E.R. Lewis Construction Company, Inc.

E.R Lewis Construction Company, Inc. is in a constant state of evolution, growing from a provider of earthmoving services in 1959 to a company that handles nearly all aspects of industrial, residential, and commercial construction today.

With 72 employees, this $20 million site work contractor attributes its success to its long-standing relationships and business philosophies combined with using the latest technology.

In an effort to continue to evolve and grow, E.R. Lewis decided to change its technology approach from multiple disparate systems to using a single, end-to-end solution that would manage all aspects of its business from the takeoff and estimate to accounting and finances through project management and completing the final punch list and all processes in between.

Struggling with Disparate Systems

The eastern North Carolina contractor was using QuickBooks for accounting and a plethora of different products (i.e. Microsoft Excel, Access, Project, and Word) for project management, as well as a standalone software package for estimating.

"We were working very hard," said Charles Lewis, the company's CFO. "We had so many products, but they weren't communicating and sharing with each other, which created a lot of redundancy and paperwork, costing us time and money."

The contractor conducted a thorough evaluation of numerous software products on the market, but felt that none of the options provided enough of a benefit to make the switch worth the effort and not cause major hardships on their organization. Then, shortly after, while attending ConExpo, Lewis saw a demonstration of ProContractor Systems ProContractor™ by Viewpoint. "I knew we needed to have it," he said. "We saw a bright star with ProContractor™ by Viewpoint at ConExpo that day."

Lewis explained that they selected ProContractor™ by Viewpoint because it was very appealing to have the ability for estimating, accounting, and project management applications to talk to each other in one seamless computer system. Plus it would allow their office and field teams to communicate more efficiently. ProContractor™ by Viewpoint is a complete construction business management software solution that handles the complexities of the entire project lifecycle.

Enhancing communications throughout the company is extremely important to Lewis. "There is a disconnect in the construction industry between the office and the field. Over the last 20 years, we have tried to change that here at E.R. Lewis."

He explained that "most construction companies struggle with an internal civil war. With a lack of understanding, problems are created that can create aggressive behavior when

CUSTOMER OVERVIEW

Headquarters:
Greenville, North Carolina

E.R. Lewis Construction Co., Inc.

100 E Arlington Blvd,
Greenville, NC 27858
(252) 321-1101

someone doesn't understand another and why they do things a certain way. ProContractor™ by Viewpoint brings more of an understanding between the office and the field. By knowing what the other side is going through, we can better operate as one team with a common goal."

"ProContractor™ by Viewpoint is an all-in-one solution that, for us, takes eight different programs and lots of paper and combines it into one system – bringing the field and office together for seamless communications," added Lewis.

One Step at a Time

With a staged implementation approach, E.R. Lewis chose to begin with the solution's accounting and project management functionality and then later proceed with using ProContractor™ by Viewpoint for takeoff and estimating as well. Even early in the company's transition to ProContractor™ by Viewpoint, Lewis and his team saw significant return on their investment, for example, in processing and managing payroll.

Eliminating Redundancy and Errors

With 72 employees, E.R. Lewis' payroll process would take two to three days each week when using QuickBooks. Now, with ProContractor™ by Viewpoint, it only takes about four hours, resulting in significant time savings for the department. Lewis explained how they had a 12-year employee in the accounting department who decided to leave the company and they didn't have to replace her because of the increased productivity achieved with ProContractor™ by Viewpoint. This payroll aspect alone is saving the company approximately $60,000 a year.

"We are very pleased with the payroll program," said Lewis. "ProContractor™ by Viewpoint is increasing our productivity and will allow us to remain lean as we continue to grow and also enable our staff to focus less on paperwork and more on strategic initiatives."

Rae Ann Griffin, E.R. Lewis' office manager, said that "ProContractor™ by Viewpoint saves time all around. By eliminating a lot of redundancy and preventing errors with duplicate data entry, we now have better accuracy, better data, and are able to make better decisions."

Griffin has also found that fewer questions need to be asked. In the past, she would spend a couple hours a week calling supervisors to clarify the information on timesheets. Now, the supervisors are entering the data while in the field and are choosing from a list of jobs pre-populated in ProContractor™ by Viewpoint. This helps ensure everyone is clear about job activity and using the same data when communicating.

