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A Utility Contractor Works Smarter, Not Larger

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"We try to think of ourselves on the leading edge of technology." Jeff is the CFO at Teal Construction, a Delaware utility contractor about to celebrate 50 years in business. "And we try to utilize that. It's what differentiates us. It makes us more productive." So why did a thriving Teal Construction switch from a major ERP system to a smaller job cost accounting package?

"The system was way too expensive and elaborate for what we do," Jeff remembers. Teal Construction does tens of millions in revenue, plus prevailing wage payroll from state and municipal contracts, so small business software and spreadsheets weren't going to cut it either. Still, Jeff estimates, they weren't using more than 5% of what their software could do, and it wasn't helping them leverage their other technology, like HeavyBid and HeavyJob.

It just wasn't a good fit. And despite its innumerable features and broad range of capabilities, it was also using out-of-date technology, which the vendor was slow to update. "The last straw," Jeff laughs, "was me getting hired."

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"I Was Definitely Hesitant"

Shortly after he started at Teal Construction, Jeff launched into a search for something that would work better for their business and interface with their other construction management applications. He even spoke with other CFOs in the area to get their recommendations. "Foundation was the most user-friendly and cost-effective software for what we were doing," he explains.

The first test, however, would be just getting up and running. Companies often transition accounting software on January 1, but the cumbersome year-end process on their old one already had Teal Construction's staff maxed out. With all they had to run manually just to close out the year on the old system, there was no way they could take on an implementation too.

Instead, Teal Construction opted to switch over in July, while their season was in full swing. "I was definitely hesitant. It's risky any time you do that in the middle of the year." A trainer from Foundation flew to their offices in Delaware, however, to walk them through the process. "He was instrumental. We barely missed a beat. It was definitely a process, but I don't think it could have been any smoother. He taught me more about accounting software than I ever knew."

"It was early on we realized we definitely made the right decision," Jeff recalls. "Foundation is so user-friendly, any hesitation we had was gone in the first week or two after we converted."

"There's Little Things . . . They're a Big Deal to Us"

Of course the ultimate test of anything in construction is time. Almost 10 years later, there's no hesitation for Jeff in recommending Foundation. Part of that is that it's helped them better realize the value they place on technology. "The interface with mobile timecard apps is huge," he explains. "We went from paper timesheets to having our foremen submit time on tablets. I'm certain that's saving us five-figures-plus a year."

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Jeff also enjoys greater job cost control than they were seeing with their big ERP system. "The fact you can go very easily into a job at any point and see how it's performing is a world of difference." He looks forward to really sitting down and playing with the popular DataGenie™ report designer one day, but, he cheerily admits for now, with all of the system's excellent preloaded job cost reports, "I just haven't needed it."

Yet Jeff insists it's more than this — it's smaller. "For example, our workers' comp auditor used to come in, and we'd have to give him a bunch of paper reports, and he'd perform his audit on-site. Now, I simply run the reports, download the files and send them off. There's no more visit involved. Now it's just an electronic review. It saves time for him, and it saves time for me."

"Our payroll," he continues, "also went from a very manual process to more of a review function. Or with our depreciation, now that we can have it set up by equipment item, I just email that to our shop foreman, and he adds it into his budget. If we didn't have that, we would have to have some other system. There's little things like that," Jeff says, "they're a big deal to us." That means they're a big deal to Foundation too.