

FANNING THE FLAMES OF INNOVATION

by Constructech Staff

DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS MAKING specific requests, and perhaps even demands, when it comes to information technology. After years of sluggish adoption rates, not only are contractors and corporate owners investing more readily in technology, they are doing so with a precise plan and particular functionality in mind.


While there are still those that resist coining this industry as leading edge, it is certainly one of the few industries refining the way it views technology and automation. To some degree it is becoming a market where software and hardware providers are being forced to think outside of the box. The good news is that in judging the 2005 Technology and Automation's Hottest, the editors of Constructech were able to find a collection of providers that are indeed thinking outside of the box and offering a variety of "hot" solutions.

The editors of Constructech are definitely not alone in considering these companies hot. In a market where technology providers seem to be aplenty, one of the distinguishing factors between the upper echelon and the rest of the pack is a company's portfolio of customers. As you will see in the pages that follow, some of the largest contractors and owner organizations, in both the private and public sector, are choosing these providers over the plethora of others who offer software to the construction industry.

A more intimate look at the actual applications reveals project management as being one of the most widely deployed applications throughout the past year. In fact, selecting the right project management solution is first and foremost on the minds of many users. Yet beyond simple tracking of change orders, requests for information, and other information, they are looking at these solutions to help them collaborate better with partners and link more precisely to financial systems, among other things.

While the leading providers in the market continue to pave the way with cutting-edge solutions, they are beginning to see a formidable challenge from up and coming companies. This isn't limited to project management applications, as lesser-known names in the realm of accounting and estimating, among others, are grabbing considerable marketshare as well.

Another trend making a profound impact on the construction industry recently is the growing importance that is being placed on collaborative technology. For owners, it is a case of getting more actively involved on projects and ensuring project data is accurate, so as to better comply with standards and regulations. For general contractors, better collaboration means more satisfied owners, which in turn translates into more work. As for subcontractors, employing collaborative functionality widens their reach and helps them win more jobs and become a partner more contractors look to when opening up jobs.

Adding even more encouragement to the market is the fact that some of the most innovative technology is still developing. Some of the providers that didn't make the cut for Technology and Automation's Hottest this year are still worth watching. Coming to market with such applications as wireless computer-aided design software, radio-frequency identification technology, and virtual whiteboards, these companies are sure to play a prominent role in the industry going forward—paving the way for an even hotter market for software and hardware for years to come. 

**Accubid**

Concord, Ont.

www.accubid.com

It's been said that the subcontracting community is looking to embrace technology more. Accubid, www.accubid.com, Concord, Ont., certainly hopes this to be true as it provides estimating, billing, and project-management software specifically aimed at mechanical and electrical contractors.

Yet it's not as if the company is sitting with its fingers crossed waiting for this trend to develop. Rather, Accubid is helping to push this trend, coming to market with two innovative products in the past year.

Its cadLive is a computer-aided design-based estimating tool that increases the speed of estimating by allowing contractors to take off material directly from an engineer's drawings. Fully integrated with Accubid's estimating programs, cadLive generates complete data synchronization without the need to import or export takeoffs or breakdowns.

ConstructJob, a Web-based project-management system, allows users to embrace the capabilities of the Internet for communication, collaboration, and management of project documentation. Subcontractors find its Web-based solution is accessible wherever an Internet connection is established making it extremely valuable for them to conduct business in the field.

One of the biggest hurdles Accubid has overcome in the past year is helping users get past an overall resistance to using technology. Through better education and more comprehensive tools, Accubid recently landed many new customers as well.

Autodesk

San Rafael, Calif.

www.autodesk.com

Autodesk provides a range of collaboration and design software.

**Citadon**

San Francisco, Calif.

www.citadon.com

Providing Web-based collaboration, project management, document management, and business process management solutions, Citadon, www.citadon.com, San Francisco, Calif., understands the need to manage and control communication and document flow in the construction industry.

Its ProjectNet Small Team Edition helps remotely dispersed project teams shorten completion times. This allows

organizations to manage complex projects much easier and leverage advanced collaboration and document management capabilities much more efficiently.

The underlying technology platform of the solution helps set it apart from the competition as it provides project teams with more in-depth version control and the ability to upgrade to Citadon's Collaboration Workspace product—which shares the same platform—with great ease.

Integrated with the Windows Desktop, users can access their documents directly through Windows File Explorer via the ProjectNet Small Team Edition desktop client. Additional collaborative functions, such as managing security and checking audit history, are now accessible through Windows Explorer.

**Computer Methods Intl. Corp.**

Toronto, Ont.

www.cmic.ca

Computer Methods Intl. Corp., www.cmic.ca, Toronto, Ont., is doing

its part to fulfill a need in the construction industry for integrated, Web-based enterprise applications.

Its flagship product, CMiC Enterprise, integrates project owners, contractors, suppliers, and partners enabling all parties to get an accurate, comprehensive view of project information. This allows stakeholders to manage finance, human resources, sales, project management, and accounting processes.

It has also had great success with CMiC Project Management, which allows users to manage contracts, automate the sales process, manage budgets, and monitor costs in a streamlined fashion. Going further, its CMiC Integration product interfaces with a company's current information technology (IT) infrastructure, allowing users to manage workflow through the connection of people, applications, and processes.

