

eCMS ERP and HCSS Heavy Bid, Heavy Job & 360



Company: J.F. Brennan Company

Industry: General Contractor

Construction Services: a

Construction, Environmental Services, and Harbor Management company focused on providing quality services to both public and private owners of civil infrastructure

Corporate Headquarters:

La Crosse, WI

Territory / Locations: offices in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois

Client Information: J.F. Brennan

Company is a construction, environmental services, and harbor management firm meeting the needs of public and private owners of civil infrastructure. The company places strong emphasis on safety and quality, and is well known for industry innovation and delivering unprecedented value to clients.

- Founded in 1919
- Annual Revenue \$100+ million
- 400 union / non-union employees

Software Applications: eCMS,

Account Payable, Accounts Receivable, General Ledger, Human Resources, Payroll, Job Cost, Equipment Accounting, Integration Suite, User-defined Tables, Content Management, Workflow, Forms Management, Project Collaborator, Business Intelligence and Analytics

Technology Environment:

on-premise deployment



“The guessing game no longer exists at Brennan. We leverage integrated data across our organization to understand how we did in the past, how we are doing today and what we can predict the future will hold.”

—Tori Weissenberger, Financial Systems Analyst, J.F. Brennan Company

Challenge: Over the past few years, Brennan was fortunate to experience not only organic growth but also tremendous expansion of its services offering. As the company responded to rapidly increasing demand for its capabilities, Brennan quickly realized that they needed to improve their business processes and supporting technology systems.

Manual data entry consumed much of the company’s resources. In addition, multiple segregated systems required additional disjointed processes and ongoing data management and movement. This situation created disconnect between the operations and finance teams, and would surely jeopardize Brennan’s growth and success in the field.

Solution:

The organization quickly established a plan to improve the current systems, a key element of which was creating a new role called a Financial Systems Analyst and establishing a centralized Project Controls & Estimating department. In addition a Systems Group was created which included the Financial Systems Analyst, Project Controls and key management throughout the organization. This group evaluated existing business processes and systems, planned out process improvements and system enhancements, and measured their financial impact on the bottom line.

The new team drafted a project plan prioritizing the integration of segregated systems, expanding the use of current software solutions, automating manual processes, and re-engineering certain critical business processes that needed improvement.

One of the most important initiatives was the integration of the HCSS software solutions with eCMS.

- For years, JF Brennan had used the HCSS Heavy Bid application. Instead of setting up contracts and project details in both systems manually and individually, the team integrated Heavy Bid and eCMS for all Accounts Receivables contracts setup. In doing so, they eliminated manual data entry and file transfers between the systems, and instead facilitated a near real-time data exchange for customer contract line item and associated job cost code, lump sum items, and quantity-based items. The integration also included job cost setup and budgeting between the systems for activity and cost type quantities, man hours and equipment hours, and workers compensation setup by activity.
- Once these data points were pulled into eCMS, subsequent changes were needed to be set up in both systems to keep them in sync with each other. Further integration was created to have eCMS update Heavy Job with critical business data, including employees (by pay class), equipment (rates), jobs (location, PM, division), revised cost codes, change orders and updated budgets, quantities, and more. This started the path to capturing additional field data into Heavy Job.
- JF Brennan expanded their use of both HCSS Heavy Job mobile app in the field and eCMS functionality to capture daily diary, employee and equipment hours, subsistence, per diem, cost activity notes and quantities placed, and equipment meter hours. These are just a few of the many critical data points now available in HCSS that needed to be shared with other HCSS applications and eCMS ERP.
- Next JF Brennan implemented integration to export critical transactional information such as employee hours, coding, pay class, subsistence and per diem, and equipment usage with eCMS accounting and payroll applications for further processing, reporting and analysis. Time entry for equipment and labor were captured in the field with iPads and fed to eCMS Payroll and Equipment Accounting applications for processing and reporting.
- To complete the full circle of data flow between the two systems, real-time cost information by job, cost code and cost type was updated weekly from eCMS to Heavy Job.

