

Jobsite Software Offers 'Real Time' Benefits

HCSS's HeavyJob Finding Particular Use In Growing Number Of Joint Venture Projects

By Carol Eaton

In an economic climate that has led to often razor thin profit margins, "yesterday's news" isn't good enough anymore for many contractors when it comes to monitoring daily field productivity and keeping project costs on track.

Increasingly, field reporting programs combined with tablet or netbook computers or other mobile devices, put directly in the hands of field personnel, are helping savvy contractors track their field productivity and their actual costs compared to estimates on a "real time," or at least a daily, basis. They can then make adjustments to material, equipment or labor quickly, to minimize cost overruns and keep projects on budget.

One of the widely used programs for jobsite management is HeavyJob Field Management Software by HCSS, a Houston, Texas based company that specializes in construction estimating and field management software for heavy/highway, infrastructure, and utility contractors. HeavyJob is a complete job tracking software that transforms job site information into valuable management information

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on a daily basis. Features include time card entry on both the PC and handheld devices, instant production/cost analysis, billing, and forecasting. The software interfaces with users' accounting software.

HeavyJob software has gained growing interest and market share in the industry since it was first introduced about 10 years ago. The software is part of a package of HCSS software products that have received a variety of awards and recognition, most recently from *Roads and Bridges* magazine

which has named it a Gold Medal winner in the Software Category of its annual Contractor's Choice Awards.

HCSS Chief Operating Officer Steve McGough points to an area where he has seen HeavyJob having a particularly significant impact over the last year or so: on joint venture projects, where big dollar investments can make daily cost tracking even more critical.

"We're seeing more and more joint venture type work," McGough comments. "A lot of states are combining jobs that normally would have been broken into smaller contracts in the past."

Enabling Quicker Response Times

Joint venture projects often involve three or more separate companies, all with their individual payrolls, accounting and estimating systems. Historically, the lag time that can result from the process of joining up reports from individual companies' payroll and accounting systems can translate into lost opportunity to immediately correct cost overruns or productiv-

ity issues that occur in the field on a daily basis.

McGough notes that to address the unique nature of joint venture projects, HCSS has enabled the system to be used by the joint venture itself with access enabled for all partners, whether they are HCSS customers or not.

"Not only do individual companies get to see how the joint venture is doing daily, but all the partners have access to the daily job cost themselves," McGough notes.



The time card entry screen allows contractors to record working conditions and notes. One benefit of having this electronically is if an accident occurs on the job, photographs can be taken and attached to the day's diary. Years later, office staff can open HeavyJob and find backup within minutes for an accident, including pictures, attached forms, and the foreman's notes.

"This just allows them to make better business decisions. It stops a lot of the double entry, reduces mistakes coming from the field, and really gives feedback and a transparency of the data in real time."

First-Hand Experience

One company that has firsthand experience with the benefits HeavyJob can bring to a JV project is W.W. Clyde & Co., an AGC member based in Utah. Clark D. Prothero, P.E., a senior project manager with the company, commented on the benefits he has seen firsthand in using the software, ranging from its ability to keep detailed tracking information about what went on at a job on a given day, to providing daily cost information quickly, when potential losses can still be stemmed.

"If you are looking for daily costing information, [HeavyJob] is the product out there to use," he notes. "Once you know what your costs are, you can then plug that time-clock for the day into the "what if" part of the program. You can change things around to see what you've got to do to make money tomorrow, if you lost money today, or what the impact is if someone is going to be out or if you change equipment, those kinds of things."

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W.W. Clyde has used HeavyJob on several joint venture projects, including the recent Big Sand Wash Dam Rehabilitation project in Central Utah, a reservoir enlargement that was completed at an estimated cost of \$38 million by W.W. Clyde/Obayashi, a Joint Venture.

"It was a big plus, because that was such a remote job. It gave us our costing daily out there, and helped us keep track of our 100-plus employees on the job," Prothero comments. He notes that the company currently uses the software via the Citrix system. This enables remote parties on the project to access job information and check on daily cost costing information and the like via a Citrix account login. "[HeavyJob] provides some unique access opportunities that maybe some of the other programs don't for multiple partners and minimal training for those people from other companies that haven't used it before," he comments.

Adding Value For JVs

McGough only sees continued growth for the software, particularly in the joint

Job Code	Description	Est	Bldg Qty	Placed	Actual	Variance
000001	Sub Structure	113,278.00	1,300.00	0.0	2,762.00	110,516.00
000002	Pre-Cast 17'x17'x10' Slab	278,220.00	13,000.00	0.0	1,800.00	276,420.00
000003	Pre-Cast 10'x10'x10' Slab	100.00	20.00	0.0	1,000.00	899.00
000004	Rebar 1/2" Dia	10.00	0.00	20.0	20.00	10.00

Image of a production analysis screen in HeavyJob, which shows if the company is making or losing money (over or under production) at a cost code level.

venture market environment which draws some of the bigger contractors, many of whom are already HCSS customers. "I think it will really add a lot of value because of the tighter bidding on projects now," he adds. "Contractors don't have the luxury of waiting to aggregate their costs to see where they are on a job. They just can't afford to go that long without getting that feedback."

Constructor Awards Issues Call for Entries



AGC of California is calling for entries to the 2010 AGC Constructor Awards program, honoring outstanding California construction projects. The deadline for entries is Friday, January 8, 2010.

Only projects completed or substantially completed in California in the calendar year 2009 by AGC member firms are eligible to compete in the 2010 Awards program.

Small and large projects are considered equally, and the sophistication of the presentation is not part of the judging; rather, it is the merits of the project that determine the winners of the coveted bronze "Constructor" statuettes. Only one entry per category may be submitted by each member firm. A project may be entered in up to two categories, but will be judged in only one. The Awards Committee will decide upon the category in which the project will be judged. Member firms are limited to two entries per year, at a fee of \$500 per entry.

There are six categories for this year's competition. They include:

- Excellence in Project Management – Projects \$5 million or below
- Excellence in Project Management – Projects over \$5 million
- Innovation in Construction Techniques or Materials
- Contribution to the Community
- Meeting the Challenge of the Difficult Job – Builder
- Meeting the Challenge of the Difficult Job – Heavy Engineering

The Awards Committee will conduct first round judging early next year and will select finalists in each category and notify them of their selection in early March 2010. Judging of the finalists will then be undertaken by a panel of seven judges.

All finalists will be honored at the AGC Constructor and Achievement Awards Banquet to be held on April 10, 2010 at the Fairmont San Francisco. Winners will not be announced prior to the dinner program.

Entry forms will be distributed to all AGC members or can be obtained through AGC's website at www.agc-ca.org, or by calling (916) 379-2422.

Did You Know...

HeavyJob is Much More than Just an Electronic Time Card.

With electronic diary entries, document capture, safety meeting minutes and attached photographs, effective backup is just seconds away to support your extra work, claims, safety incidents and other legal issues. The time card also gives cost and production feedback and allows forecasting into the future while virtually eliminating payroll errors.

HeavyJob provides critical documentation and increases communication throughout your organization!



Construction Software & Services
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