Easily Generating Reports

Another area that E.R. Lewis is already realizing benefits is dealing with bonding companies that have much more stringent data requirements these days. Gathering this information takes much less time now, as Lewis explained: "With ProContractor™ by Viewpoint, the information for our Work-in-Progress reports is already in the system and all we have to do is audit the data. In the past it could take us a week to enter the data for a WIP report and additional time to audit it. Now, it just takes 2-3 hours for the auditing."

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>
> - Charles Lewis, CFO

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Improving Change Order Management

The accounting team can also manage change orders more easily with ProContractor™ by Viewpoint. The solution enables them to enter a change order in the system even without all the data, so they can see that a change order is coming and will need to be tracked. "Before, we used an Excel spreadsheet, a specific folder, and a log to keep track of change orders. That left much room for error and oversight. For example, if the log was not updated, we could easily lose a $20,000 change order and never bill the client for it," explained Lewis.

As E.R. Lewis begins to use more functionality in the solution, ProContractor™ by Viewpoint will continue to help their team create and track change orders and drive timely approvals and eliminate potentially costly mistakes.

Connecting from the Field

Until recently, the ability to blend the field and the office was a challenge for the contractor. However, with new technological advances such as the iPad, E.R. Lewis is realizing the power of linking those in the field with the team at the office.

The Mobile Connect capabilities of ProContractor™ by Viewpoint also appeal to the E.R. Lewis team. By providing easy and convenient access to important project data on an iPad mobile device, ProContractor™ by Viewpoint Mobile Connect allows daily field reporting so timesheets can be completed at the job site and sent directly back to the office, which saves a tremendous amount of time by eliminating redundant efforts and chasing down information, as well as ensures better accuracy by keeping project details current.

Before ProContractor™ by Viewpoint, the team in the field would complete their timesheets on a weekly basis using paper and pen, often finding it difficult to remember the details of the tasks they completed earlier in the week. They would turn in their timesheets and the office staff would enter the data into QuickBooks and circle back to field employees with questions.

Now, with the ability to submit timesheets from the field on a daily basis, E.R. Lewis' executives and project managers can view details of any project in real-time and make adjustments that might be necessary to stay on track and on budget. "The data is now much more up to date and more reflective of what they are actually doing in the field," explained Griffin.

This real-time data is extremely beneficial for the project managers. In the past, they would rely on their smartphones and paper documents, which were not always current and had the chance of getting lost or damaged. Now, with ProContractor™ by Viewpoint, project information is accessible anytime, anywhere using an iPad. They can have specification manuals and drawings instantly at their fingertips, instead of lugging around large, often out-of-date binders. Soon, their project managers will also be able to more easily create, track, organize, route, and manage project documents when they use the virtual binder application in ProContractor™ by Viewpoint.

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- Charles Lewis,
CFO

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With the ability to generate daily field reports for their projects and send them directly to the engineer or owner, E.R. Lewis' project managers can keep all parties abreast of a project's status, providing a summary of the number of laborers, equipment types, any delays, issues, change orders, etc.

Griffin was originally not convinced about the use of the iPad on the jobsite; however, she said that "our guys have taken to the iPad so much quicker than tablets. The iPad is much more intuitive, making it easy for the non-tech savvy personnel to embrace it. Going with the iPad was a good move by ProContractor Systems."

She has already witnessed its potential with invoice approvals. Before using ProContractor™ by Viewpoint, they used folders to route invoices to each supervisor that needed to review and approve the next time they were in the office. Now, with ProContractor™ by Viewpoint Mobile Connect, the invoices can be emailed to the supervisor, who will access them on their iPad, and can quickly approve them. "ProContractor™ by Viewpoint can really streamline our approvals and help us go paperless," she added.

Continuing to Evolve

"By moving to a complete solution, we are not just changing our software, but changing the way the company operates," explained Lewis. "We expect by making an investment in the ProContractor™ by Viewpoint complete solution that we will be able to increase our communications and efficiency and it will pay off in significant dividends," said Lewis.

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