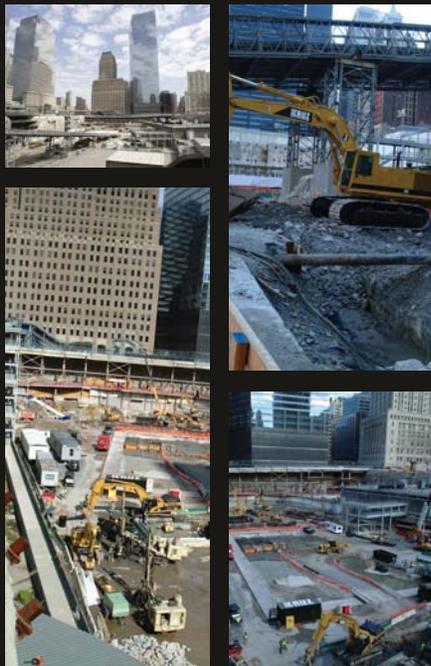# Driving the
Digital
Bridge

EE Cruz
leverages
ERP
technology
to link
office
and field
and build
better
business
outcomes

ee CRUZ CO. INC.
CONTRACTORS | ENGINEERS

N Y/NJ-based EE Cruz is a leading contractor in the heavy highway and civil construction market, delivering utility, highway, transportation, infrastructure, deep foundation, bridge and geotechnical projects. The firm is a 100% Union contractor that self-performs jobs as well as outsources or subcontracts work. We recently sat down with Lisa August, EE Cruz's Accounts Payable Manager/ERP System Administrator, to get a first-hand look at how ERP technology has been a positive force in their business.

Where does technology play an important role in your business?

In today's fast-paced highly competitive construction industry, I don't think it's possible for any business to function effectively without technology. I am a firm believer in full-blown ERP, but at the very least every firm should be exploring some type of management software. If you're not bringing things together, they are likely falling apart.

EE Cruz relies on technology in many ways and across many areas of the company, but the most important role that technology has played in our organization was its ability to open up communications between the field and the office. ERP links onsite personnel with back office management and throughout every department of the firm. The end result is empowered employees and data-rich leaders who can make wiser and faster decisions for more projects with greater success. Our ability to aggregate and interpret data and communicate at light speed drives better business practices across the board and keeps us at the forefront of our market.

EE Cruz has been a long-time satisfied Computer Guidance Customer – can you tell our readers why you decided to upgrade to the latest ERP version?

The system has been a consistent performer for our business and we'd been discussing potential next steps and phases for a while. The final factor was our interest in adopting the security configuration that eCMS v.4.0 offers.

On the surface it may not sound that exciting – let's face it, there are plenty of flashy trends out there – but don't underestimate the benefits it can deliver. The security configuration is both extremely flexible and powerful, and allows organizations to set up users with very specific system and data access points. With v.4.0, EE Cruz can offer more people access to the information that they need, but only that information. And, depending on their assigned status, we determine their ability to input, view, edit and output company information.

Users in the field now have access to the specific subset of project data that their role requires and are restricted from information that is not pertinent or highly confidential. Security can be set up by user level (job position) within the organization as well as per database tables, columns and/or data points. Users can also have temporary access or be organized into certain groups per job or current activity.

At the end of the day, it is this security feature that allows EE Cruz to push its employees further into the daily decision-making process. That means more jobs being done faster, greater profitability and happier customers.

Were there any other features that you considered "must-haves" as part of the upgrade?

Another mission-critical module for EE Cruz was Computer Guidance Corporation's new business intelligence applications. We wanted to push information down to the field and to the users, and v.4.0's intuitive dashboards and reports delivered not just real-time data for faster decision making, but easily digestible information that everyone involved could understand and take action against.

In addition, EE Cruz is a very heavy imaging and workflow user. We were excited to take advantage of the new ECM (enterprise content management) functionality that Computer Guidance released with eCMS v.4.0. The less paper the better for this firm. Digital information is actionable, while paper breeds bogged-down manual processes that inhibit the ability to share and succeed.

You went live on eCMS v.4.0 in May of 2014 – how would you describe the benefits that your organization has gained?

The benefits are numerous, but I think our leadership team would all agree that our ability to leverage Computer Guidance's new security module to bring more users online has been the biggest boost to our business. We need all parties participating at optimum levels, and that only happens when we put people have all the data they need and none of what they don't.

Our second largest gain has come from the power to push information out to our field users without them being required to know all of the

ins and outs of the system. They get "bite-size" chunks of critical data in easily understood dashboards and intuitive reports. All they have to do is refresh, drill down and review information.

