

Snowed Under an Avalanche of Paper:

How One Company is Digging Out with Mobile Handheld Technology

By J. Eric Hammersmark, Regional Vice President of AboutTime Technologies, Sage Development Partner

Timberline Sage 300 – Going Paperless and the Problem to Solve

If you think paper is free and technology is expensive, think again. Fewer are surprised anymore to learn that companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on supporting paper-based processes. The terms ‘going green,’ ‘environmental citizenship’ and ‘paperless’ are synonymous with doing right in the world we share, but what gets lost in the noise is that pushing mountains of paper around is hurting your business.



B&B Contracting, a Surrey, British Columbia heavy highway contractor with a skilled labor force and large equipment fleet, has maintained a leadership role in a very competitive civil construction market since 1948. One of their biggest challenges has been the mountain of forms required to be completed daily at the project sites to comply with safety and reporting regulations from the WCB (Worksafe British Columbia).

Jeff Horodyski, Controller at B&B estimates that 15 to 20 forms are required to be filled out on any given site daily to comply with WCB. With 30 crews working out there that’s 450 forms being filled out and processed on a daily basis. Multiplied out over a year that’s 75,000 to 100,000 forms to be processed, approved and finally filed and stored away in storage boxes. “There’s safety forms, pre-checks, hazard checks, toolbox checks (the list is a mile long!), vehicle checks, machine checks” and so on.

“The regulatory agencies are putting a lot more burden on us as the employer” Jeff explains, and the results of being fined for non-compliance with proper safety reporting would be more than simply inconvenient to the contractor. In Jeff’s words the fines would be “severe.”

The problem is not just that the forms have to be filled out -- “the foremen complain about this loudly every day,” it’s the number of times the forms have to be handled before they can finally be filed away. “The foremen fills out, signs it and reviews it, a delivery person brings it back to the office, then they are sorted by one individual every morning, then they start splitting up into piles and the

accounting department touches them a couple of times then construction management a couple of times and then filed.” You begin to get the picture.

Patrick Baker, President of Constructive Solutions, who consults and provides Sage Timberline Office systems to B&B, adds that “many of the construction companies we see are handling this purely by word of mouth. These companies often don’t have formal systems in place, a lot is left to the control of the foreman and it really is not getting communicated back to the office.”



The Solution: Mobile Handheld Technology with integration to Timberline

The aforementioned WCB (WorkSafeBC) is already trying to help by providing a mobile app on Apple and Android that allows you to search and browse the OHS Regulation, Policies, Guidelines, and WCB Standards on your mobile device. Many Sage partners provide additional products to provide different methods of data capture solutions.

“What started as a search simply to find a product to streamline our payroll and timekeeping processes,” Jeff explained “quickly turned into a much larger project paying infinitely higher dividends. It’s funny, as we started reviewing and considering AboutTime’s impact on our company as other issues came to our mind we found that other things were even more important than our payroll time. Taking lots of pictures on the site, attached to their field report, making proper traffic management plan notes” all will benefit the company in far reaching ways. They’ve been involved in legal cases over the years, sometimes dealing with an accident that has happened four years prior.

In addition interfacing employee and equipment time records with Timberline, B&B is incredibly excited at the prospects of the easy review, paperless storage, and practically unlimited reporting capabilities that AboutTime’s new FormsXPRESS module will bring. “Civil work has always meant that companies are behind in technology, very paper-based and slow to adopt technology.” At B&B we are trying to buck that trend,” says Horodyski. “We’ve outfitted their foremen with smart phones, equipping them with time keeping technology and digital forms, we’re really trying to push our company and our field to new horizons.” They rolled out smart phones this spring, enabled mail and other tools for the foremen to use and have not looked back.

Their superintendents have been “thrilled” with the addition of smart phones, in the morning they can blast out 10 or 15 emails, giving the foremen directions for the day without having to call them and connect with them, sometimes even going on site to communicate. They can attach a drawing or a sketch as needed. Very useful! Even though reluctant at first, the old hands are coming along and adopting the technology.

B&B expects to go live with the new technology in October and plans to roll it out to all 6 of their divisions by Spring of 2013.



About the Author:

Eric Hammersmark is a longtime veteran of providing technology based solutions to the construction industry. As a Regional Vice President of Sales at AboutTime he enjoys forming relationships with customers and becoming a part of their success.

With more than 900 clients and growing rapidly (over 100 which happen to be Sage Timberline Office users) AboutTime Technologies is gaining a reputation in construction technology as the best of breed solution for paperless data capture and time reporting from the field.

To see a demonstration of AboutTime's flagship product for employee and equipment time keeping or their new module, FormsXPress, please contact AboutTime at 1-888-315-TIME(8463) or Sales@AboutTimeTech.com. Alternatively you can request a demo on their website at www.AboutTimeTech.com.

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