

Employee-Owned, Technology-Driven Construction

Quest Civil Constructors Upgrades Enterprise Resource Planning System to Fuel Expansion

Sponsored Content

Quest Civil Constructors, Inc., is an employee-owned heavy civil contractor serving the western U.S. from its Phoenix-based headquarters. The firm specializes in the construction, rehabilitation, repair and demolition of diverse and complex heavy civil construction projects. By leveraging the entrepreneurial spirit and vested interest of their employees, Quest has accrued a proven track record of success, completing unique and challenging civil construction projects safely and timely.

Recently, we had a chance to have a candid conversation with Layne Birling, Chief Financial Officer, Quest Civil Constructors, about the company's recent move to enterprise resource planning (ERP) and its widespread impact on their organization as a whole. Here's what he had to say about their expectations and experience.

What business changes and/or process requirements motivated Quest to embrace enterprise resource planning technology?

A: The biggest influence in our decision to purchase ERP technology has been our growth and expansion. Our projects have grown in scope and complexity, have moved further away from our office in Phoenix, which results in working across multiple time zones with expanded hours of operations and various geographic conditions.

Our project management teams and key decision-makers needed to have real-time visibility into our company's performance not only at a high level, but also have the ability to drill down into their specific areas of responsibility. There was no question that our operations teams would require more efficient, timely and stable access to all of our systems. To move forward successfully, Quest would have to share information to the field and in the office, seamlessly, dynamically and in real time.

An investment in ERP technology enables Quest to not only share information throughout the organization, but also to eliminate many manual processes. This will allow us to continue to grow and expand in an efficient and

cost-effective manner, which increases the ROI of our software purchase.

What tipped the scales in favor of Computer Guidance Corporation eCMS as your ERP of choice?

A: Quest prides itself on being a relationship-based contractor and we view the relationships that we have with all our service providers as partnerships; they are an extension of our team. We recognized that Computer Guidance Corporation operates under this same principle. CGC partners with their clients to bring information technology solutions that help improve their clients' business. In addition, CGC does one thing very well...CGC delivers construction-specific ERP systems to commercial contractors.

After reviewing the application set, we were pleased with the feature-rich functionality, business intelligence offerings and the tight integration that exists among data, applications and process flows. We were also pleased to see CGC's leadership come to life in their cloud solutions and the forward-looking strategies they have in managed hosted services.

Quest's old system couldn't keep pace, so what does eCMS bring to the table to help you get the job done better and faster than before?

A: Quest had several manually intensive processes and a growing number of tasks that needed to be conducted outside of our old ERP, which resulted in inefficiencies and opened the door to the possibility of errors. First and foremost, by moving to eCMS, we were able to replace an extensive MS Excel workbook that functioned as our monthly project forecasting and reporting tool.

Before eCMS, our project leaders spent a significant amount of time transferring data from cost reports to the workbook and then manually calculated their project forecast. Now, inside of our new Computer Guidance Corporation ERP, our project leaders are able to utilize the forecasting feature and job cost inquiry to access real-time revenue and cost information to more efficiently



produce project forecasts without the need to rekey data elements.

Another tremendous benefit over our old system, is that Quest is now able to use the eCMS enterprise content management (ECM) application suite to image, route and process vendor invoices in a timely manner. While we previously had an electronic imaging and routing invoice system, it was not part of our ERP. What separates ECM is that it is fully integrated into eCMS, which allows our users to be able to drill down and see the image at any time. Then, they can approve the documents online and in real time, saving a significant amount of unnecessary communication and eliminating costly delays.

Why did Quest select cloud ERP, hosted and managed services?

A: We have always utilized server-based accounting and project management software, but this was our first exposure as an organization with an IBM platform, and we wanted to leave the hardware support to the experts at Computer Guidance Corporation. In addition, we felt it was important to remove our staff and IT services team members from the ERP software support workflow. With CGC handling backups, downloads and installations of software, these activities happen more timely and with no interruption to our staff. In the end, this decision has only increased the ROI of our technology investment.

Did that decision dove-tail into your selection of CGC's browser-based ERP?

A: Our users, especially our operations personnel, really appreciate the ability to access eCMS from any computer at any time, and this browser-based approach was a key differentiator for CGC when we were looking at options for our



new ERP. With our projects extending further away from our Phoenix headquarters, as well as the evolution of the workplace in general, being able to connect to the ERP from the office, project site, hotel or home without having to access a VPN or terminal server has simplified access as well as created efficiency for the end user. Simply put there are no barriers to system access.

What have been Quest's most significant accomplishments since implementing eCMS?

A: The list is expanding daily and by no means exhaustive, but to date, we have implemented the

core accounting and job cost applications as well as equipment accounting and maintenance. We have developed a handful of Cognos reports, including our key weekly labor and equipment production report, which is paramount for our project teams in order to manage production. We have Human Resources Self Service (HRSS) implemented, which provides employees access to their pay history and has eliminated sending direct deposit notifications, streamlining our human resources and payroll activities. Lastly, we have implemented Mobile eCMS payroll for one of our projects and have an initiative to roll Mobile eCMS out to all projects by the end of 2016.

Can you quantify the benefits that Quest has seen from eCMS v.4.0?

A: As I mentioned earlier, the ability to replace several manual processes has created some significant efficiencies for Quest. In my estimation, the ability for us to replace our manual forecasting process within eCMS alone has resulted in a positive return on investment for us. Every additional efficiency we have or will gain just increases the value of that ROI.

In addition to forecasting other areas where we have benefited include integrated project management and control, integrated and automated equipment maintenance and work order tracking, and human resources. Quest eliminated several MS Excel and MS Word documents, which today have become just like paper files—out of date and inaccurate the moment you save and send. There is just no way to operate an industry leading construction business on anything other than the appropriate tools for the job—just like out in the field—labor, equipment and timely accurate information is everything. For Quest, that means a partnership with Computer Guidance Corporation.

Where will Quest be in the next five years and how will technology play a part in that journey?

A: We have a Vision 20/20 for Quest, and technology will certainly function as a major component of our future plans. We fully expect to add a large number of construction and business professionals as well as craft workers to our growing team of employee owners. Reaching this milestone won't be without its challenges, but that is why we set such a lofty goal. The challenges make the reward that much sweeter and in the end that all results in fun!

As we continue to grow, Quest will leverage technology to streamline its processes and bring more efficiency to our business. For example, we expect to be collecting data on mobile devices for both labor and equipment to eliminate timesheets. We will also strive to be fully paperless within the next two years by utilizing our eCMS ERP and ECM product suite to eliminate all paper filing systems by the end of 2017.

