Meridian SYSTEMS

Customer Case Study

Christa Construction, LLC

Christa Construction Uses Prolog® Software to Achieve Real-Time Project Projections and Measurable Gains in Efficiency

Founded in 1982 by David Christa, Christa Construction, LLC is one of New York's premier builders, having completed over $5B worth of construction and currently performing $100M to $200M in construction each year. Headquartered in Victor, NY, the company has additional offices in Buffalo and Binghamton. Christa delivers a wide range of professional construction services, including general construction, construction management, facilities management, real estate development and design-build services. The company performs a mix of public jobs, negotiated projects and development work.

Christa has received numerous awards and recognitions over the years, including several Project of the Year awards from the American Public Works Association and multiple Builders Exchange Craftsmanship awards. The company offers their clients comprehensive solutions and innovative financing options to ensure successful projects.

At Christa Construction, it was decision-making time. The company was running an older, client/server version of Expedition project management software by Oracle Primavera that was no longer being supported. They needed to either upgrade to the Web-based version of Expedition or implement a different project management solution. "I said, 'Let's make sure we're spending our time and money on a product we're completely happy with,'" recalls Christa's Director of IT, Dan Kinsman. "So we started evaluating other project management systems."

Christa had several prerequisites for their new software. The ability to integrate with the company's Sage Timberline Office accounting software was a top priority. Strong budgeting and forecasting tools were also essential. And the option to provide customers, architects and project owners with a Web-based interface to access documents like submittal logs and daily reports was important, too.

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>
> *Dan Kinsman, Dirctor of IT*
> *Christa Construction, LLC*

After evaluating project management solutions from Primavera, Timberline, Meridian Systems and a few other companies, in February of 2007 Christa chose Meridian's Prolog software. "Prolog's functionality and ease-of-use stood out from the other solutions," Kinsman explains. "The Document Management module, for example, was very strong."

Christa purchased Prolog through Boston-based PSSGroup (PSS), a Meridian authorized Global Reseller that provides software consulting and integration and training services. PSS also offered a third-party application, ProIntegator from CubisOne, a Meridian authorized Independent Software Vendor (ISV), which integrates Prolog with Timberline.

Live on Prolog in Just 90 Days

A fast track implementation of Prolog was important to Christa's management team and within 90 days, the company went live with their first pilot projects. Today, Christa has more than 50 Prolog users managing nearly 70 active jobs. "It was a crazy implementation schedule," Kinsman admits, "but PSS was a tremendous help. I've been extremely impressed with the caliber of their people and their knowledge of Prolog and the construction process. I couldn't have asked for better support."

Kinsman's theory of IT, which is shared by PSS, is that software should enhance a company's processes without being cumbersome for the end users. "If you throw software at an administrative assistant and it makes her life harder, you're not going to experience a successful rollout," he says. So before configuring Prolog, Kinsman and PSS spent time gaining a better understanding of Christa's vital project management processes.

To lessen the resistance to change, Prolog was implemented in phases, beginning with submittals, contract management and change order management. Next, the project managers learned how to enter and manage budgets. Then, the field managers learned how to use Prolog WebSite to enter daily reports, interact with customers and use the document management features.

PSS helped Christa design custom reports to deliver targeted information. "We created a custom, one-page report that gives project managers the current status of a project," Kinsman says. "We created another, more in-depth report that lists the entire history of a project, from bid through completion. This historical data is used to improve estimating and executive decision making."

ProIntegrator from CubisOne

Once Christa gained familiarity with Prolog, PSS and CubisOne worked with Kinsman to implement the ProIntegrator solution to link Prolog with Timberline. Soon, Christa was using ProIntegrator to access information in real-time. Vendor and budget details, for example, migrate back and forth between Prolog and Timberline. And when the accounting department enters information like invoices and labor in Timberline, costs are automatically updated in Prolog.

Integration of these two critical systems offers a significant advantage, especially when creating projections. Before, financial reports generated from Timberline gave project managers a snapshot of how much money had been spent on a job, but didn't give them a tool for projecting final costs. So projections were generated using spreadsheets.

With Prolog and ProIntegrator, project managers now have a forecasting tool that gives them a complete financial picture of the job. "ProIntegrator helps us see what the current costs are because it pulls that information into Prolog from Timberline," Kinsman explains. "Then, we use the reporting tools in Prolog to create our projections."

The benefits of this capability have been two-fold. Internally, both the accounting and project management teams operate more efficiently because they've eliminated double and triple entry related to stand-alone software and spreadsheets. Externally, the project managers are using accurate projections to better serve Christa's customers. "If an owner requests a change," Kinsman says, "the project manager can price it in Prolog and generate a report that shows the cost impact of that change on the job's bottom line. This allows the owner to make an informed decision before moving forward."

Meridian Partner Profile

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Achieving Remarkable Results

After two years of managing projects with Prolog, Christa has realized remarkable results. "Prolog has allowed us to integrate several functions to more efficiently and accurately budget, forecast and manage the entire construction process," Kinsman states.

Streamlined data entry and instant access to information has increased efficiency in the office – and in the field. "Our administrative assistants can now handle three or four jobs each versus two or three jobs before Prolog," Kinsman says. "I've noticed the same trend with our project managers."