Another benefit is what we have been accomplishing with ECM. We are becoming paperless, and enjoying more and more automated workflows. All of our data – field productivity, job cost, job profitability, labor, human resources, equipment, outstanding payables and receivables, change orders, and more – must to be accessible to whoever needs it, when they need it and in a format that they can leverage it. eCMS v.4.0 has made it all possible for EE Cruz.

We heard you recently completed an ECM webinar – can you share some of it with us here today?

A few years ago, we started imaging our documents in order to eliminate file cabinets. But we found that with so much more information directly at our employees' fingertips, we could be more responsive and efficient. Vendor phone calls were handled more quickly. Communications with the field went faster. We started emailing information and sharing data with the touch of a button and got rid of the copy-scan-save-email workflow.

After seeing the amount of time being saved, we looked into other ways to utilize the imaging system. We checked with our auditors to see if the images were acceptable for compliance purposes. They loved the fact that they could pull up images themselves or provide a list that we could fulfill in minutes. With auditing improved, we then began to use the electronic filing process for everything: Employee Files, Certificates of Insurance, Change Orders, Child Support/Probation, Equipment Files, Purchase Orders, Subcontracts, Terminated Employees, Union Reports, Expenses, Payroll, Release Waivers, Certified Payrolls and more.

EE Cruz decided to push forward by automating the A/P invoice process between field and the office with automated approvals, entry, review and routing. No more carrier service, lost documents, delays in approvals and unnecessary expenses. We created custom workflows, filters, approver rules and configurations. None of this would have been possible without

Computer Guidance Corporation's eCMS, and the benefits were so great, we could have stopped at the rollout of Enterprise Content Management and Enterprise Security. But we went on to add Audits, Billing, Account Reconciliation, Vendor Information, Employee Records, Payroll, HR information, Subcontractors, Equipment Files, Purchasing and more to our workflows and imaging processes.

Through it all, we gained many benefits, including an increase in approval turnaround so that vendors get paid in a more timely fashion. We also boosted productivity and freed up work time for employees to take on additional projects and tasks. EE Cruz established a more efficient flow of information and eliminated the gaps so things are not lost in the shuffle. The firm has saved money in travel, postage and storage space. Our invoice entry has increased over the past three years from 300 to 500 invoices per month. I could go on and on about the positive impact we've experienced as a company with eCMS v.4.0.

With your upgrade, you elected cloud implementation and a browser-based ERP – can you describe that experience?

EE Cruz chose the cloud because we had reorganized and change some of our IT infrastructure. We believed it would have been too difficult to maintain the system remotely, so we wanted to leverage the cloud and pass on those responsibilities to the solution provider. Computer Guidance Corporation manages our eCMS system and infrastructure and EE Cruz doesn't worry about it. It has been great to go back to focusing all our resources on our core business and objectives. And, most of our users think eCMS v.4.0 in the cloud seems faster.

In addition, EE Cruz gets seamless access to our ERP because of its browser-based format. Whenever it's needed or desired, our team members can work from home, out in the field or at alternate locations. In those situations, access is as simple as sharing a link. No downloading software and configuring individual stations or computer portals.

What do you recommend to other contractors when it comes to ERP selection and implementation?

The most important thing with any ERP is its ability to provide

data to the users, and to serve up information in a convenient and secure way. You've got to find the solution and the solution provides who can help you achieve that. And, if you can find a vendor who can provide you the ability to customize it to meet your needs and your specific business processes instead of changing the way you do business that's the real win.

That's why we chose Computer Guidance Corporation initially, and why we continue to upgrade and move forward together in a true partnership. Any firm has to have a great relationship with the solution provider and maintain a partnership throughout the implementation and management process.

We would also recommend a construction company does a lot of testing and training before implementing and ERP or any part of it. Start with a small project or job and test the application or new functionality. Get it working and get buy-in from the top down. If the company's management supports the initiative and you have the ability to bring the teams together around the effort, you will likely be very successful.

What are EE Cruz's plans for the future?

We've implemented ERP across our core financials. We set a goal and achieved it. Now, we will target another critical area – business intelligence – and we will capitalize on that investment as well. In the short term, we are also implementing Archival and Human Resources Self Service applications from Computer Guidance. And, we will do much more with Cognos providing dashboards and reports for our organization enterprise wide.

Over the long haul, we want to be entirely paperless and bring on some additional field applications via mobile apps and integrated project management solutions. EE Cruz believes the future of the industry and the success of our organization resides in integrated data accessibility and automated workflows. We look forward to what the future holds... exciting times and technologies.

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