There were no more equipment usage or labor time errors. There were no more missed or delayed change orders. There were no more miscalculations, duplicate data entry, time-consuming manual processes or delayed information. Real-time JF Brennan data was available and accessible anytime and anywhere between these two systems. The financial team knew exactly where they stood with costs, budgets, and current CORs. The management of ongoing changes were quickly available in both systems to all who needed it.

The integration of HCSS and eCMS completed a critical business loop, starting with data input into HCSS Heavy Bid, which was transferred to HCSS Heavy Job, then directed into eCMS accounting and payroll applications, and then back out to HCSS Heavy Job. This integration provided daily production information, weekly cost analysis (expected vs. actual), ongoing job analysis, and planning and forecasting tools to measure each job’s current state and predictable outcome. There was consistent data across all applications and systems readily accessible to all JF Brennan team members.

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“We refused to allow our growth to be crippled by ‘siloe’d’ business applications. When your company is in growth-mode, your employees and equipment need to perform at optimum productivity and this can only be assured if you have automated your most-critical and time-consuming business processes and have fully integrated data on which to base your day-to-day decisions”

—Tina Klinger, Chief Financial Officer, JF Brennan Company

Solution: Using the data within Heavy Job combined with cost data from the accounting system management is able to determine what the expected man hours and cost will be if we were to continue at the current productivity levels. They can also measure how far along a project is by cost versus billings to the customer to give a picture of how costs, revenue and billings relate. Data is also used to predict cash flow and determine how slow or fast they are receiving cash after invoicing a customer.

Lastly eCMS and HCSS Equipment 360 were integrated at the point where equipment hours, meter readings, and job information were captured in HCSS and made available in eCMS on a daily basis. Information such as equipment, job and location were now known, eliminating the need to re-enter data and manage information in both software solutions. eCMS would update HCSS with new equipment, code, location and job data while HCSS would have actual usage and time from the field.

The eCMS master record was used for all updates after a job was established and everything was only updated in eCMS for processing while different data elements may have been captured and transferred with the various HCSS applications. Since the information was made available in one place, management and the financial team could analyze historical data, review current productivity and forecast future outcomes.

eCMS Business Intelligence & Analytics application was leveraged to populate reports and distribute easily digestible information to all key stakeholders. Reports such as employee hours, equipment performance, equipment under and over utilization, idling times, utilization and cost comparisons, maintenance costs and much more were provided for smarter business practices and decisions.

The end result—there was one version of truth for JF Brennan—and that truth helped the organization manage its unprecedented growth without sacrificing any piece of its customer or vendor relationships, or the quality of the projects the firm delivered. Brennan turned the weekly operations meeting from discussion of near term, tactical issues to strategic, longer term or financial issues that drive their business results.

Lessons Learned: Standardization and automation of business processes not only reduced costs by eliminating errors and manual processes, but they drove accountability, improved communication and empowered smarter business practices across JF Brennan Company. The company continues to automate and re-engineer business processes with the goal of improving margins, enhancing employee and customer satisfaction, and supporting future growth.

Results:

- Eliminated disparate systems
- Integrated data made available on demand and in real time
- Improved visibility into financial and operational performance
- Gained efficiency through automation, standardization and fact-based decision-making
- Increased cost controls company wide
- Eliminated several manual processes and associated information-sharing, and eradicated duplicate data entry and data entry errors
- Reduced annual administrative expenses by saving 6-8 hours per week due to integrating Heavy Bid with eCMS, automating the contract, job cost and budget setup processes
- Reduced mistakes and annual administrative expenses by saving 6-8 hours per week due to integrating Heavy Job Manager with eCMS to provide equipment and labor information automatically in real time
- Overall the accounting department has reduced by .5 FTE during growth of the company due to elimination of multiple data entry in two systems
- Decreased margin fade by 4% by reducing the under allocation of equipment costs through real-time knowledge of cost of maintaining equipment versus hourly charges for that equipment
- Improved project margins and overall productivity with business intelligence



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