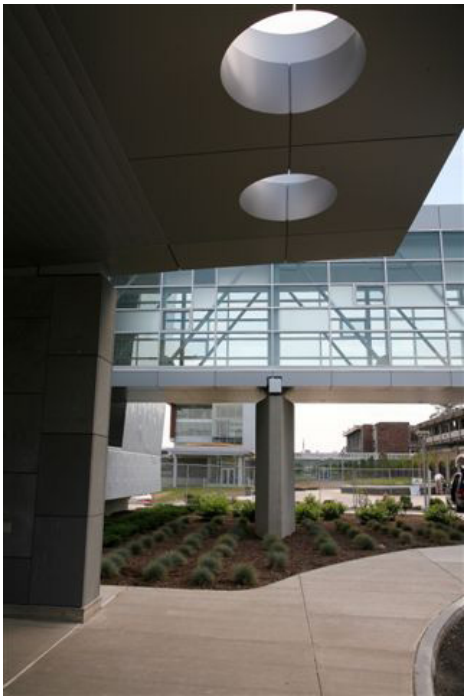
Increased efficiency can readily be seen when processing requests-for-information (RFI). By using the e-mail functionality within Prolog, Christa has automated this previously manual process by electronically routing RFIs and associated documentation to the appropriate recipients for review and response. Similar efficiency gains can be seen when managing submittals. "Processing a batch of submittals using Expedition took a couple of hours," Kinsman says. "Prolog knocks that task down to 30 minutes."

Increased executive oversight is also noteworthy. Prolog's robust reporting and search capabilities allow Christa's executives to easily evaluate key data segments, such as a single project manager's financial performance across all of his jobs. "Prolog gives our executives an easy way to pull the information needed to address a potential issue," Kinsman explains. He credits Prolog's SQL database and user-friendly interface for making the company's data so accessible.

Visibility into project details plays a big part in risk management at Christa. At the end of a recent job, an issue required the company to identify specific dates that a subcontractor worked on the project, along with the work they performed. "Since the field manager had been diligent about completing the daily log in Prolog," Kinsman states, "it literally took us two minutes to set up a filter and print the necessary report. Before Prolog, a manual search through paper files and logs would have taken us a full day – or longer."

Opening the Door to New Opportunities

Kinsman feels that Prolog has bolstered Christa's business development ability. Several of the company's customers have previous experience with Prolog and have confidence in the solution's capabilities. And some projects are now requiring contractors to provide a Web-based interface to support collaboration between the owner, contractor and architects. "Prolog opens the door to new opportunities," he states. "And there are definitely jobs that we've been able to pursue simply because we have Prolog in place."



Christa Construction, LLC Project Profile

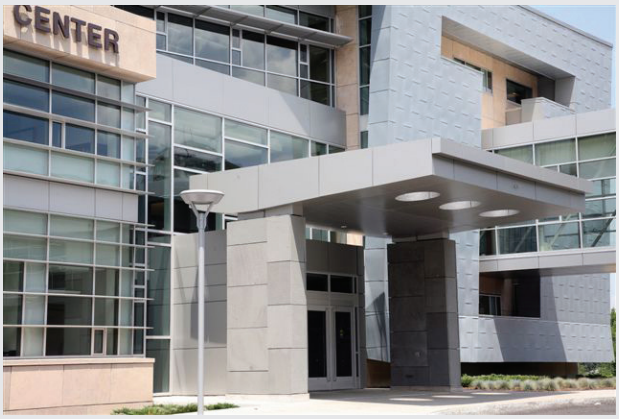
Ithaca College, Peggy Ryan Williams Center, Located in Ithaca, New York

It is often said that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. The Peggy Ryan Williams Center building provides the prospective student with this first impression of Ithaca College: it is the portal through which the campus experience begins – the gateway to their future.

The building was designed and built using sustainable practices for site selection, reduced energy and resource consumption and enhanced indoor environmental quality. To achieve these objectives, the following sustainable strategies were used: geothermal heating and cooling, use of sustainable and local materials, wind and solar energy to supplement electricity, controlled natural lighting, green roofs, porous pavement and low maintenance native grasses.

As the general contractor, Christa completed the construction of this monumental building on behalf of Ithaca College. This new structure is linked to an existing building through an elevated bridge. The four-story, 58,000 sq. ft. building was constructed of structural steel and concrete and built on caissons. The exterior features limestone, glass and metal siding. Green areas are provided on the roof tops for various plantings. Geothermal well fields are installed for use with the heating and cooling system, and a rain water catch basin collection system is utilized for toilet flushing.

The building houses enrollment planning, admissions, graduate students, human resources and executive administration. Selected views of Cayuga Lake, the landscape and the campus are featured from various points in the building as people move throughout.



Architect: HOLT Architects, Ithaca, NY

Key Project Elements

- 58,000 sq. ft. structural steel and concrete building, built on caissons
- Four-story building featuring limestone, glass and metal siding
- LEED Platinum Certified (pending)
- Carbon Neutral (using 100% green energy)

Start Date: April 2007

Completion Date: February 2009

Results: The Peggy Ryan Williams Center is a Carbon Neutral facility and is pending LEED Platinum certification from the United States Green Building Council (USGBC).

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