



Illinois News

Customer Profile: Thelen Sand & Gravel, Inc.



Sand & Gravel, Inc.
28955 W. Route 173
Antioch, IL 60002
847-395-3313

In 1947, Vern Thelen finally had enough money to buy a truck and 25 acres of land from the profit he made

selling sand out of the back of a horse-drawn wagon. Today, Thelen Sand & Gravel, Inc. in Antioch, Illinois has over 250 employees and spans several counties and businesses across the midwest. How did this company become one of Lake County's most enterprising and successful family-owned and operated businesses? By cherishing community, working hard, displaying loyalty, and most importantly, planning for the future. By making innovation a core value of the company, Thelen has been able to successfully integrate cutting-edge technology with time-honored tradition.

But this expansion from a "one-man show" to a complex organization did not come without some growing pains. Many divisions spawned from the sale of aggregate materials, including the Underground and Excavating Division. With the work volumes piling up the Excavating Division had to upgrade its technology, and *HeavyBid* was the route they took. Tim Clutter, Contract Administrator at Thelen Sand & Gravel said, "Realizing that workloads were already high, we invested in *HeavyBid* estimating software, which allowed our workers to become more efficient. This software helped increase the amount of bids we were able to turn out, which in turn increased the amount of work our division did."

With the quick expansion of Thelen, a problem that they ran into was the delay of available job information between multiple departments. Thelen

relied on accounting reports to monitor job progress, but discrepancies between old accounting records and time cards took weeks to trace. The company spent tremendous resources tracking down daily details, analyzing handwritten time cards, and seeking clarification on details of old jobs by busy work crews. Thelen recognized that these time consuming investigations as well as possible delays in job progress could be resolved quicker, so they looked for technological solutions.

"To complement our bidding software, our company bought *HeavyJob* field management software," Clutter said. "*HeavyJob* has proven to be the solution. It not only records daily jobsite information such as labor and equipment hours, progress quantities, and major material receipt/usage, but it also allows seamless integration of time card data with the company's COINS accounting system. With *HeavyJob*, discrepancies between field crew entries and accounting records can now be quickly traced to files on the company server instead of handwritten tickets buried in a folder."

By installing *HeavyJob* on a Citrix server, Thelen has taken this integration even further by enabling home office information to be remotely accessible by field superintendents and foremen. With an internet enabled laptop in a pickup, foremen can now e-mail time cards to the office as well as directly access office data to analyze job production. Errors are resolved quicker, numbers going from the field to accounting line up cleaner, and crews remain busy working rather than explaining old details.

"This job tracking software is amazing. Not only can we track all of our labor and equipment hours against our budget, but the production analysis screen is on the cutting edge of technology. It has

allowed our foremen to check numbers against the budget on a daily basis and also for the week, month, or even the entire job. This lets them know immediately if they need to pick up the pace, or if they are on top of their job. Most companies, including ours a few years ago, would not find this information out until weeks into the project and possibly not even until the job was over," Clutter said.

In the summer of 2004 Thelen implemented another HCSS software program called *The Dispatcher*. "We now know where every piece of equipment and every person are on a daily basis. With the most recent update, we are able to link up *HeavyJob* and *The Dispatcher* to ensure that the foremen are entering on the time card the specific piece of equipment that was scheduled for them. It seems that with every update, HCSS is improving the system in a useful and practical manner," Clutter concluded.

Thelen's embracement of new technology to support expanding operations is not only a testament to their motto, "Small enough to know our customers and large enough to take care of their needs," but also a vow to stay ahead of the competition.

Thelen Sand & Gravel, Inc.

Founded: 1947

Type of Work: *Underground, Excavating*

Company Size: *\$20-30 Million (Underground & Excavating Div.)*

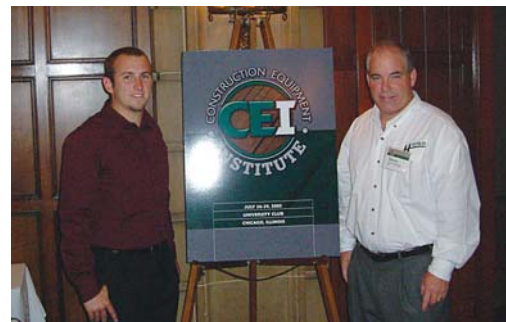
Number of Jobs Bid Annually: 500

Location: *Antioch, IL*

HCSS & Thelen Sand & Gravel Present at CEI Conference

The Construction Equipment Institute held their annual conference in Chicago where Steve McGough, HCSS Vice President of Product Development and Tim Clutter, Contract Administrator for Thelen Sand & Gravel, delivered a joint presentation followed by a roundtable discussion on how *The Dispatcher* program has added value to Thelen's operations. During the roundtable discussion, Tim said "*The Dispatcher* program has paid for itself. The program has allowed us to monitor our equipment rental invoices more consistently. In the past we would just approve the rental invoices, figuring they were

correct. By having documentation of when a piece of equipment was placed on and off rent we have received \$11,000 in credits from our rental vendors." Tim went on to say, "If we need to schedule mobilization or locate a piece of equipment for maintenance, it's just a mouse click away. In the past, several phone calls would have been made to locate a resource. Not only did this waste office time, it disrupted our field production. We now know where every piece of equipment and every employee is located on a daily basis." Special thanks to Tim and Thelen Sand & Gravel for their participation in the conference.



