

IBM and Computer Guidance streamline WIMCO operations

IT enhancements cement relationship with construction company

Overview

■ Challenge

Integrate all IT operations at WIMCO so that the construction company could save money by reducing the time and errors associated with multiple manual entries of the same information into different data bases

■ Solution

Build an electronic bridge that ties together all the company's data bases using IBM @server® iSeries™ and xSeries®, IBM WebSphere® Application Server Express 5.1.1® software and Computer Guidance Construction Management Systems eCMS

■ Key Benefits

- Greater efficiency in each step of estimating, bidding and completing projects development by 30 percent.
- Significant time savings such as reducing work with estimator documents from two days to three seconds and cutting bank statement reconciliations from as much as four hours to 30 seconds
- Improved relationship with subcontractors and vendors



Winning a construction bid is often a tough challenge, but making money on the project is even tougher. The difference between profit and loss lies in properly managing the project. With that in mind, companies that turn winning bids into profitable deals increasingly rely on information technology to efficiently handle the countless details involved in construction work.

Consider the case of WIMCO, an award-winning general contractor serving five south-eastern states from its headquarters in Washington, North Carolina. WIMCO's wise use of IT helped the company

“We now enter a job number, press the ‘generate’ button and in three seconds we’ve created an entire project budget.”

Darlene Moore,
Accounting Manager,
WIMCO

Solution from IBM and Computer Guidance improves construction company's efficiency in estimating, bidding and completing projects

Benefits

Benefits provided by IBM and Computer Guidance

- High-functionality solutions designed specifically for SMB markets
- Built electronic bridge for all of customer's databases

Benefits realized by WIMCO

- Reduced work with estimator documents from two days to three seconds
- Trimmed statement reconciliations from four hours to 30 seconds
- Enhanced relationships with subcontractors and vendors

transform itself from a small scrap metal business into an operation whose annual revenues average \$30 to \$40 million-plus. Among its more than 1,300 projects have been schools, courthouses, restaurants, condominiums, industrial buildings, supermarkets, retail stores and multifamily dwellings.

WIMCO's most recent IT enhancements have streamlined every step in the construction project cycle — from estimating and bidding to billing and collecting. For more than a quarter of a century, IBM offerings have been at the heart of WIMCO's IT operations. And building on that solid IBM base at WIMCO in recent years has been innovative software from Computer Guidance Corp.

Based in Scottsdale, Arizona, Computer Guidance is a leader in software solutions for construction companies, and it has had a close relationship with IBM for more than 20 years ago. Computer Guidance serves hundreds of clients in the United States and Canada with sophisticated software that integrates a wide variety of applications. Its Construction Management System solution includes a suite of 30 applications allowing a customer to share data both internally and with subcontractors and suppliers.

WIMCO: Long-term IBM customer

One person who can describe how IBM and Computer Guidance help WIMCO is Darlene Moore, its accounting manager. She's worked for the company since 1977 and remembers the then-new IBM System/32 at WIMCO.

"We kept migrating the software and converting the data files as we moved up sequentially to the System/34®, System/36®, AS/400® and now an IBM @server iSeries Model 800 as well as three IBM @server xSeries, one of which is running Computer Guidance's Construction Management System eCMS using IBM WebSphere Application Server Express 5.1.1," she said.

IBM WebSphere Application Server Express 5.1.1 provides cost-effective solutions that let mid-sized companies like WIMCO deliver e-business on demand to customers, partners

"A fair amount of our success is directly attributable to our relationship with IBM."

John Safin,
Marketing Director,
Computer Guidance

and employees. This sophisticated software grows as a business grows.

Over the years, WIMCO's business efficiency significantly improved because of its IT operations. But all the elements weren't tied together. As a result, project managers, people in finance and those responsible for estimating jobs all entered the same data manually into separate systems.

"Believe me, it was slow," Moore said. "It took a couple of people — working at least one day and sometimes two days — to go through the estimator documents ranging from 100 to 500 line items. To create the project budget for a new job, the project managers would do their thing on their own system and pass a printout of it to the folks in accounting who had to re-key every line item into the accounting software, generate a report and then proof it."

WIMCO called in Computer Guidance "to deliver interface software that would link all our data bases, so we could take information from our estimating software and turn it into a project budget when we were awarded a bid," Moore said.

The new software provided quick benefits.

"We now enter a job number, press the 'generate' button and in three seconds we've created an entire project budget. Three seconds, with no typos and no errors. And the accounting and project managers don't have to touch anything," Moore noted.

What's more, she said, just minutes after WIMCO has been awarded a contract, the new budget is downloaded into Computer Guidance's Project Administrator software that automatically creates schedule plans. "Subcontractors can be notified that they have a job with us almost immediately, because the project managers are able to start writing subcontract agreements right away," Moore explained.

The enhanced Imaging and Workflow system within eCMS routes invoices electronically around the company for approvals and then archives them for future reference.

Even WIMCO's bank is now tied into the system. As a result, monthly statement reconciliations take 30 seconds, rather than three or four hours. In addition, Computer Guidance provided another program interface called Positive Pay or POSPAY, which allows WIMCO to

Key IBM Components of the Computer Guidance Solution for WIMCO

Software

■ IBM

IBM WebSphere Application
Server Express 5.1.1

■ Computer Guidance

Computer Guidance
Construction Management
System eCMS

Hardware

IBM @server iSeries
IBM @server xSeries
IBM 4224® printers

electronically transmit cash disbursement files to the bank. The bank uses those files for security screening and fraud prevention to protect WIMCO. Computer Guidance's Construction Management System and Project Administrator were key to integrating everything at WIMCO into an automated workflow process. In effect, Computer Guidance built an electronic bridge to connect WIMCO's various databases.

Computer Guidance started with — and stayed with — IBM

John Safin, Computer Guidance's marketing director, said when his firm was founded in 1981, company officials were determined to work closely with a well-known, trustworthy vendor. He said, "IBM was the obvious choice, and we've stayed with it ever since — first with the AS/400® and then the IBM @server iSeries and xSeries. We've embraced the WebSphere brand because it offers so much to our customers."

For example, WebSphere Application Server Express Version 5.1.1, which is part of the WIMCO solution, is a tightly integrated development tool and application server that provides an affordable entry point to e business for companies creating dynamic Web sites. It supports the latest specifications for JavaServer Pages, Java™ Servlets and Web

services and delivers easier Web Site design, enhanced security, and improved developer and business productivity.

Safin emphasized the partnership with IBM. "A fair amount of our success is directly attributable to our relationship with IBM. And it's not only IBM hardware and software, but also the IBM people we deal with. They're both knowledgeable and helpful."

Safin noted that Computer Guidance has been a Premier IBM Business Partner for many years and participates in the IBM ISV Advantage Initiative.

WIMCO's continued success depends on IT advances

As for WIMCO's future, Moore said she annually attends Computer Guidance's customer conference so she and her company can keep up with the latest software for the construction industry. "You've got a choice," she said. "If you don't get on board, you're left behind."

In reality, for WIMCO there's little choice, because its continued prosperity is based in part on a solid, up-to-date IT system that helps its people win bids and then go on to complete profitable projects.

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For more information about ISV resources from IBM PartnerWorld, visit: ibm.com/partnerworld/isv

For more information about WIMCO, Visit: www.wimcocorp.com/

For more information about Computer Guidance, Visit: www.computer-guidance.com/



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