![bqe logo]

8 Reasons Excel is Hurting Your Firm's Productivity

How Smarter Tools Can Save Time, Reduce Errors, and Help Your Team Work Better

Table of Contents

Introduction

Is your firm still relying on Excel to manage projects, budgets, or operations? What may have started as a simple solution often turns into a tangled web of manual updates, version control issues, and limited visibility. Over time, spreadsheets slow your team down, introduce costly errors, and make it harder to scale.

This ebook explores eight critical ways Excel is holding your firm back. More importantly, it shows how purpose-built project management software can replace those inefficiencies with real-time insights, streamlined workflows, and smarter decision-making. If you're ready to work faster, more accurately, and with greater confidence, this is your next step.

Time-Consuming

Excel slows your team down. Entering data manually, double-checking formulas, and hunting for the right file all take time that could be spent on billable work. Because Excel cannot store drawings, documents, or communications, your team is forced to juggle multiple platforms like Google Drive, Word, Slack/Team, email, QuickBooks, and more, just to piece together the full picture of a project.

This fragmented workflow creates confusion, increases the chance of errors, and makes even simple tasks feel like a chore. Switching between programs, searching through browser tabs, and updating disconnected files is a drain on your productivity and your bottom line.

No Real-Time Data

Excel cannot give you real-time insight into how your projects are performing. Data is only as current as the last manual update, which means you are often making decisions based on outdated information. That delay creates risk—budgets drift, schedules slip, and problems go unnoticed until it is too late.

Without automated reporting, your team spends valuable time pulling numbers instead of acting on them. This slows down project workflows and limits your ability to respond quickly to issues. When you lack immediate visibility into key metrics like hours worked, budget burn, or resource allocation, you lose control of your projects and put your deadlines, profitability, and client satisfaction at risk.

Zero Automation

Excel does not automate your work. While you can build schedules and track expenses manually, every update, calculation, and report still depends on someone inputting data. This wastes time and increases the likelihood of errors.
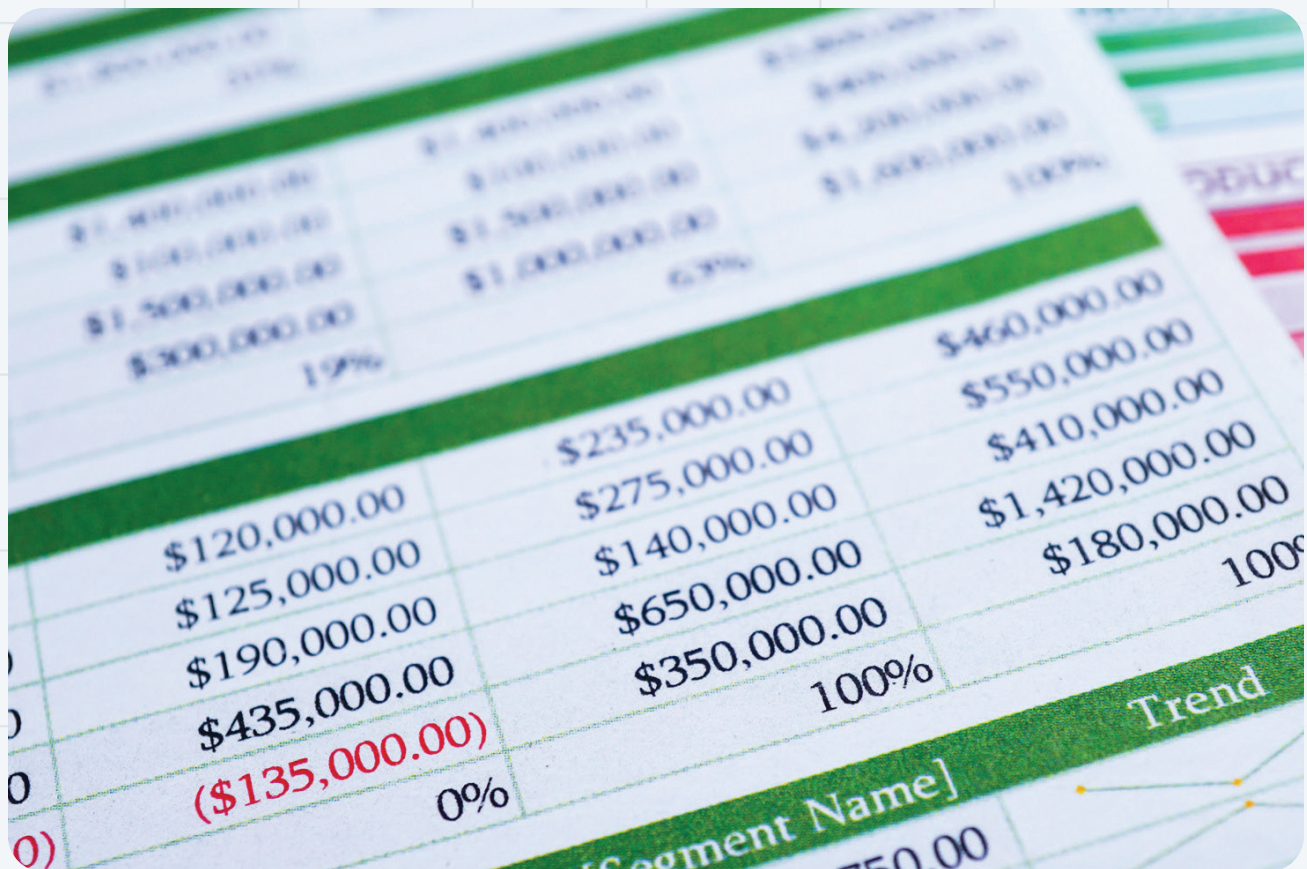
Project management software eliminates that burden. It can automate recurring reports, trigger alerts when deadlines shift or budgets near their limit, and keep stakeholders informed without extra effort. With automation, your team spends less time chasing updates and more time focusing on high-value work. Excel cannot offer that level of efficiency.

