



J.F. Ahern's Accounts Payable department cuts costs and hours, gains efficiency with eCMS Imaging and Workflow



Wisconsin, Minnesota,
Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska,
Illinois, Missouri



The Customer

Headquarters: Fond du Lac, WI

- 1,000 Employees
- 1,400 W-2's
- Annual Revenues ('06) \$162M
- 68,000 invoices per year
- 127 years in business

Application: eCMS – 56 users

- General Ledger
- Job Cost
- Payroll
- Accounts Payable
- Purchasing
- Accounts Receivable/Billing
- Equipment Accounting
- Business Objects
- eForms
- Imaging and Workflow

Environment

- eCMS
- IBM iSeries
- DB2
- Websphere

“The powerful imaging and workflow component of eCMS is a no-charge item and requires no integration.”

– Michelle Colyer
Controller

The Company

Founded in 1880 by David Ahern and his son John, J. F. Ahern Co. was originally started as D. Ahern & Son in downtown Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. As a small plumbing business, it primarily focused on sanitary plumbing, steam, and hot water heating servicing the residential and light commercial markets. By the early 1900's, John's sons Tom and John E. (Don) began to take an active role with the company.

By 1921, the company was incorporated and renamed J. F. Ahern Co. at which point, John F. and his sons, began to target commercial, institutional, and industrial work throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest. In 1983, the company sold its residential business allowing it to focus on large commercial, industrial, manufacturing and municipal projects.

Today, J.F. Ahern Co. is one of the leading mechanical and fire protection contractors in the United States with over 1,000 employees and sales of \$162 million in 2006 (ranked 76 on ENR600). Strong growth is projected for 2007 with revenues projected at \$215 million. The company has 10 offices throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri. At any given point, JF Ahern Co. is working on 500-600 major active jobs (over \$500,000) located throughout the country.

The Challenge

Since 1992, JF Ahern Co. has been using Computer Guidance and upgraded to Computer Guidance's eCMS solution in 2005. Today they have over 200 people using eCMS throughout their 10 offices with a staff of 17 in accounting.

Michelle Colyar, the Controller for J. F. Ahern Co. felt that the biggest challenge

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faced by the company was the amount of time and related effort it was taking to process accounts payable invoices. Although Michelle thought that an imaging and workflow solution would help solve this problem, most of the solutions that she reviewed were prohibitively expensive (some up to \$250,000) and could not offer a compelling return on investment.

With the upgrade to eCMS, the decision became very easy, since the imaging and workflow component of eCMS was a no charge item and required no integration.

With the existing paper process consisting of manually processing over 68,000 invoices a year, each invoice needed to be copied and mailed to the project manager while the original was filed in accounts payable. In addition, when a call came into Accounts Payable from a project manager, subcontractor or vendor, Michelle's staff needed in many cases to pull the invoice from the accounts payable file or from storage in another building and then copy or fax it to the requestor.

Along with the need to automate the invoice process, Michelle also thought that imaging and workflow would also help streamline the processes associated with accounts receivable checks as well as all job files.

The Solution

Using eCMS, which has a full range of imaging, document management and workflow capabilities, Michelle first looked to streamline the existing paper intensive invoice processes. The existing manual steps typically consisted of processing and approving approximately 5,000 – 6,000 invoices each month. Using eCMS, invoices were now being scanned into the eCMS system using a Canon™ multifunction copier.

Initially Michelle wanted to simplify the procedures associated with requesting

Aurora Health Care



invoices from Accounts Payable. After implementing the imaging component of eCMS, project managers could now retrieve their documents directly from the system without calling accounts payable. Also, if requests did come into Accounts Payable, the staff could retrieve the invoice from eCMS at their desktop and either email or fax it directly from the system. Michelle estimates she is saving one half of a FTE in Accounts Payable with the implementation of imaging. As an added benefit, she no longer has to pull invoices for the auditors each year saving an additional 40-50 hours.

Anyone, including project managers, can now access this information from anywhere as long as they had access to a browser and the appropriate security to access eCMS. Furthermore invoices are seamlessly tied to detailed transactions allowing users to drill down through job cost and pull up the associated invoice.

Today Michelle is in the process of rolling out the workflow component of eCMS associated with the processing and approving of accounts payable invoices. Once in the system, the documents can now be electronically routed to project managers for approval and then routed back to accounts payable for payment. There was no longer a need for copying, mailing, filing, and faxing paper documents in Accounts Payable. In addition, if invoices are not being approved timely, automatic reminder notices can be sent to the approver as well as escalation notices to their manager.

After the invoices are electronically routed back to Accounts Payable for processing and payment, the staff uses dual monitors to process invoices with the invoice on one screen and the eCMS accounts payable screen on the other.

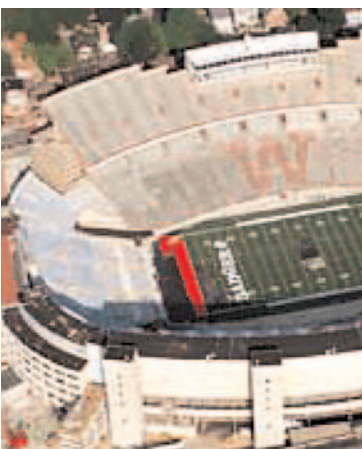
With the successes achieved in accounts payable, J. F. Ahern Co. did not want to stop there. Today they are also scanning approximately 100-150 accounts receivable checks and associated attachments. This process is greatly assisting in the handling of approximately 3,000 collection calls each month where they can answer the question while on the phone. The new process is also assisting in projecting cash more accurately.

Lastly, J. F. Ahern Co. has begun the process of scanning all job files and related correspondence.

Overall Michelle has been very impressed with the results achieved by implementing imaging, document management and workflow and will continue to migrate other documents into eCMS.



Ace Ethanol



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University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI

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About eCMS

Representing the new standard in financial application suites for the construction industry, eCMS blends flexibility, dependability and superior performance. The eCMS browser-based interface allows for maximum accessibility of mission-critical information to those who need it, regardless of location. Combined with core financial applications and integrated productivity tools, real-time information means your business can reduce costs by streamlining complex operations. The functionality and evolution of the eCMS application suite has arisen through listening to our customers and continually striving to exceed their expectations.

About Computer Guidance Corporation

Computer Guidance, the leading provider of financial accounting, project management, and bidding software, delivers solutions to more than 600 enterprise customers from various construction disciplines.

Computer Guidance delivers the accounting and project management software of choice for 20% of the ENR Top 400 contractors – and it has been voted one of the leading job costing and accounting software applications by the highly-respected CFMA IT Survey. Computer Guidance also provides the ultimate solution for any company seeking flexibility, dependability, and superior performance in an accounting software suite.

For additional information about Computer Guidance, visit our web site at www.computerguidance.com or call 1-888-361-4551. Computer Guidance is headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Contact Computer Guidance

For more information contact:

Kevin Basso
Marketing Manager
480.444.7000
kbasso@computerguidance.com

Computer Guidance Corporation

15035 North 75th Street
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

1.888.361.4551

www.computerguidance.com

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