



[CASE STUDY]

CONSTRUCTION SOFTWARE SAVES MONEY – AND PREVENTS HEADACHES

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The problem

“One missed email cost the company over \$2000,” says Trish Hall, Office Manager at Mike Mitchell Construction (MMC) in California.

An employee rented a mini-excavator and skid steer for a job, used them for one day, but didn’t see an email informing him the equipment wasn’t needed the next day. So he didn’t cancel the rental. “We were stuck with a rental bill for equipment we didn’t need,” says Hall.

At the time, MMC’s system for communications and project management was cobbled together from different apps. They used Microsoft Outlook for email, Dropbox to store documents, and the Cozi Family Organizer app for a calendar, to-do lists, notes, and reminders.

"It was messy trying to manage a lot of different apps," says Hall. "And everybody had access only to their own emails. So it was hard to efficiently share information."

Although mistakes like the \$2000 unnecessary rental were rare, their ad-hoc system was time consuming and added stress for Hall and the MMC team trying to ensure everybody had the information they needed to perform well in a timely fashion.

Their old system was impacting clients. "Suppose it's 110 degrees and the AC in a grocery store breaks down," says Hall. "Instead of phoning us, the property owner might send an email to someone on the team who happens to be in meetings for the rest of the day. If we don't respond until the next day, we've missed that opportunity to help our client, and they're very unhappy!"

MMC aims to respond to clients within two hours, but their patchwork system was preventing them from consistently operating to their own high standards.

Something had to change.

Searching for a solution

MMC started the search for an all-in-one software solution that would include everything the company needed at an affordable price — without too many unnecessary features the company wouldn't use. They wanted to be confident it was the right program for a one-and-done switch.

"Some of the reviews of Procore [an enterprise level system for large commercial contractors] said you need an IT person dedicated to running and updating the software," recalls Hall. "We just don't have the personnel for that. We did a demo with Procore, but it was too complex and more than we needed."

Eventually, a Google search led to BuildIT and it looked promising, so the company decided to do a demo. "We were impressed with BuildIT. It had everything we needed and not too much we didn't," says Hall.



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Making the change

Although she's not afraid of tech, Hall is no tech expert. She was initially apprehensive about implementing a new system. "It's hard to let go of the old ways you're used to," she says. "I also knew that the employees would all be coming to me for help on how to use it!"

But the switch was easier than she'd imagined. "It took me about 30 days to use it efficiently and effectively," says Hall. "It's not hard to learn. It's logically laid out, and very easy to get what I want out of it now I know where everything is."

Hall estimates it took a couple of months to get everyone in the company comfortable with the software, scheduling and collaborating with success.

"We have some guys who are in the field 95% of the time, and getting them to attend to emails can be a challenge, no matter what programs we use," says Hall. "Eventually everyone came on board and could use BuildIT easily once they saw how logically the system is laid out."

Using the software

Let's return to the grocery store client who emails about a broken AC system. In BuildIT, Hall can view everyone's emails from one screen and can see that nobody has followed-up with the client. So she follows up with the client and schedules the repair. She notes that "with one click, I can convert the email into a task in the schedule. It's very efficient." She assigns that task to another team member, and they can access the entire background email conversation, right there on the schedule — so everyone is well-informed. "This makes it so much easier to reach our goal of two-hour response times!"

The system is so well-organized that even when Hall returned to work after a 2-week absence, she was quickly able to get back on top of everything. "I didn't have to search through a bunch of different systems and calendars. All the information was right there, under one roof."

Hall says the software makes it easy for her to retrieve information, such as job files, communications, and contact details about prior projects — because the

organizational structure and search function work so well. "I can usually find the answer I need in less than a minute. I feel like I have organizational superpowers!"

Results

By using BuildIT, Hall says everyone in the company has the information they need at their fingertips and can get more done. Partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company has half the number of employees as they did a year ago.

"Because we're more efficient, we can take on and manage more projects with fewer people," says Hall. "We're doing just about the same number of projects and as many maintenance jobs as we were a year ago."

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"There are very few programs we feel so strongly fit our needs," says Hall. "But BuildIT does in every way. We really, *really* like it." And it's not just the software she appreciates.

"Scott from BuildIT is always very responsive. I feel like he's got a red telephone on his desk with my name on it," she laughs. "If I have a question or don't know how to do something, he's right there to help me do it."

BuildIT is an online scheduling, project management, and communication system designed especially for smaller construction firms.

To find out more about BuildIT, visit www.builditsystems.com or call Scott Hutchinson at 1-866-585-5050. (And, for the record, his telephone is standard black!)

Mike Mitchell Construction MMC has been a commercial contractor since 1976, serving the Central Coast and Southern California.

To find out more about MMC, visit www.mmc.work or call Trish Hall at (805) 237-9744.