WIMCO Corporation Wins Big Thanks To Relentless "We Can Do Anything" Attitude

Focused, Relationships and Family First Approach Fuels Growth, Quality Construction and Service Excellence

Recently, we had the opportunity to sit down with Darlene Moore, Executive Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer of WIMCO Corporation, a licensed commercial general contractor that has been based in Washington, North Carolina since 1950. The business, which changed its name from Washington Iron and Metal Company in 1972, has been owned by the Rawls family since its inception, and currently operates in 11 states, including North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

WIMCO Corp specializes in commercial building across a variety of industries, including schools and universities, medical facilities, office buildings, drug stores, grocery stores, movie theaters, retail stores, and shopping centers. Building for brand names and others has WIMCO Corp growing at a rate of 48% over the past 3 years.

Q: Your business undoubtedly continues to change with the times, but what do you believe has contributed to WIMCO Corp's significant growth recently?

A: During the recession of 2009, we knew we needed to make decisive changes to our business model to move forward as an industry leader. While our competitors were down-sizing in an attempt to stay afloat, WIMCO Corp made large investments in technology and kept all of our existing positions intact, even adding new team members when experienced professionals came available.

WIMCO Corp used the "downtime" of the recession to train our operations and accounting employees so everyone would be ready for the upswing when the economy bounced back. At the same time, we refined our focus on our core business by outsourcing our network support requirements and retiring outdated equipment to make way for today's technology and the benefits of speed and access that come with it.

We transitioned to MS Office 365 and added applications like Abbyy PDF Transformer, Ken Rename and Smartbid.net, and we integrated these with Computer Guidance's eCMS (Enterprise Resource Planning) ERP for additional process improvements. With these tools we were more efficient, from planning and pre-qualification to contracting and construction. Leading the charge was a "beefed up" pre-construction department with revitalized marketing and stronger client emphasis.

Q: How have business processes changed across your organization during this time period?

A: One specific example occurred in conjunction with WIMCO being selected by one of its nationally known clients to be their "go-to" general contractor for their Wellness Experience Private Health Room (WEPHR) program. In the first year, we completed 62 WEPHR projects, each with 10-12 subcontractors. It was a huge step forward for our firm, but at the same time, had a huge impact on our project management and administrative resources, as well as our insurance, tracking and imaging processes.

So, prior to the rollout of the program in year two, we met with our insurance carrier and legal counsel and prepared a multi-project work order for subs working the same scope on multiple projects. In doing so, one blanket insurance certificate could cover each sub on all projects. Previously, a sub awarded 75 projects would get 75 subcontracts or 75 work orders under a master subcontract agreement. But now after creating a multi-project job number, our PM could write one work order with one contract item # for each of the 75 projects, each showing the subcontract amount, project # and location, scope of work name, and code.

Then, the PM could generate an eFORM's work-order template from our ERP system and email one document to the subcontractor. Once executed, an admin could copy the multi-project work order subcontract record into individual projects, adding the correct coding, description of work, and contract value to each job. This freed up the PM's time to focus on more critical tasks and is a great example of how WIMCO seeks innovation to drive productivity in all areas.

Q: What strategies do you believe will help WIMCO Corp continue this upward momentum?

A: We will continue to invest in our people and processes, bringing in new talent and technology where appropriate. WIMCO is a family-owned and family-focused company, and a big believer that relationships are the cornerstone of any good business. We consistently network with other companies and attend conferences and seminars to keep up with trends. We have also become members of a peer group with eight other non-competitive general contractors who meet semi-annually to discuss financial and operational matters. With our customers, transparency and fairness have driven repeat business and referrals, and our "we can do anything" attitude has provided us a rock-solid foundation for over a half a century.

Q: Speaking of technology, is it true that you have been a Computer Guidance Corporation ERP customer since the early 1990s?

A: Yes that's true. Back then, we were one of their first customers and today they are a big part of our extended family. Computer Guidance Corporation's enterprise resource planning technology has been quietly but powerfully supporting every project we undertake. And, there is no stopping us now.

