Case Study
Winter Park Construction

Prolog

Winter Park Construction Uses Prolog® Software to Improve Employee Performance, Boost Sales and Protect Profit

Winter Park Construction (WPC) is a general contracting and construction management firm specializing in the resort, condominium, timeshare, hotel and multifamily industry. Headquartered in Maitland, FL, WPC completes 20-25 projects each year and reports annual revenues in the $160M-$200M range. The company offers its clients a full range of services, from pre-construction and site development to in-house estimating and aggressive scheduling. WPC is #263 on ENR's 2006 Top 400 Contractors list and has been locally recognized for safety, growth and community involvement.

Construction

For Winter Park Construction (WPC), a reputation for performance and excellence is everything. Part of the prevailing culture of quality is brand conformity for all documents that leave the office. The use of Microsoft products for project management made it difficult to produce documentation that met the WPC standard for quality and consistency. In addition, the company's proprietary document control system utilized multiple databases that required many levels of file saving. To make matters worse, spreadsheet-based financial reporting scattered estimates, budget reports and buyout logs.

Senior management set out to find a new solution that would address three major issues: document standardization to support the WPC brand, financial control through increased data visibility and a single database for streamlined document management.

In early 2004, WPC purchased Prolog Manager from Meridian Systems®. "After looking at all the options," explains Craig Gum, WPC Senior Project Manager, "the management team felt that Prolog offered the most complete document control capabilities available, along with the financial capabilities needed to support our operations."

A Well-Planned Implementation Ensures Success

After struggling to implement Prolog on their own, in June 2005, WPC decided to employ a more professional approach. WPC put together an in-house implementation team and hired HardHat Technologies (www..hardhattechnologies.com), a Meridian Systems channel partner based in Conyers, GA, to help drive the rollout of the software. The WPC and Hardhat teams designed an implementation plan that included:

> Training for the WPC implementation team so they could learn the "ins and outs" of Prolog before presenting it to the rest of the staff

> Designation of WPC employee Kathy Williams as the company's Prolog Administrator and product "Guru"

> Identifying the specific Prolog features and functionality that would be implemented at various stages of the rollout

> System configuration, database setup and customization of forms to support the WPC brand

> Pilot project selection for critical testing in a live environment

According to Williams, the implementation plan provided an organized and methodical path to ensure the company's successful adoption of Prolog. "HardHat helped pinpoint areas in Prolog that would be better used and by whom. They've been an invaluable resource for information, outside training and support."

After WPC's internal team was trained by HardHat, two pilot projects were selected to work through the quirks, fine tune customization, and develop reports. HardHat and WPC customized forms with the company logo, added new fields, changed others to match its internal language, set up quick text categories to lessen data entry and, developed standardized templates for documents such as contracts and business letters.

When the Prolog pilot phase wrapped up, WPC broke their employees into groups based on responsibilities and HardHat trained them. One after another, new projects were rolled out using Prolog.

"By standardizing on Prolog software, we have achieved a level of professionalism that is vital to the WPC brand. Everyone understands that we need to do things a certain way at a certain time and that instills quality all the way down the line – from our office and field staff to our subcontractors."

Kathy Williams
Prolog Administrator
Winter Park Construction

Prolog Software Improves Employee Performance, Protects Profit

Within months, WPC had significantly improved employee performance by standardizing its project management using Prolog's many capabilities, including Cost Control, Document Management, Field Administration and customized reporting. "As a management tool," Gum explains, "Prolog streamlines our document control, which helps operations process the administrative aspect of projects faster. This, in turn, gives us the opportunity to add an additional job to each project manager's plate. From a financial aspect, we have a better understanding and control of our job costs and more profit through greater volume and proactive crisis management."

Prolog's reporting capabilities allow senior management to access financial data for better decision making. "Having easy access to reports that we used to have to kick and pull and tug to get from the project management team is huge," says Gum. "With Prolog, and use of Prolog Today, we now have the information we need on our screen every morning."

The visibility that Prolog provides has helped WCP identify problems early, before they erode profit. "We're able to put accountability on the project managers now because they have access to the information needed to protect profit," explains Gum. "With Prolog, instant access to financial summaries, budgets and contracts allows the project team to manage jobs more efficiently and more accurately," adds Williams. "I've actually seen superintendents spending more time on their jobs and less time doing paperwork."

Today, Prolog is used by 70 of WPC's 129 employees, from top management (President, COO, CFO, and Senior Managers) through the entire project team. The company recently brought its Estimating department on board to enter data such as meeting minutes, RFIs, specs and drawings to generate history for a project at its inception and is expanding use to other departments as time permits.

