FieldManager™ Read-Only

Subcontractor ensures rapid payment and reporting accuracy

Needs analysis: *P.K. Contracting wanted access to the information being tracked by the DOT and primes - what was done and where and when. Faxes and phone calls were proving to be tedious, and lack of information was delaying payments and contract closeouts.* **Product implemented:** *FieldManager Contractor® Read-Only.* **Results:** *P.K. can now see the actual data recorded at the site by the DOT and primes. They spend more time accomplishing work and less time hunting down information. Shared data also contributes to an increased level of trust among the DOT, primes and subs. P.K. resolves errors daily instead of waiting for (and delaying) project close-out.*

"With the Read-Only program, I am able to look at the Inspector Daily Reports (IDRs), which often answers the questions that I have. From that point, I am able to make corrections at my end or notify the inspecting agency of an error, and why it's an error, so the necessary correction can be made."

"FieldManager Read-Only has streamlined the finalization of projects. As a subcontractor, I am able to look up information pertaining to our work without waiting for the prime contractor or inspecting agency to answer questions."

" I feel that the yearly cost for [FieldManager Read-Only] has been recouped by expeditiously resolving quantity issues, thus allowing the generation of MDOT pay estimates."

Sandy Haines,
Contracts Administrator,
P.K. Contracting

Long lines may be good for business at P.K. Contracting, a pavement marking company, but long waits for payments are not.

P.K. Contracting, based in Troy, Mich., has been operating as a subcontractor since 1980. Needless to say, they've seen the tedious days of contract administration – full of paper, pencils and a multitude of errors.

FieldManager® road construction software eventually became an integral part of Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) business process, alleviating many problems associated with item tracking and payments. FieldManager, created by Gainesville, Fla.-based Info Tech, Inc. and MDOT, provides seamless contract administration and contains data on all aspects of the contract, including complete day-to-day details of progress on the work site, benchmarks for the contract and payment history.

Local agencies soon followed suit by implementing FieldManager. However, the subcontracting community still had no easy access to the information being tracked by the agencies and prime contractors. Trying to figure out what was done, where it was done and when it was done was a cumbersome task made up of multiple faxes and phone calls. Additionally, viewable contract information on the MDOT web site was helpful, but limited in some respects.

However, 2001 brought with it a pilot program developed to specifically deal with these issues. MDOT introduced FieldManager Read-Only to the business process, which quickly produced positive results. The Read-Only software grants users access to contract data and comprehensive reporting and inquiry tools used by contract administrators, thus alleviating unnecessary delays in the reporting and payment process.

Since the introduction of FieldManager and Read-Only software, agencies and their contractors have seen marked improvements in the contract administration process. Communications have clarity, job tracking is more accurate and payments are quicker.

"FieldManager Read-Only has streamlined the finalization of projects," said Sandy Haines, contracts administrator for P.K. Contracting. "As a subcontractor, I am able to look up information pertaining to our work without waiting for the prime contractor or inspecting agency to answer questions."

Given Michigan's short construction season, this is a tremendous benefit, since what little time they have is now focused on road work, not error resolution. Simple errors prone to communication lapses used to cause backups and problems for Haines, but no longer.

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"On all good weather days, contractors and inspectors are on the jobsite from dawn to dusk, thus making it difficult for someone to look into the records to try and figure out all the whats, wheres and whens," said Haines. "With the Read-Only program, I am able to look at the Inspector Daily Reports (IDRs), which often answers the questions that I have. From that point, I am able to make corrections at my end or notify the inspecting agency of an error, and why it's an error, so the necessary correction can be made."

Joseph Phelan, director of sales and customer support for Info Tech, couldn't agree more.

"FieldManager Read-Only empowers the subcontractors, allowing them to be less reliant on others for information that affects their financial stability," Phelan said. "Read-Only puts a powerful set of tools in their hands to streamline and stabilize their business process."

Another unanticipated benefit that arose from MDOT's read-only program is an increased sense of trust and confidence among the agency and the subcontractors. In the past, Haines detected a minor level of discomfort among MDOT staff with regard to accessing information like IDR notes. Now that much of the contract information is available to her, she and the agency are realizing the positive benefits of shared data tracking and open communication.

"The contractor now has picked up some of the slack of not enough hours in the day," said Haines. "We are trying to help MDOT officials keep records as accurate as possible, and resolve any problems as they happen, instead of waiting until job closeout."

Most of all, FieldManager Read-Only has provided an enormous return on investment. Time saved is money saved, and with an easy implementation and learning curve, FieldManager Read-Only provides subcontractors like P.K. Contracting with access to powerful inquiries – such as Item History to Date – and a repository of fresh contract information.

"From the period of May 1st through May 17, 2007, I received a total of 134 read-only files, and since inception, 2,986 read-only files," said Haines. "While I have not opened or processed all of these files, there have been many occasions where the information obtained has been extremely beneficial in my day-to-day business functions. I feel that the yearly cost for [FieldManager Read-Only] has been recouped by expeditiously resolving quantity issues, thus allowing the generation of MDOT pay estimates."

Now that the line is short at the MDOT payment window, you can be sure that P.K. Contracting will continue painting long lines all over Michigan's roads. •

PHOTO COURTESY: P.K. CONTRACTING

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