Q: Why is partnering with your solution provider so important in today's world?

A: WIMCO's approach to business is from its very core a family and team player business. It's all about relationships. Having partners, contractors and employees that care about your company is directly reflected in the care that you, in turn, can provide your customers. The key component that sets Computer Guidance Corporation apart from the rest is that their support team knows every one of us by name, and when you need something, they are there. Just like WIMCO, Computer Guidance is constantly working on enhancements, keeping up with the trends, and always trying to improve their product in a way that improves their customers' businesses.

Q: What is your assessment of Computer Guidance Corporation since its acquisition by JDM Technology Group?

A: I see nothing but positive signs, and having access to the wealth of great products offered by the parent company is great for Computer Guidance Corporation and its customers. Their staff seems to be happy with the changes and at least equally, if not even more motivated.

Q: What drove your decision to upgrade to eCMS v.4.0?

A: The power of eCMS v.4.0 was presented to WIMCO a couple years ago and we had to have it. Its new imaging feature would allow us to take advantage of the subcontract progress billing coding table. And, that's just the tip of the iceberg. WIMCO currently leverages the system's accounts payable, accounts receivable, business intelligence, enterprise content management, general ledger, human resources, inquiry, integration, job costing, project collaborator, payroll, purchasing, time and material billing, and user menu applications.

Q: Which applications or business processes make the most impact on your organization?

A: The obvious choices are accounts payable, payroll and job costing, because of their significant reach throughout our organization. However, the Timberline Interface of the Integration Suite deserves special mention. In particular, we use the Project Collaborator for everything project related, including financial processes and all communications. The Letters Module and Design Templates make repetitious tasks simple and easy, including owner billing, project forecasting and budget transfers.

Q: Why did WIMCO Corp choose a cloud implementation?

A: WIMCO's existing i515 System was in need of being replaced, and as I work toward transitioning out of the company to retire, I realized that there were no other staff members trained on how to maintain an IBM system and it would be very difficult to find someone else. I had the opportunity to tour Computer Guidance Corporation's IO Data Center a few years ago during their Customer Focus user conference, and was quite impressed. And, when you factor in their disaster recovery service and account management, I knew the cloud was an ideal solution.

Q: Why does WIMCO Corp believe a browser-based ERP is the way to go?

A: With a browser-based approach, you have access to the ERP system through multiple devices without having to install and configure client access software on each of them. It makes things more convenient on a day-to-day basis, but especially advantageous when there's a system upgrade to be done because you don't have to upgrade the clients. We simply connect to the system through the web browser and we are running.

Q: What are your thoughts about mobile and self-service applications for construction companies?

A: Personally, I love the idea of both. We are a mobile nation and our industry has always been that way, so having access to the ERP system quickly and painlessly is a true motivator and morale builder for all WIMCO employees. We really want all of our team to be more efficient, so the more we can have personnel complete tasks for themselves, the more we will ultimately free-up resources which will result in improved productivity. We just signed up for HRSS today to support these initiatives across the organization.

Q: Do you integrate third-party applications with eCMS? Which products and why?

A: Computer Guidance Corporation is better than anyone in the industry at what it does. They develop best-in-class construction accounting and project management software. However, there are so many peripheral products utilized by construction companies that we also rely on third-party vendors to perfect. The nice thing is that they integrate seamlessly with eCMS, so WIMCO Corp gets the best of both worlds. It's that type of open architecture that allows Computer Guidance customers to leverage those applications while still using eCMS for all of its mission-critical features.

At WIMCO Corp, we use Sage Timberline Estimating software and it is fully integrated with eCMS. We purchased the interface back in 1999 and the integration suite paid for itself the first time we used it. Before the integration, the estimator would estimate the project, and once it was awarded, he would pass a printout of the estimate to the PM. Then, the PM would have to handwrite the codes for the entire project onto blank budget forms – oftentimes, using different codes for the same scope from previous projects and combining parts of the estimate. The PM would give the completed budget to accounting who would manually enter each code and have to deal with the errors that come along with that. At the end of the day, WIMCO had three people keying or handling the same data before a budget would be generated and the PM could start writing subcontracts.