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Collaborating with the Extended Project Team

For its Preconstruction Services department, WPC recently purchased Prolog® WebSite, which automatically integrates with Prolog Manager. Gum will use the Web-based project management tool to take this department's performance to a higher level by enabling the extended project team to coordinate, collaborate and communicate better.

"Initially," says Gum, "Prolog WebSite is going to help us from a collaboration standpoint, mainly through its RFI, submittal and reporting capabilities. I envision the entire owner/architect/ engineer/design team and our subcontractors using it for full document control and document sharing in the project planning phase."

From any Internet connection, the extended project team will be able to log on to Prolog WebSite and actually look at, review and respond to communications online. This will cut response time and enhance the delivery of WPC's preconstruction services. "Just like Prolog Manager," adds Gum, "Prolog WebSite will provide us with a centralized and standardized communication source."

Williams notes that Prolog has also become an integral part of WPC business development. "We've incorporated Prolog and Prolog WebSite into our sales strategy to demonstrate our ability to facilitate communication between an owner, the architect and our project team. Owners can see, through our Prolog data, how we build projects on time and on budget. That's a big selling point for new work."

Prolog Delivers "Phenomenal" Return on Investment

Although WPC hasn't completed a job using Prolog yet (projects typically last two to three years), Williams and Gum note a drastic reduction in staff hours (especially overtime) and paper usage on active projects. "In my opinion," states Williams, "Prolog has already paid for itself. As far as the return on our Prolog investment goes, I guarantee it's going to be phenomenal." Gum concurs. "Although we haven't been at this long enough to have clear, quantitative analysis, there's no doubt that Prolog provides a financial gain."

WPC Project Profile

HGVC Tuscany Village in Orlando, FL

WPC's 10-year relationship with Hilton Hotels and the Hilton Grand Vacations Club (HGVC) team has resulted in the creation of a truly stunning timeshare resort: the HGVC Tuscany Village Resort on International Drive in Orlando, Florida.

Located on 34 acres in the heart of the tourist corridor and close to all major attractions, Tuscany Village is comprised of seven mid-rise residential buildings totaling 384 units, along with the typical amenities you would expect to find at a Hilton resort of this caliber.

The residential buildings are situated around an 11-acre lake with a lakefront promenade that connects them to the pool deck and other amenities. At the far end of the lake, opposite the clubhouse/reception facilities, is a smaller secondary pool area with exercise facilities, a bar and a Pizza Hut Express. The entire resort is designed around an Italian "Tuscan" theme with liberal use of cast stone columns and architectural details and tile roofs.

WPC chose to implement Prolog Manager during the last two phases of this resort construction. Utilization of the program has enabled WPC to streamline many of the project accounting and management functions that were previously maintained in numerous separate files and programs. Contracts, budgets, submittals, correspondence, reporting and potential change orders (both subcontractor and owner) are now maintained in one program, allowing greater control of both cost and productivity from the construction side.

Client:
Hilton Hotels, Inc.
Pat Terwilliger, Beverly Hills, CA
Ken Schwartz, Orlando, FL
Greg Barrows, Orlando, FL

Architect: Fugleberg Koch Architects
Landscape Architect: Myers Schmalenberger/MSI
WPC Project Manager: Rex A. Davidson
Total Contract Value: (7 phases) $78M

Key Project Elements

› Full-service Italian "Tuscan" themed timeshare resort on 34 acres

› Seven residential buildings varying in height from six to eight stories

› 384 timeshare units in studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom layouts

› Clubhouse and reception building with lounges, sales office and engineering and housekeeping facilities

› Full-service kitchen, deli and 60-foot bar that opens onto a 30,000 sq. ft. pool deck

› Two amenity sites with swimming pools, spas, exercise facilities and more

› Constructed on an 11-acre lake with promenade walkway for easy access to amenities

Project Completion Date: Opening of the final building is scheduled for February 2008, which will complete more than five years of uninterrupted development of this resort.

Results

Construction began in August 2002, with the first phase incorporating the resort amenities, housekeeping and engineering facilities and the first two guest buildings. This phase was completed in approximately 18 months and operations opened in January 2004. Since then, four more seven-story timeshare buildings have successful opened and WPC has begun vertical construction of the seventh and final building on the site.

Using Prolog on this project has resulted in more efficient management of the construction process and more time to focus on client satisfaction.