

Construction School 101 – Redefining the 3 Rs

Reliability, Reputation & Resource Planning propel Carl Bolander to the pinnacle of the industry

A short time ago, we had the opportunity to sit down with long-time specialty contractor, Carl Bolander, a leading provider of Demolition, Earth Retention, Piling, Underground Utilities, Environmental Cleanup and Earthwork services since 1924. Based out of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, and employing a team of 200 people, Carl Bolander has built its century-old reputation on reliability, integrity, customer satisfaction, and business and resource planning expertise that has been proven beyond a doubt.

Q What do you believe to be the catalyst behind Carl Bolander's significant growth?

A: We have built our company around safety, quality and customer service. It is that commitment to our core values which has allowed us to retain an excellent customer base. And, at the same time, that mindset has enabled the firm to recruit, train and retain the highest quality employees. In doing so, we have forged an explosive pathway of growth without sacrificing client satisfaction along the way.

Q What type of projects or industry segments have afforded your firm the most growth potential?

A: Currently, we are working as both the primary contractor and as a subcontractor on various projects throughout Minnesota. In fact, Carl Bolander has just taken on two of the largest environmental cleanup jobs in the state, and we are still thriving in all of our specialty areas across the board – from Demolition to Underground Utilities. Because of the strength of the core of our business and the technology and processes that support our firm, Carl Bolander has the ability and, more importantly, the flexibility to change with the demands of the marketplace or our individual customers.

Q What strategies can most significantly help your organization continue along this upward trajectory?



A: To be sure, we have enjoyed the momentum Carl Bolander has experienced to date. But, we realize that only by continuing to add value to projects can we maintain such an exceptional rate of success. Greater effectiveness in the field, new levels of efficiency in project and resource management, and faster access to more reliable information are the key strategies that we believe will lead our organization into the future.

The foundation for all of these strategies is our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software from Computer Guidance Corporation, a platform that has been evolving with our firm's needs and our customers' goals for decades now.

Q How has Computer Guidance Corporation's ERP technology supported your organization and its recent changes?

A: Carl Bolander has been a customer of Computer Guidance Corporation (CGC) since 1985. And because of the importance of their ERP platform to our business, we have long considered ourselves partners. The result is the ability to do more with less in many areas of our business through automated processes and digital workflow.

Specifically, we work with Computer Guidance Corporation to improve the cost controls within our organization on an ongoing basis. CGC provides us with the ability to have the proper checks and balances in place to keep Carl Bolander operating smoothly and efficiently day-in and day-out. Our job costs and payroll transactions run on the CGC platform – everything from invoices, bills and purchase orders to resource costs, time entry and change orders. Whether we have payroll to run across the organization or data to pull from several small jobsites, our ERP software exceeds our expectations and fulfills our every need.

Q Why is partnering with your ERP solution provider so important?

A: In the end, as a contractor, what you're really searching for is long-term stability. We look to our partners in the same manner in which our customers look to us. We've been doing it for over 90 years now and I'm thrilled to say that Computer Guidance Corporation has been a stable partner for one-third of our existence.

Perhaps, even more importantly, CGC has provided a stable financial solution for Carl Bolander. Together, we have been able to implement and maintain new, more efficient processes within the construction industry as a whole. In addition, we are able to bring in new technologies and business processes without a lot of interruption to our daily construction operations.

Q What is your assessment of CGC since its acquisition by JDM Technology Group?

A: From the outside looking in, it seems that the acquisition was a seamless process. And from what I have seen so far, it must have been, because we didn't experience any lag-time in service or even a hiccup in the communication between our two groups.

At the 2015 Customer Focus Event, I had an opportunity to speak with one of CGC's long-term employees, Rick Gott. Rick and I have worked together for 18 years, and I was pleased to be able to express what we as customers expected from the new ownership. Through our conversation, I was assured that their aim continues to be innovation without deviation from core eCMS processes.