Since the integration, we assign a job number in eCMS as soon as we are awarded a job and the estimator generates the Timberline .jce file for automatic transfer to eCMS. In less than 5 minutes, we have a Job Cost Budget complete with no misspelled words, no transposed numbers, the same code for all scopes used consistently for every project, one time entry and no duplicate keying.

In addition to Timberline, Comdata is the newest third-party product that we are in the process of implementing. Being able to code and add receipts for credit card charges on a mobile application is a quick and easy way for our employees to code expenses. Being able to download those expenses into A/P Batch will improve productivity for our A/P department tremendously. We've already eliminated four major charge cards and replaced them with one MasterCard.

Q: How is WIMCO Corp using ECM (imaging and workflow) today and what are your future plans?

A: Currently, we utilize Computer Guidance's ECM application suite for accounts payable to route invoices for approvals using the coding tables for both regular invoices and subcontract billings, as well as to complete subcontract document association to subcontract agreements. On the A/R side, we use ECM for our cash receipts journal for images of checks and billings, along with owner contract documents associated to contract items. We also use the module for importing and associating general ledger entry records and images.

WIMCO human resources department uses ECM for all employee documents, from tax forms and training documents to applications, photos and certifications. In addition, ECM supports employee timecard activity and PO execution, as well as records associated with submittals, required documents, drawing logs, change order requests, sub amendments/RFPs, letters, meeting minutes, RFIs, punch-lists, daily reports, project closeouts and transmittals.

Q: Can you comment about the importance and accessibility of data, as well as what you are doing today, where you are going next and what you are planning to accomplish with it in the future?

A: Besides the passion of our people, data is one of the most important assets of WIMCO Corp. We couldn't function without real-time lookup and eCMS inquiry capabilities makes this process both easy and efficient. We also use the business intelligence application everyday across our organization. The need to access our data in a format that provides exactly what is needed for the occasion goes a long way in making proactive decisions as quickly as possible. Next up for WIMCO Corp is CGC's Interactive Data Inquiry and Cognos applications, and we are looking forward to the advantages they will undoubtedly provide our business. And, we expect Computer Guidance Corporation to continue developing and enhancing its core product, which will provide us with faster and more far reaching access to data critical to accounting and project management.

Q: What benefits have you gained with eCMS?

A: We're able to access eCMS through VPN or SSL portal from anywhere at any time. This is huge for our field supervisors, who don't have to go through the extra step of logging into VPN now that email is also in the cloud. Thanks to eCMS, we have been awarded repeat business because the documents WIMCO generates are professional, concise, and easy to understand, and architects and owners love them. Now, with eCMS v.4.0, we no longer have to worry about system maintenance, upgrades or backups, since Computer Guidance Corporation handles all of it for us.

Q: What can you share with other contractors about successful ERP implementations or upgrades?

A: It's not luck that's put WIMCO in the position we are in. There's a process and a partnership at the foundation of our ERP success. I recommend that contractors moving to ERP or moving to a new platform or version have a test environment so they can familiarize themselves with the changes to come. They need to get their staff comfortable by running complete processes through multiple applications to make sure the transactions update properly and test the system extensively. Lastly, they need to prepare for the go-live date by doing all of the work prior to the implementation and then clearly document any security or application setup.

Q: What are your plans with technology for your WIMCO Corp over the next 5 years?

A: We will continue to look at new business intelligence tools to explore ways for us to serve up data and present it in different ways to those who need it precisely when they need it. Specifically, from Computer Guidance Corporation we will look at HRSS, Report Archival, PC2 and Comdata Integration CEMS (Comdata Expense Management System). WIMCO will continue to automate our processes and become even more paperless.

We will also strive to increase our productivity by implementing new productivity tools. Our mission is to be free to focus on construction and not business processes. Most of all, we look forward to continuing the relationship that has developed with everyone at Computer Guidance Corporation over the years and partnering to improve both of our businesses through a commitment to excellence for our customers.

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