

Product

Maxwell Systems® StreetSmarts®

Company

Sigfusson Northern LTD
Lundar, MB, CAN

Industry

This heavy civil contractor performs projects that include earth and rock excavation, mine construction and site restoration, aggregate production, drilling and blasting, sewer and infrastructure, earthwork, environmental clean-up, heavy hauling, and more.

Challenges

The company leveraged various technologies across its business to improve operations, including an accounting software package, which lacked the capability to manage the contractor's increasingly complex project management needs. Sigfusson Northern wanted to better manage projects, job costs, and equipment with a superior accounting solution that could also integrate with their existing estimating software system.

Solution

Sigfusson Northern chose Maxwell Systems StreetSmarts as their job cost accounting and project management software solution, which is tailored to the needs of heavy and highway contractors. Able to use one solution to manage all of the accounting practices for their seven entities across the U.S. and Canada helps the company efficiently manage job costs, see the big financial picture, and maintain information in one place, in one format. They also use StreetSmarts to manage payroll in-house; track equipment expenses and bill to projects; and streamline workflow between the office and job sites.

Results

The CFO of Sigfusson Northern believes that StreetSmarts is a very powerful tool that helps them better track costs with greater visibility and operate with more efficiency and tighter control. The accounting and project management practices are streamlined and the company has more accurate and timely data on projects, costs, equipment, and more. The home office can stay in sync with activity happening at job sites, and remote employees can manage with live, secure data in StreetSmarts via the web. Ultimately, the company has been able to form new ventures and the accounting team has added three more companies without creating new positions, thanks to the efficiencies achieved with using Maxwell Systems StreetSmarts.



StreetSmarts

Maxwell Systems Case Study

Sigfusson Northern LTD

Sigfusson Northern LTD (SNL) has built its reputation on an ability to get the difficult jobs done. Beginning their commercial fishing and exporting business in the 1920s, soon after the Sigfusson family expanded into winter road construction, blazing trails into some of Canada's harshest and most remote northern terrain.

Today, SNL is a heavy civil contractor performing work on large multi-million dollar projects to small commercial developments in western Canada. Their projects include earth and rock excavation, mine construction and site restoration, aggregate production, drilling and blasting, sewer and infrastructure, earthwork, environmental clean-up, heavy hauling, and more. To accomplish their goal of offering top workmanship in a timely fashion, the contractor employs between 150 and 350 office and field staff at any given time.

To accommodate its growth over the years, the company has leveraged various technologies across its business to improve operations. SNL had relied on an accounting software package for many years, but the product lacked the capability to manage the contractor's increasingly complex project management needs. After evaluating potential options and making a large investment in an enterprise resource planning solution, the SNL team found that their new purchase also did not meet the unique needs of a heavy construction contractor.

Once again, SNL researched the accounting and project management software options on the market. The company was clear about what they needed in a solution and was impressed when they were introduced to Maxwell Systems StreetSmarts. "We wanted to better manage our projects, our job costs, and our equipment and that's why we chose StreetSmarts," explained Greg Harris, CFO, Sigfusson Northern LTD. "The other solutions we evaluated did not offer the equipment module including the maintenance capabilities that are available in StreetSmarts. Plus, those other products were not able to integrate with our existing estimating software system."

Maxwell Systems StreetSmarts is a comprehensive job cost accounting and project management software solution tailored for heavy and highway construction. Designed to help contractors manage construction, equipment, materials, financials, and much more, StreetSmarts is utilized by hundreds of construction businesses to improve operational efficiencies, cost reductions, and increased profits.

Managing Job Costs

In addition to SNL, the Sigfusson family of businesses includes 50%

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ownership of a U.S.-based company that also uses StreetSmarts, as well as a number of joint ventures totaling seven entities under its umbrella. All of the accounting practices for these entities are handled in SNL's Winnipeg office using StreetSmarts software.

Harris explained the value of using a single solution to manage various businesses: "It is very beneficial for keeping costs which apply to specific joint ventures, SNL, or another one of our companies in StreetSmarts. It is a broad-based product that meets the needs of both our Canadian and U.S.-based businesses." By using one solution, the accounting team is able to see the big picture while also having the ability to drill down to the detail and maintain all the information in one place and in the same format.

From the start of the construction phase until the final retainage payment is received, StreetSmarts provides real-time information to help SNL streamline processes and mitigate risk.

With the seamless integration between StreetSmarts and SNL's estimating system, jobs, budgets, contracts, subcontracts, and purchase orders are automatically set up in StreetSmarts, saving time and increasing accuracy for the contractor.

Harris explained that with StreetSmarts, every job is set up in project management with a full array of cost codes. Managers, foremen, and superintendents can access the information they need to manage their job from one central location. They can also appropriately allocate costs. He added that "All overhead departments are also set up in StreetSmarts and costs are applied to the appropriate budgets. We download estimates as a basis for our budgets, providing labor, materials, and equipment breakdowns." All expenses are cost coded to a job or as overhead and tracked, enabling the SNL team to see the financial standing of a project at any time.