I believe that there is a lot of positive momentum at Computer Guidance Corporation right now. It seems that with the new acquisition, the company is focusing on fewer projects at a time to ensure complete delivery and customer satisfaction. I also believe that the CGC's development priorities are going to continue to be driven by customers like Carl Bolander and rightfully aligned with our needs.

Q What drove your decision to upgrade to eCMS v.4.0?

A: We believe our business thrives when we stay current with Computer Guidance Corporation's latest product version, as it allows

us to implement the most recent enhancements and capitalize on their cutting-edge advancements and functionality. eCMS v.4.0 has a lot to offer, and we wanted to take advantage of its innovative features, including business intelligence, enterprise content management, interactive data inquiry, archival, mobile applications and more.

I love the new look-and-feel of the navigation alone, but one of the key areas that we are looking forward to embracing is business intelligence because of the significant analytics and reporting capabilities it will afford our organization. In addition, the enterprise content management application suite was a great improvement and advancement for eCMS.

Specifically, we can see the impact in the Report Archival feature. With it, Carl Bolander has the ability to electronically receive reports from eCMS that previously were only produced and available for sharing as paper documents. In addition, the system supports the massive Payroll Update reports we generate each week when we process payroll. To have those reports kept in digital format indefinitely is the biggest value-add to eCMS since the conversion from CMS to eCMS.

Q Why did Carl Bolander choose to implement eCMS Enterprise on site rather than through the Cloud?

A: Cloud technology for an organization as established as Carl Bolander just simply did not fit into our structure. In addition, we all read the news about companies getting hacked and data being stolen, and it can be a real tragedy for all parties involved. Our organization is lucky enough to have the capacity to have our data stored on site. And, with a solid disaster recovery system in place supported by personnel with deep IT expertise, we and our customer have great piece of mind.

Q Why do you think browser-based ERP is the way to go?

A: Even if I was reluctant to make the move, our newest generation of employees and the customers we serve live their lives in browser-based worlds. Everything is available and accessible via point-and-click throughout the ERP platform, so speed and ease of use are big benefits. Menu options are outdated and more cumbersome to maneuver. Browser-based eCMS delivers accessibility, anywhere and anytime from any device... all you need is an internet connection and you can be in your most productive state.

Q Can you speak to the importance of data accessibility and distribution?

A: Data access, distribution and storage are the cornerstones of ERP. You need to capture



Photo by Paule Crosby

data from the office and field, and translating it into meaningful information that can be utilized to improve performance and efficiency. No matter the employee's role in the organization, they have decisions to make on a regular basis. And, the quicker you can get them the data they need to do so, the faster they can complete their objectives. If you do it right, the employees are happy and so are the customers.

For example, at Carl Bolander, we give Project Managers the ERP tools they need to make sure that we are controlling every cost and maximizing our return on the investment we have put into every project. Because our organization is structured to have one person work at multiple project locations, we are also currently thinking of ways Carl Bolander can implement mobile applications for time card entry, amongst other remote business processes.

Q What advice can you provide to other contractors when it comes to ERP management and utilization?

A: The most important factor is ease of use and access to the data. Without those two pieces, there's not going to be any ERP, just a lot of time and money wasted. And, speaking from decades of ERP experience, I have not seen a system anywhere that delivers on those two points like eCMS from Computer Guidance Corporation. They have set the bar for the industry when it

comes to accessing raw data and producing a full range of reports.

Q What are your plans for using technology and Computer Guidance Corporation at Carl Bolander during the next 5 years?

A: I think we are all looking forward to having more advanced tools, applications and modules along the lines of interactive data inquiry so that any of our users will have access to the information they need without changing the data while seamlessly interfacing with MS Office products like Excel. We will also continue to push the boundaries of electronic storage of reports.

Most importantly, I hope Carl Bolander's next 5 years with Computer Guidance Corporation are just like the last 18 years. While I realize no one can ever be perfect, we have been on a continuous move toward perfection and the efforts we undertake as partners can be seen in the excellence of our employees and the satisfaction of our valued customers.