CMiC continues to bring new and innovative products to market, releasing such applications as CMiC Collaboration Manager, CMiC Resource Schedule, and CMiC Interchange—which leverages extensible markup language to help users integrate IT assets—in early 2005.

With a growing portfolio of customers, steady revenue growth, and a healthy pipeline of products, CMiC is helping define the market for integrated, Web-based construction operations.

**Cynergy Technology**

Tulsa, Okla.

www.thumbprintcpm.com

Cynergy Technology, www.thumbprintcpm.com, Tulsa,

Okla., is banking its success on project knowledge. Its Thumbprint CPM (collaborative program management)

software is a knowledge-based solution that allows companies to capture business processes, both as they exist and as they change, to facilitate best practice sharing and continual improvement across companies.

Containing a model language that has the ability to capture process and intellectual property, Thumbprint CPM is a pure program management tool that considers the impact of each project component as a critical part to the overall success of an entire program. Using Thumbprint CPM, the knowledge attained from one project can be applied to future projects. Changes made to the process model can also be leveraged appropriately during current projects. Overall it helps companies realize the impact each and every process has on the overall program.

While this has been the base model for the company's success since its inception in 1999, Cyntergy enhanced its offering in 2004. Thumbprint CPM now offers new capabilities to help companies leverage their corporate knowledge.

Delttek

Herndon, Va.

www.delttek.com

Provides project control and financial management solutions.

HeadsUp Technologies

Overland Park, Kan.

www.headsuptech.com

Its iCPM tool integrates critical business processes and data.

 Intuit Master Builder

Intuit Construction Business Solutions

Santa Rosa, Calif.

www.intuit.com

They say 350,000 contractors can't be wrong. That is the number of organizations in the construction industry using accounting and production management products from Intuit Construction Business Solutions, www.intuit.com, Santa Rosa, Calif. Aside from QuickBooks, which is one of the most widely used accounting packages for smaller businesses, Intuit has a solution to fit every size enterprise, including QuickBooks Premier: Contractor Edition, QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions, and Master Builder.

The company continued to come to market with new and innovative solutions in the past year with the release of Master Builder 10 and QuickBooks: Premier Contractor Edition 2005 while landing a bevy of new customers in industries ranging from remodeling, subcontracting, general contracting, and homebuilding.

One of Intuit's biggest appeals to the construction industry

is that it continues to hone its Developer Network program, which enables third-party solutions to integrate with its QuickBooks and Master Builder products.

This past year also marked a restructuring into a regionalized network of Solutions Providers. This helps provide greater support for customers using Master Builder construction management software while enabling solutions providers to build their own business more efficiently for long-term success.

Based on a 20% growth in revenue in fiscal year 2004, the company anticipates the same growth in 2005. With its evolving list of customers and dedicated partners there is little reason to believe Intuit is anything less than hot.



Meridian Systems

Folsom, Calif.

www.meridiansystems.com

Despite dropping the 'Project' from its name, Meridian Systems,

www.meridiansystems.com, Folsom, Calif., hasn't lost sight of helping construction companies develop their projects. As one of the most widely recognized names in the construction software industry, Meridian's Prolog, Proliance, and ProjectTalk products are in use by some of the most well-known contractors building some of the largest projects in the world.

Meridian focused heavily on infrastructure lifecycle management (ILM), which encompasses the complete plan, build, and operate cycle of a facility, in 2004. Aside from conducting in-depth industry research on ILM, the company came to market with innovative solutions addressing this area. Proliance 2.0, released in July 2004, combines project and portfolio management functionality, business process management, and a layer of business intelligence, all under one comprehensive solution. By combining scope, budget, and schedule while improving visibility into corporate performance, this solution helps construction companies and facility professionals solve the most critical aspects of their business on a daily basis.

In 2004 Meridian continued to develop strategic business partnerships. Earning the level of Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Meridian also saw its chief technology officer David Ing appointed to the Microsoft Architect Advisory Board.



Primavera Systems

Bala Cynwyd, Pa.

www.primavera.com

Primavera, www.primavera.com, Bala Cynwyd, Pa., has been addressing the project management and scheduling needs of the construction industry for more than 20 years. Continuing to come to market

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with leading-edge solutions and adding prominent customers into the mix each year indicates no slowing down in this run.

With the release of Primavera Contractor in October 2004, Primavera provides a solution centered on coordination between contractors and subcontractors. As a single project planning and scheduling software solution, it is possible for the entire project team to work cohesively on a single consolidated master schedule with timely status updates and change notifications.

Alongside of the release of Primavera Contractor, 2004 marked a year in which Primavera continued to expand offerings and services while extending partnership programs. Establishing the Ongoing Industry Research Forums, the company has developed a program that reaches out to customers and non-customers in the interest of tailoring products that help solve specific problems across the project team. The launch of Primavera Online Interaction Portal and the Primavera Knowledge Center, which is a resource for the construction and engineering industry, are among other notable developments this past year.

