

Atlantic United Construction

Solution Overview

Industry

Construction

Scenario

In the past, the company used accounting software with minimal project management functionality that was difficult to get information into or out of.

Solution

Microsoft Dynamics SL seamlessly integrates project and contract management with financial accounting. Employees can enter time with electronic timecards, invoices can be formatted to meet customer requirements, and management has access to real time reports.

Benefit

The application saves \$25,000 per year in administrative costs, frees up projects managers time, and real time reports make it possible to identify problems so corrective action can be taken.

Software Used

Microsoft Dynamics SL
Financial Series
Project Series
Contract Management
Project Allocator
Time & Expense for Projects
Microsoft SQL Server
Windows Server

Demographic Information

Migrated from: packaged UNIX accounting software
Transaction Volume: 1000 per month

Atlantic United Construction® has saved \$25,000 per year in administrative costs by implementing Microsoft® Dynamics SL (formerly Solomon). The integrated business software automates many previously-manual tasks, and seamlessly integrates project and contract management with financial accounting. This saves considerable data entry time and reduces the potential for errors. The flexibility of the billing module in the new software means that invoices can now be generated automatically in each client's desired format rather than by hand as in the past.

Company Overview

Established in 1984, Atlantic United Construction has successfully filled the needs of a diverse range of customers by completing more than 300 projects throughout the United States including apartment complexes, office buildings, restaurants, hotels, airport catering facilities, retail centers and medical facilities. The company has extensive experience in minor and major renovations and tenant finish build-out projects, and can also construct a building using pre-engineered building systems to meet its customers' specific needs.

Business Challenge

In the past, the company used UNIX-based software that had only very limited project management functionality. The software was not capable of generating complete job costing reports so accountants maintained a running summary of project costs in a spreadsheet. This took a considerable amount of time and meant that the spreadsheets were often considerably outdated so project managers often didn't find out about a problem until it was too late to do anything about it. The old software had a green-screen interface that presented learning difficulties to new users and meant it could not exchange information with common Windows productivity applications. Accountants continually had to re-enter data between the program and the spreadsheets that they used for budgeting and analyzing financial figures.

Solution

Management of the firm was frustrated because they felt project managers lacked the information they needed to profitably run their projects. Pam Burnett, a partner in Atlantic United, said that she examined all of the leading mid-market business software packages and selected Microsoft Dynamics SL because it has the strongest project management capabilities. "We also needed a partner to assist with training and implementation," Burnett said. "We selected one because of their extensive experience in Dynamics SL implementations as well as their organized approach to meeting our schedule and budget." They provided good configuration in the Contract Management and Flexible Billings modules and a number of custom reports.

“The integration between project management and financial accounting, electronic timekeeping, automated billing and other similar features save us so much time that we have been able to reduce our administrative staff by one person through attrition.”

Pam Burnett
Partner
Atlantic United Construction

Benefits

Major Improvements in Project Management Capabilities

“We have identified major improvements throughout the entire process of managing a project,” Burnett said. “First of all, our employees record their time on a daily basis using electronic timecards provided by the new software. An electronic alert informs the project manager that there are timecards waiting approval. The manager can then review the timecard and, if they approve it, it is instantly entered into the project record and flows through the accounting system to update the financial reports. This is an enormous improvement over our previous process in which the accounting staff spent time entering paper time cards and several additional steps had to be performed before they were visible on reports. Rather than having to manipulate the information in spreadsheets, it is immediately available to project managers who are now much better able to monitor the progress of their jobs. I am aware of many cases in which the ability to immediately identify a cost problem, often on the same day it began, has made it possible to take immediate corrective action that resolved the problem before it had a chance to impact the project cost.”

Automated Billing Saves Project Managers’ Time

Dynamics SL has also dramatically improved the billing process. Time and subcontractor expenses are recorded as the job progresses and are available to the Flexible Billing module at any time. When we configured the system, we entered overhead allocation and markup rules and formatted several invoice types and attached them to specific customers. This means that project managers can generate a draft invoice at any time, review it, make corrections, and finally print the finished invoice without ever having to re-key a single piece of information. Invoices can easily be formatted to meet specific customer requirements and once a format is created for a particular customer all future invoices can be produced in that format without further effort. “The time that we save in the billing area is especially valuable because it affects our project managers who are one of our most precious resources and always pressed for time,” Burnett said.

The Difference Between Profit and Loss

Overall, Burnett said that the implementation of Dynamics SL has had a major positive impact on the profitability of the firm. “Our administrative cost savings are substantial but they are dwarfed by those that we obtain from having more timely and accurate information, although this metric is more difficult to measure. Margins in the construction business are very tight, so being able to fix problems before they impact the budget can easily mean the difference between profit and loss. With Dynamics SL, we now have confidence that our information systems match up to our experience in the construction business.”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics SL, call **Synergy Business Solutions** at 800-481-8590 or go to www.synergybusiness.com.