Customer Case Study: Barton Malow Company

Founded in 1924, Barton Malow Company is a construction management firm that provides a broad range of services, from preconstruction to closeout. Headquartered in Southfield, Michigan, the company has additional operations across the U.S. and employs more than 1,500 people. Over the last 80+ years, Barton Malow has received hundreds of project related awards and recently received two safety Excellence Awards from the Associated General Contractors – Greater Detroit Chapter. With annual revenues in excess of $1B, Barton Malow is consistently ranked among the top 10 builders in the nation in its niche markets. The company is #37 on ENR's 2006 Top 400 Contractors list and #33 on ENR's 2006 Top 100 CM-at-Risk firms.

Barton Malow
Design/Construction Services

By Standardizing on Prolog® Software, Barton Malow Gains Better Efficiency and a Competitive Advantage

In the late 1990's, Barton Malow transitioned from its home-grown, DOS-based project management application to Prolog Manager developed by Meridian Systems. With Y2K approaching, the company needed a new software solution that would be compliant. What's more, management wanted to standardize project management processes to increase efficiency and gain better control of costs.

Although other project management systems (such as Primavera and Constructware) were also evaluated, Prolog was chosen because of its superior ability to provide the flexible standardization Barton Malow needed.

Initial implementation of Prolog focused on the cost side, with an emphasis on contract and change order management. An integration interface was written in-house to create an open exchange of information between Prolog and Barton Malow's accounting software from Computer Guidance. Although the engineering side of Prolog was also rolled out early, it wasn't until Julie Adler joined the company as its Application Support Analyst that those functions were fine-tuned.

> "By standardizing on Prolog software, we have been able to develop best practices that have made our company stronger and more efficient."
>
> *Julie Adler*
> *Application Support Analyst*
> *Barton Malow Company*

Standardization Provides Better Efficiency and High ROI

Adler's diverse background, which includes construction management, information technology and previous Prolog implementation experience, made her the ideal candidate to help Barton Malow standardize on Prolog. "Standardization," she explains, "is really an efficiency thing. With standard processes, we can share employees between projects without a huge learning curve and we can get more work done."

With approximately 350 Prolog users and just 100 concurrent licenses, efficiency at Barton Malow is vital. Each project is assigned a number of user licenses based on its size and it's up to each team to share that access. This spreads the cost of Prolog across all projects, providing an extraordinary return on investment.

According to Adler, Barton Malow combines process standards with enough flexibility to support different management styles. "We have many managers that have been around for 25 years and they like to do things their own way," she says. "Because of its flexibility, Prolog allows us to provide corporate standards through its forms, reports and word processing templates, while also allowing us to take advantage of the way each manager uses the various Prolog applications."

Prolog® WebSite: A Competitive Advantage

In addition to Prolog Manager, Barton Malow also makes extensive use of Prolog WebSite, an integrated, Web-based application designed to provide collaboration to the extended project team. This tool is used on many of Barton Malow's high profile projects where the owners, architects and subcontractors are eager to collaborate and share data without having to navigate through typical paper trails.

With Prolog WebSite, communications now take one or two days instead of five or more. Because requests and replies are handled electronically, less time is spent getting from point A to point B and more time can be spent on problem solving and moving a project forward. And, says Adler, more and more firms are embracing – and even asking for – electronic communication.

"We're doing an $800M school program in Toledo, Ohio," Adler relates, "and in the front end documentation the owner stated that every contractor working on the project would be computer capable and that all requests for information would be run through Prolog WebSite. That's a big change from five years ago. Today, many owners are computer savvy and they understand that using a computer is more efficient than scribbling notes on a piece of paper."

Having Prolog Website also helps Barton Malow get – and handle – more work. "It's back to that efficiency thing," Adler says. "Prolog WebSite is our competitive advantage."

A Flexible Reporting Database

Prolog's flexible reporting database has allowed Barton Malow to create custom reports to gather data in very specific ways. "I've been using databases for almost 25 years," Adler explains, "and they can do things that many people don't even think about. With Prolog's reporting, you can think out of the box."

One example is a custom report that Barton Malow calls the Committed Cost Billing Report. This custom report existed in the company's legacy project management system and was used to provide targeted information to project owners. Using the software's custom reporting capabilities, Barton Malow duplicated that report in Prolog so clients could continue to receive anticipated information in the format that they were familiar with.

Prolog: An Exceptional Tool

"By standardizing on Prolog software, we have been able to develop best practices that have made our company stronger and more efficient," states Adler. "Prolog is the best software that I have seen for project management. It's an exceptional tool."