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Information Technology

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An Integrated Package

Multiple-application software offers diverse business services

By Debra Wood

Growing construction companies require a sophisticated financial and project management system, and many have turned to eCMS 3.7 from Computer Guidance, which provides real-time reports and access to data through the Internet.

"It allows us to do a host of different things that helps us run our business," says Joseph Patti, controller at EE Cruz, a heavy-construction contractor in Holmdel, N.J., and AGC of New Jersey member that has used eCMS for three years. "It allows us to track job costs and keep track of all our estimates until complete."

EE Cruz uses eCMS to draw from historical data to estimate future jobs. eCMS will create graphs and charts for presentations and reports, and it allows the user to export data to Excel or other software applications.

eCMS includes 28 applications, such as payroll, accounts payable, invoicing and project management. Information is populated from a common database, but all data is password-protected and accessible only to appropriate employees. "It is all one integrated package," Patti says. "It is stable. It does not crash. I do not lose data."

Document-imaging and workflow features expedite invoice approvals without the paper bill ever leaving the accounting department. Accounting scans incoming invoices and attaches them electronically as a PDF file to the related job and sends an e-mail to the appropriate project manager, who can log into the system to approve payment or add a note to the image.

General contractor WIMCO Corp., Washington, N.C., has used the document-imaging feature since 2004. Darlene Moore, vice president of finance at WIMCO, says it has speeded processing of invoices. The company also uses it for time-card entry, tax returns, correspondence, contracts and billing. It also keeps a photo of every employee on file. "If the building burned down, we could restore from images all of the paper documents," Moore says.

AGI General Contractors, Stanton, Calif., recently began using Project Collaborator, eCMS's project management application. The company has relied on Computer Guidance's accounting systems for years.

"It picks up productivity," says Jackie Buck, AGI's vice president of finance. "It makes the process of working together so much easier."

Documents flow automatically between departments, increasing efficiencies. "Since you can manage cost in a more timely manner and communication is shared, accountability for gross profit margins, pending change orders and timely payments come into play," Buck says.

At its annual user group conference, Computer Guidance recently introduced the advanced Beyond Dashboard and Portal, Hosted eCMS, remote field timesheets and GPS asset-management monitoring. WIMCO and AGI General Contractors reviewed the applications and development initiatives before the company unveiled them to the marketplace, says Victoria Satran, director of marketing for Computer Guidance.

Large specialty, civil and general contractors use eCMS. A minimal installation starts at about \$80,000, including hardware and online and in-person training. Computer Guidance also offers a subscription-based Software as a Service platform for customers who want to avoid upfront information technology infrastructure investments.

"It functions well," Moore says. "It takes a lot of stress off our office. It is good having one solution."



Computer Guidance Corp.
15035 N. 75th St.
Scottsdale, Ariz. 85260
888-361-4551
www.computerguidance.com

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