

Decision Time: Almost 100 Years in the Making

T.N. Ward Moves to Integrated ERP Technology to Support Growth, Client Satisfaction

After almost a century of successfully managing large and complex projects, T.N. Ward has maintained its status as one of the nation's leading construction management firms, recognized by the Engineering News-Record and regional and local associations for its accomplishments. T.N. Ward serves the education, healthcare, affordable and commercial housing, industrial and energy, entertainment, hospitality, retail, and sports & recreation market sectors. The company has completed individual projects worth over \$400,000,000 and has built many solid customer relationships along the way.

Serving the Mid-Atlantic Region as well as other locations in the USA with a blend of teamwork, expertise and respect, T.N. Ward satisfies clients' objectives by meeting both budget and schedule requirements, effectively solving problems should they arise, and maintaining the highest quality workmanship often utilizing its own workforce as a true General Contractor.

Recently, we had the good fortune to sit down with T.N. Ward's Vice President of Finance, Mark Smith, who not only handles the company's financial controls and reporting, but also heads Human Resources and Risk Management. He is a member of the firm's IT Committee and in this role Mark is responsible for the introduction of information technology to support corporate initiatives. He spearheaded the selection and implementation of Computer Guidance Corporation's eCMS enterprise resource planning solution to improve T.N. Ward's financial and project management services.

Q What drove your decision to upgrade your legacy accounting software to a fully integrated, enterprise-class ERP solution?

A: T.N. Ward spent significant time and effort selecting our ERP solution as well as planning its implementation. We definitely wanted an integrated solution – one ERP package that would handle both the financial

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side of the house as well as the operations and project management piece.

We were facing significant challenges with our existing technology. We had two separate systems, one for project management and one for accounting, and each system didn't talk to the other. This dilemma resulted in duplicated data entry with associated inaccuracy and inefficiency. Operations staff entered information into one system while the financial team was leveraging an entirely different set of data.

The lack of coordinated information hampered communication and reduced productivity. We needed an all-encompassing ERP package in order to manage our current business more effectively and support our desire for successful growth.

After evaluating solutions across the market, T.N. Ward made the decision to migrate to Computer Guidance Corporation's eCMS enterprise resource planning solution in 2011. Since then, we've been improving a number of business processes, and leveraging applications to automate and standardize operations and financial reporting.

Fast forward four years and I'm thrilled to report that our decision to move to eCMS has proven to be the most appropriate choice we could have made to integrate our field and office operations. Despite the challenges presented by the conversion of any system, the solution has surpassed our expectations. Our strength as a business as well as the satisfaction of our customers attest to the success of eCMS as a capable financial and project control tool.

Q What was T.N. Ward searching for in terms of the new ERP's key features and functions? Why were these pieces so important?

A: From the IT perspective, T.N. Ward needed a scalable and reliable system that

would support current business requirements and future needs. We wanted a software solution that could provide a wealth of applications that are integrated and driven from/by a single database to support the needs of the entire business. The bottom line was a single database with great accessibility and enterprise-level security, and that is what we found with eCMS.

But that would only solve half of our issues. Because our previous systems were separate, administrative staff would enter and re-enter information. Therefore our invoice and payment processing were delayed and trying to validate data accuracy required excessive communications. Budgeting and forecasting was difficult to achieve with accuracy or any sense of timeliness. So, when it was time to look at ERP options through a financial lens, we knew we needed an enterprise-level system that provides fully integrated functionality so data exchange could be seamless and transparent.

Some specific needs that we had were to ensure enterprise-wide reporting that would be customized per project per department or per business area. We also wanted to focus on tightening and enhancing our processes in our payroll and human resources areas, and to provide advanced tools for our financial reporting needs. Dashboards and reports were on our hot list because we wanted to make information visible in our organization in meaningful formats and disseminate it on demand. Once again, Computer Guidance Corporation's eCMS solution fulfilled each of these requirements for T.N. Ward.

Q Obviously, you are very happy with eCMS, but what were some of the key differentiators that set Computer Guidance's ERP solution apart from the competition?

A: We examined a range of solutions suitable for mid- to large-sized organizations like ours and considered the business that T.N. Ward would push through and pull out of the system. eCMS was the solution with the depth and breadth that could keep pace with our demands and fit into our budget. Computer Guidance Corporation's strong and reliable platform provided us with an



integrated system for both Field Management and Project Management components, as well as advanced and dynamic business intelligence capabilities. When overall value was considered, the competitive solutions we saw just didn't come close, and eCMS's job costing and payroll capabilities were well ahead of the curve.

Q Now that you have implemented Computer Guidance Corporation's ERP solution, how would you describe the benefits T.N. Ward has gained?

A: The moment we went live with our new ERP, one of our project managers and one of our accounting team members could each produce a detailed report on the same project and they were both looking at the same data. That was an automated first for us and a big win. We knew that every user would be able to enter and retrieve data when, where and how they needed it.

The project teams in the field did not need to call accounting in order to create, obtain and verify job cost reports. Subcontractor billings were input in a timely manner and information was available detailing how much they were billed and who was paid. Everyone had general access to integrated data, and the appropriate security measures were in place to ensure users only accessed information relevant to them. This was huge.

Change orders were processed timely. Prior to eCMS we would enter information in the project management software and not be able to pay the appropriate parties immediately because accounting input would lag based on a paper approval process. Subcontractors would be upset, owners

would be dissatisfied and overall financial performance would be impacted. Now, our team members can easily access the browser-based eCMS system and quickly navigate between applications and screens, to allow all parties involved to be on the same page.

T.N. Ward can now also track requests for information, change order requests and other project-related documents and information all in one integrated system. We see huge benefits having multiple users accessing the system and making changes at the same time to the same jobs. We've also gained significant productivity and efficiency with the HR application, including the automated management of our benefits and personnel information.

Q What data or information is most vital for your organization? And why?

A: That's a tough question for me personally. I love all the data. I want access to information and I want to analyze it, dissect it, use it, and repurpose it again and again. I love eCMS's data management and reporting capability. There is a broad variety of tools that allow users like me to study data and make informed decisions as quickly as possible. I leverage Cognos for dashboards and reports on a daily basis.

Predicting the future is no easy task, but after we introduced eCMS Cognos, T.N. Ward team members can confidently forecast job cost, payroll and project information. We have the ability to generate real-time reports on demand for owners, management or accounting...or even just for me. Cost to complete, cost at completion, and outstanding accounts payable and accounts receivable are just some of the reports that I have right at

my fingertips. Cognos allows us to start at a high level and drill down to data as needed.

Q How would you describe Computer Guidance Corporation as your ERP partner?

A: We are pleased with Computer Guidance Corporation from both a solutions provider and partner perspective. And, we are looking forward to a long-lasting relationship and what new value-added applications the future holds for us both.

I just recently attended their annual user conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, and I had the pleasure to meet with members of the Computer Guidance Corporation team and some of their customers. The event provided me with a wealth of information and great confidence as to where the organization is headed and how much eCMS can offer a firm like T.N. Ward.

Computer Guidance Corporation customers are very engaging, and network and collaborate well together. Combine that with Computer Guidance Corporation's leadership and staff, and you have a win-win scenario. T.N. Ward is a satisfied customer and we share the same vision, providing users access to real-time data and allowing users to automate business processes for higher productivity to deliver the highest quality product for all of our customers.