No Quality Check

Excel accepts anything you type, even if it is incorrect, incomplete, or duplicated. There are no built-in safeguards to catch mistakes or enforce consistency, which leads to unreliable data and costly errors.

Project management software is built to prevent these issues. With field validation, required inputs, and duplicate detection, it helps ensure the data your team enters is accurate and usable. These quality controls protect your reports, improve decision-making, and reduce the risk of financial and scheduling mistakes that stem from bad data.

Limited & Difficult Tools

Excel may seem simple at first, but working beyond basic data entry requires specialized knowledge. Creating formulas, building charts, or using pivot tables takes training and practice. Without that expertise, you risk wasting time or producing incomplete reports.
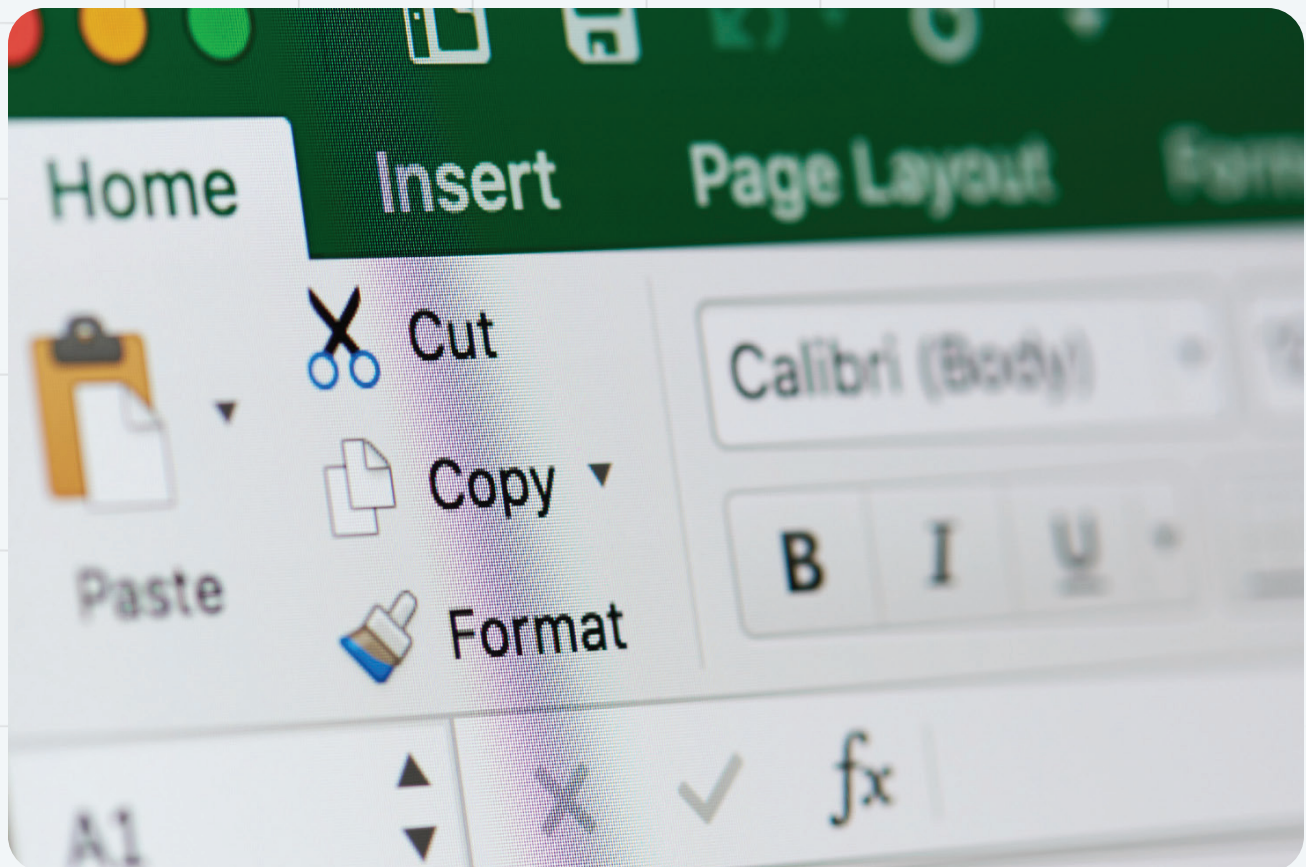
Project management software removes that barrier. It gives you access to real-time insights, built-in reports, and visual dashboards—without the need to code or manually manipulate data. You get the information you need, when you need it, without relying on advanced Excel skills.

Resource Hogs

Large Excel files can slow down your computer and disrupt your workflow. Spreadsheets with thousands of records load all data into your local system memory every time you open them, which can cause delays, crashes, or freezing—especially on older machines.

Cloud-based project management software avoids this problem. It stores data securely on remote servers, allowing you to access project information without overloading your device. This keeps your computer running smoothly and your team focused on the work that matters.

Not Multi-User Friendly

Excel was never built for true collaboration. Most spreadsheets only allow one person to work at a time, which slows down teams and leads to version control issues. While cloud-based versions like Excel Online or Google Sheets offer some sharing features, they are limited in functionality and often struggle with large files or complex tasks.

Project management software is designed for team collaboration. Multiple users can access and update project data at the same time, with full visibility and control. Tasks, time entries, budgets, and communications stay in sync, so nothing gets lost or overwritten. When your entire team can work together in real time, you move faster and stay aligned from start to finish.

Lack of Support

Spreadsheets offer little to no support when something goes wrong. If a formula breaks or data goes missing, you are on your own. For complex tasks like time tracking, budgeting, and billing, Excel does not provide built-in guidance or industry-specific best practices.

Professional services firms need more than a blank spreadsheet. They need software backed by expert support teams who understand how their business works. Specialized project management platforms come with training, onboarding, and consulting tailored to your workflows. You gain not just a tool, but a partner that helps your firm operate more efficiently and profitably.

