues (often to one parties advantage)
3. Email heavy, sending files back and forth (often via third party download links which have a habit of expiring)
4. No 'secure' way of agreeing the cost of variations
5. No centralised store for costs, narrative and supporting information (leading to time consuming disagreements)
6. Manually preparing and signing interim valuations
7. Manually preparing client cost reports in excel
8. Risk of members of staff leaving organisations, potentially losing crucial supporting information
9. Significant lack of post contract data analytics
10. Lack of 'automated' director oversight of project financials

**The list goes on, but the issues can be summarised in four key themes:**

**Time intensive**  
Detrimental impact on project financials and professional fees

**Insecure**  
Creating uncertainty and therefore financial risk

**Lack of audit trail**  
Narrative and supporting information often mislaid/lost

**Delay in agreeing costs**  
Agreement of costs often pushed to final account stage



**Once you acknowledge these issues it's hard to ignore them, and even harder to continue working in such an inefficient manner.**

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# 03. Why should you care, and why now?

## New ways of working

Rightly or wrongly, since Covid-19 we have re-wired the way we work to allow for a more flexible and often remote approach. This has led to a trend of less face-to-face cost meetings at longer intervals. The knock-on effect being that 'unagreed' variations are sitting in change logs for longer periods of time, increasing financial risk to all parties involved in the process.

## Competitive fee landscape

Now more than ever the professional fee landscape is competitive. This is evidenced by the common practice of junior surveyors managing projects with the support of directors. Burning resource on manual, repetitive processes is indirectly costing your organisation money. An average of 2 hours per week (per project) is being wasted through inefficient change management processes.

- How many projects are you working on?
- How many projects is your organisation working on?
- Think about the opportunity cost of that inefficient use of time

## Stricter audit trail requirements

With stricter audit requirements coming into force with the Building Safety Bill "Golden Thread", contractors and cost consultants need to ensure they are adapting to ensure they remain compliant. Information in the golden thread should be stored in a structured digital fashion, managed, maintained and retained in line with the defined principles. [Find out more about golden thread requirements here.](#)

## Talent Attraction and Retention

Moving forward, young upcoming talent in our industry will be drawn towards organisations that are ahead of the digital adoption curve. They want to ensure they are committing to a company that understands the shift in attitudes and will support them with the right tools for the job throughout their career. Similarly, workload and stress levels are key factors in employee happiness and therefore staff retention. If there are solutions out there to ease the burden of manual time-consuming processes, these will be crucial in retaining 'talent' – as they will jump ship to your competitors.

## Data Insight and Analytics

Insight and Analytics is going to have a big impact over the next decade, with companies that are able to harness their post contract cost data (and behaviour) having a huge competitive advantage, giving them the ability to provide superior advice to clients.

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# 04. What needs to happen?

**So you recognise the pain points, understand the associated impacts, but how do you take concrete steps to see real change and improvement?**

**The answer to this will depend on where your organisation currently sits on the digital innovation scale, but as a starter, I would suggest the following;**

- Cost consultants need to embrace digital tools beyond the standard construction management platforms, ERP's and document storage solutions. You should be on the lookout for niche solutions that focus on your specific pain points / frictions within existing workflows
- Junior surveyors should be encouraged to table solutions to management that they would like to try. (At director level, you may not appreciate the specific pain points your junior surveyors are experiencing on a daily basis)
- Management needs to acknowledge an 'investment' will need to be made in order to support the new ways of working

The cost of implementing new software solutions will be offset by the significant 'return on investment' achieved from using them. Depending on the type of software, these can be in the form of physical time savings, enhanced management oversight, improved financials, financial risk reduction, data analytics and the associated competitive advantage.

Champion the use of new solutions, be an ambassador for digital change and encourage others to follow. The next 5-years are going to be crucial for organisations to shake off the 'manual ways of working' and utilise the innovations available to them.

Ensure you and your organisation are on the right side of the adoption curve to ensure your position in years to come.

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**“We were conservatively saving over an hour a week on our pilot project, through efficient change meetings and by having all the latest variation information securely stored in one location.”**

▶ Oliver Smith, Associate Cost Consultant, G&T

**GT** GARDINER  
&THEOBALD

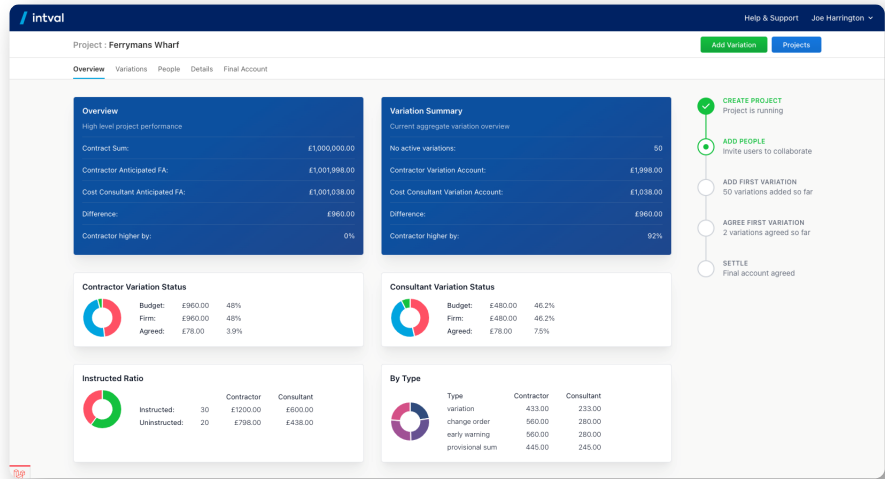
# 05. Need some help?

**Intval is a post contract 'cost management' solution that utilises secure interactive change logs.**

With optional bespoke modules for interim valuations and client cost reporting, intval provides an affordable one-stop solution for post contract services. Empowering your teams to work effectively.

Storing the conversation, costs and supporting information all in the cloud, helping you digitally transform your post contract workflows.

To find out more, click on the **free trial button** to request a login. (Allowing you to explore the platform using a dummy project.)



[Click here for a free trial](#)

**“The biggest benefit comes from avoiding the ‘he said / she said’ scenario with all parties knowing what, when and how costs were agreed.”**



► Mollie Horton, Cost Consultant, JLL

# Product Roadmap

We are building intval with market leading cost consultancies, helping us prioritise our product roadmap and ensure we deliver a best in class solution.

## Just a few ideas that we are working on:

Interim Valuations with semi-automated director sign-off

HR functions - Auto tracking fee expenditure against agreed fee levels

Upstream client cost reporting

Multiple currencies (£, \$, Euro)

Weekly update emails highlighting a projects financial movements

"Paperclip" icon to show files when files have been uploaded against a variation

Contract Administrator logins to facilitate digital contract instructions

Ability to SQL search your organisations cost data

Auto prepare final account statements for signature

JCT Contract creator (including vault storage for contract appendices)

Collate multiple projects under a master project (for complex works)

Cost data collection from variation breakdowns for benchmarking

Read only client logins (to access cost reports and valuations)

Carbon calculator for project change logs (Building Transparency API)

Interactive collateral warranty tracker

If you think any of these could add value to your organisation, please get in touch, [hello@intval.co.uk](mailto:hello@intval.co.uk)



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