Anytime, Anywhere Access

Serving extremely remote areas of western Canada, SNL's field crews don't visit the home office often. The StreetSmarts SmartTraxx module helps to coordinate and streamline efforts between the office staff and field crews no matter where people are located.

"Before we had StreetSmarts, our jobsite clerks used spreadsheets for everything and payroll was manually entered," said Harris. "Now, clerks enter the data at the jobsite, obtain the job foreman's approval, and payroll can then be processed. This significantly reduces data entry for jobsite clerks that are often not only covering their own jobs but are responsible for smaller jobs that don't have assigned clerks. We save lots of time and our information is more accurate." Before, it would take 4-5 days for the payroll data to be entered and the office staff to be able to start processing the data, versus today, with StreetSmarts, all the payroll data is quickly and easily entered on a daily basis and the information is more real-time.

With the SmartTraxx module, SNL is able to easily track hours worked, equipment used, purchase order receipts, and much more from the jobsite. At the end of the day, SmartTraxx syncs up with the home office to keep everyone on the same page.

Just recently, SNL started to use the StreetSmarts Web Reporting module. Now, remote

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employees have the ability to generate custom reports in minutes based on live data that is securely accessible via the Web. It doesn't matter if the user is located at a remote jobsite or in the main office; employees can now access real-time data on their own and conduct analyses to help make better decisions with accurate, current information.

Extending Equipment Life

Typical of heavy construction companies, SNL owns more than 200 pieces of heavy equipment and nearly 300 pieces of small equipment that must be maintained and tracked in order to extend the life of the equipment.

Maintenance is an integral part of the successful utilization of equipment. The Preventative Maintenance component in StreetSmarts helps contractors avoid unnecessary equipment breakdowns and productivity losses.

At the beginning of each week, SNL's maintenance managers use StreetSmarts to run reports about the company's equipment -- tracking information such as hours used, upcoming oil changes, or other required maintenance. Knowing this information early in the week, allows the team to strategically perform maintenance when needed and relocate equipment to other jobs to prevent idle time and ensure maximum utilization.

"StreetSmarts allows us to track all expenses on work orders for each piece of equipment and bill maintenance expenses to the appropriate project or projects," said Harris. "We weren't able to do this before having this StreetSmarts. It's really valuable because we can track costs of equipment appropriately and better understand the nature of repairs, whether it is the result of job abuse or normal damage."

Increased Efficiency and Greater Control

StreetSmarts provides contractors with a comprehensive set of tools to maintain complete financial control. The solution handles everything from Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable to General Ledger, Cash Management, Payroll, and Human Resources.

"We do all of our own payroll in-house," said Harris. The StreetSmarts Payroll component enables Sigfusson to not only manage the complexities of payroll processing typical of heavy construction contractors, but also the unique requirements for Canadian companies, managing multiple entities, as well as managing the productivity of operations and crews.

Sigfusson also leverages the software for HR and safety. Harris explained: "StreetSmarts helps us keep track of incidences, safety statistics, and safety training, and allows us to scan résumés to collect and connect more employee information in the system. Before having this software, we kept all this information on spreadsheets that were not updated properly and often included errors." StreetSmarts provides Sigfusson with quick access to more comprehensive and accurate information to ensure safety and compliance.

Since implementing StreetSmarts, the accounting team has added three more companies, by forming new joint ventures, to its responsibilities; however, no new positions have been created. In fact, this increase in efficiency as a result of StreetSmarts has enabled

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Sigfusson to move some AP/payroll personnel to other departments to handle the growth in other areas of the business.

Top-notch Training

Within less than a two-year period, SNL transitioned between three different software solutions – from its basic accounting package then to the large enterprise product and finally to StreetSmarts. “We needed to make sure all of our numbers were accurately transferred over to StreetSmarts,” said Harris. “We leveraged Maxwell Systems Private Training quite a bit over the first two years and have surely benefited from their top-notch training and customer support. We had about 30 personnel go through very intensive training on the various StreetSmarts modules, from equipment management and payroll to project management. It was very beneficial.”

Sigfusson has a core group of employees leveraging StreetSmarts who regularly use the help desk and online customer support offered by Maxwell Systems. “We’ve always had a good response with a fairly quick turnaround when contacting support,” explained Harris. “I’ve been so very happy with the online support. Within a minute, I am communicating with someone and we always have the option to go to the phone if we need to discuss something in more detail. The team at Maxwell Systems is definitely knowledgeable and they have been helpful in designing features to specifically meet our needs, such as user fields and custom reports.”

The Power of Data

Harris summarized: “StreetSmarts is a very powerful tool. We are learning from StreetSmarts and changing some of our processes, like tracking costs differently, to operate more efficiently. We have more data available to us now and the more we use the solution, the more we see we can use in it. We know that StreetSmarts will provide us with even greater visibility to study our costs and gain tighter control of our operations.”

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