Key Takeaways

- **Spreadsheets waste time** by requiring manual data entry, updates, and cross-checking.

- **Data is never real-time** in Excel, which delays decisions and limits project visibility.

- **Spreadsheets lack automation**, which makes routine reporting and project updates more labor-intensive than they should be.

- **There are no built-in safeguards** to prevent errors or maintain data quality.

- **Advanced Excel features require training**, making them difficult for most team members to use effectively.

- **Large spreadsheets slow down performance**, consuming local computer resources and reducing efficiency.

- **Excel is not built for collaboration**, and cloud-based versions have limited functionality for multi-user workflows.

- **There is no specialized support** for project-based tasks like time tracking, billing, or resource planning.

Get Time Back in Your Day with BQE CORE

Excel may work for basic, individual tasks, but it quickly breaks down under the demands of a growing architecture or engineering firm. BQE CORE is built specifically for your industry, giving you the tools to manage projects, time, and billing more efficiently—all in one platform. By reducing manual work and minimizing errors, CORE helps your team move faster, stay focused, and make better decisions. The result is measurable savings in time, money, and effort—every single day.
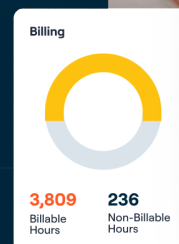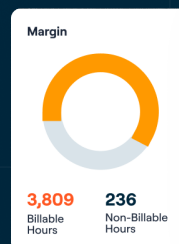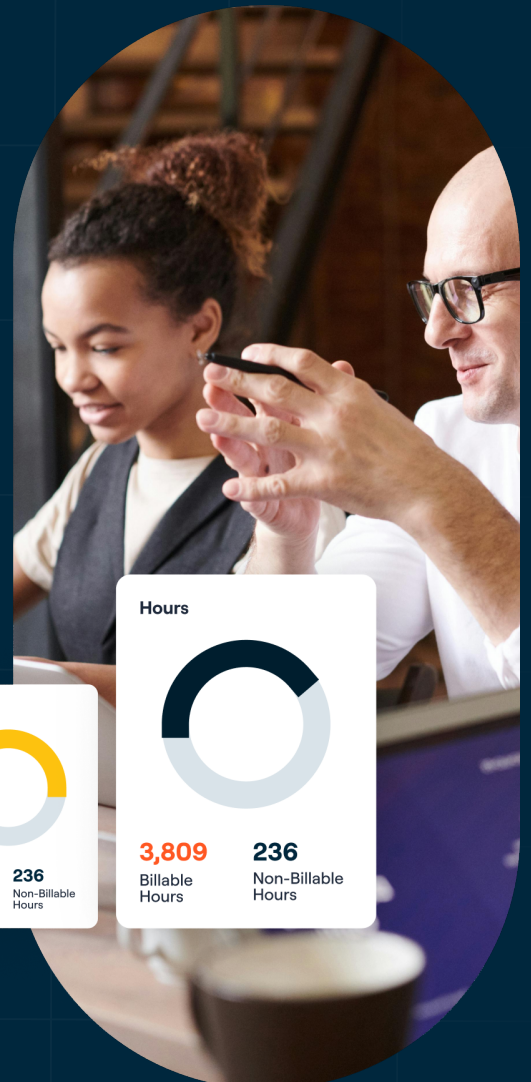
About BQE CORE

Designed for engineering, architecture, and professional services firms, BQE CORE is a leading provider of business management software.

Firm owners are busy. This is why we built BQE CORE to streamline operations by integrating time tracking, project management, invoicing, and accounting into a single platform, enabling firms to boost productivity and profitability.

With a track record of over 30 years serving the A&E industry, BQE empowers businesses to make informed decisions through real-time insights and powerful analytics, helping them achieve growth and operational excellence.

LEARN MORE, BOOK A DEMO →

Margin

3,809
Billable
Hours

236
Non-Billable
Hours

Billing

3,809
Billable
Hours

236
Non-Billable
Hours

Hours

3,809
Billable
Hours

236
Non-Billable
Hours