Sage Software

Reston, Va.

www.sage.com

It acquired Timberline, which provides a range of enterprise technology.

**Skire Inc.**

Menlo Park, Calif.

www.skire.com

The process of creating an automated and integrated environment across the lifecycle of a facility becomes very simple for owners via the technology platform and suite of applications from Skire Inc., www.skire.com, Menlo Park, Calif.

Its business process automation, project control, collaboration, and document management capabilities streamline the planning, design, procurement, construction, and operations and maintenance activities that often slow the development of a project.

Leveraging the capabilities of its Web-based Unifier platform, which allows the project team to manage data and business processes more efficiently, Skire came to market with uDesigner in 2004. With an easy-to-use hypertext markup language interface, uDesigner enables owners to build forms and workflows that map precisely to the way they conduct business with the ability to standardize across programs or the enterprise. Users do not need software development expertise to create a combination of forms and workflows that automate any business process, including funding requests, design datasheets, and maintenance records, using uDesigner.

Tally Systems

San Diego, Calif.

www.tallysystems.us

Provides takeoff software with blueprint measuring tools.

The Cram Group

New York, N.Y.

www.thecramgroup.com

Access multiple applications from one central Website.

**USGN**

Phoenix, Ariz.

www.usglobal.net

Don't talk to USGN, www.usglobal.net, Phoenix, Ariz., about industry best

practices—the company doesn't believe they exist. At the core of its Web-based collaborative project management software is its thin-client application development platform, which allows customers to write their own applications without the use of programmers or code—in what USGN refers to as "company best practices."

Companies have leveraged this technology to create corporate plan rooms, online bidding, real estate tracking, supply-chain management, cost controls, key performance indicators, and roll-up reporting. While the bulk of its customers are corporate owners; contractors, construction managers, and architects also use the technology to manage their processes. All components of real estate, design, construction, purchasing, asset management, and facility management are modeled via this technology.

USGN's thin-client application requires users to have only a Web browser to deploy its technology. Its advanced platform allows for simplified customization that supports advanced database applications.

In 2004 USGN added such customers as McDonald's Corp., and Menemsha Companies.

**WennSoft**

New Berlin, Wis.

www.wennsoft.com

Software and services provided by WennSoft, www.wennsoft.com, New Berlin, Wis., help tie business processes together while providing deep analytics, enabling companies to develop a more proactive business environment. Its core of product offerings include service management, job costing, and equipment

management, all of which integrate into Microsoft Business Solutions – Great Plains.

One of the biggest accomplishments in 2004 for WennSoft was in its selection to participate in the US ISV (independent software vendor) Partner Advisory Council from Microsoft Business Solutions. The program, in which WennSoft will be a council member, is designed to improve the ISV experience and assist Microsoft in its effort to understand and strengthen relationships across the ISV community.

WennSoft came to market with version 8.0 of its core product in 2004, which includes time tracking capabilities, enhanced user-defined fields in job costing, and a scheduled maintenance module within the equipment management module, among others.

With an average growth rate of 5% within the past three years and more than 80 new customers coming on board in 2004, WennSoft continues to prove that good software can thrive in any market conditions.

WinEstimator

Kent, Wash.

www.winest.com

It provides a broad portfolio of bidding and estimating software.

UP AND COMING



Congistics Corp.

Wilton, Conn.

www.congistics.com

Commercial contractors continually struggle with finding a solution to

accurately combat the drag on productivity presented by constantly-changing schedules, capital assets that are difficult to track and locate, and the need to dispatch the right workers to the right jobs.

Congistics Corp., www.congistics.com, Wilton, Conn., believes it has the ideal solution to solve this critical problem. Its ControlBoard product, designed to resemble a typical whiteboard, allows users to create weekly and monthly resource schedules, allocate resources, and track and monitor equipment. An integrated dispatching module that enables users to directly dispatch scheduled and un-scheduled resources accompanies the product.

ControlBoard is built on the Microsoft .NET platform, which enables every change made to be tracked and stored in a sophisticated database. This helps users resolve any conflicts associated with changes involving resources and schedules. Advanced reporting tools, conflict alerts, along with its ability to track and store changes to the schedule make ControlBoard a highly intuitive product. •

COMPANIES TO WATCH

Corecon Technologies Inc.

Huntington Beach, Calif.

www.corecon.com

Corecon Technologies Inc. provides integrated estimating and project management.

E-Ring Inc.

Madison, Ala.

www.ering-cad.com

With its Capture Desktop product, E-Ring Inc. brings to market an advanced, onscreen takeoff application.

Explorer-Software Inc.

West Vancouver, B.C.

www.explorer-software.com

Explorer-Software has been providing the construction industry with management and accounting software for more than 20 years.

GiveMePower Corp.

Calgary, Alta.

www.givemepower.com

Software from GiveMePower Corp. helps users manage blueprints and computer-aided design files.

ToolWatch Corp.

Englewood, Colo.

www.toolwatch.com

ToolWatch Corp. provides tool and equipment tracking software.

UP AND COMING

FieldRanger

Portland, Ore.

www.fieldranger.com

FieldRanger focuses on the field force needs of small contractors, such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning and electrical with its work order software.