

# BUILDING SUCCESS



The David L. Lawrence Convention Center Project

## featured

- Lighthouse Electric
- Foundation Software

## Lighthouse Electric Powers Up a Competitive Advantage!

Lighthouse Electric was founded in 1984 by Anthony "Tony" Mikec and his three sons, Todd, Mark, and Neil. Their first job came from one of Tony's neighbors whose church needed new parking lot lighting. Equipped with only hand tools and a pickup truck, Neil, Tony's middle son, began to dig the trenches and lay the pipe. When it came time to set the poles, there was no boom truck to lift them into place. Tony recalled seeing a sign crew installing a new sign at a gas station just down the street from the church, so he paid them a visit and made an offer they couldn't refuse. With their help, the job came to a swift and profitable conclusion. That was the humble beginning of Tony's award-winning company.

Lighthouse Electric has come a long way from its early times, now supplied with all the right people and heavy equipment. However, as in days past, the challenges to be faced are constant. Chief Information Officer at Lighthouse Electric, Ron Felix, summarizes his views on today's construction market. "The face of construction has changed. With a sluggish economy and sharpened competition, it's no longer sufficient to work harder. Every element of the company must work smarter. New demands necessitate improvements on work flow processes, and post-project reporting and

analysis must drive further improvements. It is essential for us to understand and control every job's costs to the last cent."

To remain competitive, Lighthouse Electric needed to have information readily available to make better management decisions. The first order of business was to make certain the accounting software was flexible and used open architecture. Their previous software did not meet these criteria, and it was technologically outdated.

### THE CHALLENGE

After an extensive search, FOUNDATION® for Windows® was selected. "FOUNDATION had many advantages over the other systems we researched. The areas most critical for us included flexibility in work flow, powerful reporting capabilities and customizable data entry. No other system even came close to FOUNDATION in these three categories."

Since FOUNDATION runs on Microsoft® SQL Server, Lighthouse was ensured that the technology could be customized to meet the nuances of their work flow. Every bit of data entered is date-sensitive, and the open database allows data collection through familiar interfaces like Microsoft Excel and Access.

## CUSTOMER



## CORPORATE PROFILE

Lighthouse Electric  
Canonsburg, PA  
Commercial, Residential,  
Industrial  
Employees: 300  
Annual Revenue: \$40 Million

## SYSTEM PROFILE

### Foundation Software Modules in Operation

- Job Costing
- Payroll
- General Ledger
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- DataGenie Designers
- Document Control

## BENEFITS

- Flexibility in work flow
- Customized reporting that enabled massive improvements in change order processing and tracking
- Modifiable data entry screens that allow the creation of custom fields
- Increased business volume – nearly 60% attributed to improved information and technology

"As we looked at areas to improve, we determined that a better system for processing and tracking change orders could increase profitability. Because FOUNDATION allowed us to create custom fields on change orders, we could track important data. We identified key information such as the estimator, source of change, target completion date and percent complete for each change order and were able to create custom fields for tracking it," Felix said.

### THE SOLUTION

Lighthouse scheduled the conversion for year-end to minimize data entry and set aside two months to load data, test entries and run parallel. The transition went smoothly, which they attribute to planning, real-time support and dedicated personnel.

Lighthouse, like many labor-intensive contractors, knew they had to gain control of two key elements: labor and change orders. They also knew FOUNDATION for Windows, with its robust job costing functions, would enable them to record and report project progress. Knowing that FOUNDATION would keep the business processes going, Lighthouse was able to concentrate on developing analysis specific to their business.

From this research and design came two Constructech Vision Awards. The first, in 2003, dealt with change order life cycle and the ability to monitor progress from request for information to final approval. In 2005, Lighthouse was awarded yet another Vision Award for Pro-Active Construction Management, or PAC-Man, a methodology to project labor four weeks ahead to minimize overtime and employer taxes while generating benefits from a stable workforce.

"Lighthouse continues to make improvements to its information structure and processes," Felix added.



**"FOUNDATION for Windows has proven to be the stable, flexible, open architecture software we needed. We count on it to be there every day so we can concentrate on business issues."**