



# How BESIX Watpac Improved Subcontractor Accountability Through OpenSpace

*Leading GC Piloted OpenSpace on a 6-Storey High School and Now Uses it on All Victoria and South Australia Projects*

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## Goal: Find a Competitive Advantage Through Innovative Site-Side Technology

A leading general contractor in Australia, BESIX Watpac is always looking for ways to mitigate risk, reduce its cost base, and differentiate itself from other construction firms.

“The construction industry is behind in technology, and we recognised there were plenty of opportunities for tech to disrupt,” said Seamus Egan, the company’s New Business Manager for Victoria and South Australia.

Egan saw the potential of OpenSpace when Sandro Ablahad, a Site Engineer based out of the firm’s Melbourne office, brought the idea to him. Ablahad was confident that 360 photo documentation technology would help in his own job by minimising the time he would need to spend walking the site. From there, Egan decided to pilot OpenSpace on a [six-storey high school](#) that was underway as part of the Gasworks redevelopment in Fitzroy, Victoria.

## Strategy: Use OpenSpace to Document Progress and Compare Design to Reality

When BESIX Watpac began using OpenSpace in April 2021, the project team found it easy to use and saw benefits right away.

Ablahad’s favorite aspect of OpenSpace is the ability to use camera time slices to see the services installed behind plaster-finished walls when there’s a need to locate them to make repairs. Users can refer to a capture from weeks or even months in the past to find precisely where plumbing, ductwork or electrical wiring was placed—removing the need to haphazardly drill holes into finished walls in a trial-and-error process.

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Seamus Egan  
New Business Manager for Victoria and South Australia, BESIX Watpac



“I wish I had this technology sooner, since I’ve had situations where it’s quite challenging to find where services are located under time constraints, and the painting and plasterboard contractors aren’t happy,” he said.

For Egan, OpenSpace’s standout feature is the ability to compare current site conditions to the BIM model in a side-by-side view. It lets the project team identify discrepancies at an early stage before they become major problems.

“It’s so powerful from a coordination perspective, since it drives attention to things that don’t look right and require further investigation,” he said. “I think it lights up the same part of the brain that we use to play ‘spot the difference’ as kids, so it’s like second nature. The ability to visualise the design alongside site activity was probably where our Project Manager saw the most benefit.”

OpenSpace is also intuitive to use for a wide range of team members.

**“If we have a quality or safety problem, we can very quickly get to the truth and decide what to do.”**

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“The interface is quite easy to learn—and quite easy to explain to less tech-savvy members of our team,” Ablahad said. “All they need to do is download an app on their phone, attach a 360 camera to their hard hat and walk. It’s as simple as that. Everything else is done automatically and uploaded to the cloud.”

**90%** REDUCTION IN  
SITE WALKS BY  
ADMINISTRATION STAFF

**20%** OF WORKFORCE  
SUPPORTED TO WORK  
REMOTELY

“We are an industry of two ends—with a spectrum of ages and technology uptake,” added Egan. “The builder skills, including the ability to see a problem, preempt a problem and challenge a situation, tend to exist in the more experienced age bracket, and their adoption has been absolutely critical to our success with OpenSpace.”

## Results: Time Savings, Greater Accountability and Higher Productivity

After the success of the pilot, BESIX Watpac’s Victoria/South Australia business unit has rolled out OpenSpace on all its projects.

“It happened without much effort from myself or anyone internally promoting it,” said Egan. “It spread through positive word-of-mouth and is on six or seven projects now.”

Egan predicts it will continue to “bubble its way through our organisation.”

BESIX Watpac is achieving strong results from OpenSpace in the following areas:



### More Accountability from Subcontractors:

By providing a single source of truth on project conditions at any point in time, OpenSpace makes it easier to manage subcontractor relationships and contractual obligations. “When you have an indisputable record of the history of the site, you can stand your ground and say, “We know what the facts are; now let’s get on with the job,” Egan said.

### Remote Project Management During Pandemic:

Victoria had the most lockdowns of any Australian state, but OpenSpace helped keep projects moving forward by facilitating “virtual walkthroughs” for employees who were unable to attend site in person due to Covid restrictions. This enabled contract administrators, who were responsible for monitoring site progress and paying subcontractors, to do their monthly site walks from home and still be connected to progress on-site. Egan thinks OpenSpace will make it possible for some people to continue working from home indefinitely.

### Time Savings and Increased Productivity:

OpenSpace removes the need for every project team member to do their own site walks to familiarise themselves with day-to-day progress. Instead, a single person can walk the site using OpenSpace, and the rest of the team can view that capture. Given that BESIX Watpac’s projects are typically very large, the time saved when 10 people no longer need to walk the site every day is significant.

### Avoiding Rework and Mitigating Risk:

Through its BIM Viewer feature (which provides a side-by-side view of site conditions with the model), OpenSpace helps avoid clashes. Discrepancies can be detected before they become costly to address—and well before FF&E are placed on the walls and floor. OpenSpace also takes luck out of the equation; management can rest assured that a robust record exists instead of having to hope that a manual photo was taken when disputes arise. “There’s peace of mind for me as an executive,” Egan said. “If we have a quality or safety problem, we can very quickly get to the truth and decide what to do. The sooner you know the truth, the sooner you can deal with it.”