Steve McGough (right), HCSS Vice President of Product Development and Tim Clutter (left), Contract Administrator for Thelen Sand & Gravel at the CEI Conference, June 26-29 in Chicago.

Purchasing Laptops for HeavyJob/Field

One of the most common questions we get at HCSS is, "How much should I spend on a laptop for my foremen to run *HeavyJob/Field*?" With so many choices available today, picking the right laptop can be a daunting task. From a business perspective, you need a laptop that will run *HeavyJob/Field*, but not cost a small fortune.

Many folks are concerned with what specifications the laptop must have to run the software. We list our minimum system requirements as 64MB RAM, Pentium 2 or 3 processor, VGA monitor, CD-ROM drive, and a mouse device. You would be hard pressed to find a laptop that does not meet these minimum requirements. The bottom line is that any current laptop is more than adequate to run *HeavyJob*.



So what are the choices? Since just about any hardware will suffice, it comes down to a decision between durability and price. A common choice for durability is the Panasonic ToughBook. It comes with the latest technology,

and is specifically designed to be rugged enough to take the inherent abuse of being in the field. Unfortunately, that ruggedness will set you back about \$3,000 per unit.

Or better yet, you can opt for a more economically viable solution: buy an inexpensive laptop and a rugged carrying case. You could buy five \$600 laptops for the price of one ToughBook. Even if you have a foreman that breaks or loses one laptop every year, it would take five years to justify the purchase of a highly durable laptop.

Dell Computers (www.dell.com) regularly offers the low-end Inspiron notebook computers for under \$700 and often has sales that bring the price to under \$600! Other main retailers to watch for that may offer new laptops in the \$600 range include www.hp.com, www.gateway.com, and www.toshibadirect.com. Don't forget to keep an eye out for sales at your local electronics superstore like Best Buy, Circuit City, CompUSA, or Fry's. Quite often they offer new laptops for about \$600.

If you don't mind yesterday's technology or "scratch and dent" models, you can always purchase refurbished laptops for even less. Online resellers like www.geeks.com, www.LaptopOutlet.com, and www.USAnotebook.com offer refurbished laptops at a price ranging from \$250-\$600. Some even offer a warranty on their laptops. Also, don't forget to check with Dell and Gateway to see what kind of refurbished inventory they have.

Employee Corner: Suhail Khaliq, Technical Support

Suhail began working at HCSS in July 2002 as a Tech Support Analyst, and he was recently promoted to Assistant Tech Support Manager. A graduate of the University of Texas in 2001, Suhail has experience with a variety of computer hardware and software applications, including programming in Fortran and C++.



In addition to taking support calls, Suhail teaches *HeavyBid* training classes and assists customers with *HeavyJob* implementation. What Suhail likes best about working at HCSS is the casual environment. "We maintain a relaxed, yet professional relationship with our customers, and we are encouraged to have fun around the office," remarks Suhail.

Although he was born in Chicago, Suhail has lived in Houston since 1981. He has traveled extensively to countries around the world. His most recent trip was to India. He also speaks five languages - English, Urdu, Hindi, Arabic and Punjabi. This was helpful on one particularly difficult support call when English was not the customer's first language - Suhail simply slipped into Urdu and was able to fix the problem!

Suhail is involved in nearly all HCSS sponsored activities. He plays on the soccer and softball teams and participates in many of the 5K runs. One of Suhail's favorite hobbies is skydiving. As a matter of fact, he has encouraged several HCSS employees to join him.



Illinois Bid News

(HeavyBid Customers Noted in Green)

Butterfield Rd - Variable Width Milling & Bituminous Concrete Surface

Central Blacktop Company, Inc. \$255,391.68

Plote Construction, Inc. \$276,851.79

James D. Fiala Paving Corp. \$291,685.24

All are HCSS Customers!

Reconstruction of Harnett St. in the City of Mascoutah

Korte & Luitjohan Contractors, Inc. . . . \$843,085.88

Hank's Excavating & Landscaping, Inc. \$849,233.29

The Kilian Corp. & Asphalt Sales & Products, Inc. \$898,550.83

Coldmilling & Bituminous Resurfacing on Rt 92

Brandt Construction Company \$865,905.40

Valley Construction Company \$894,998.58

McCarthy Improvement Company \$895,521.70

Resurfacing & Sidewalk Improvements at Jubilee

College State Park

Otto Baum Company, Inc. \$50,530.50

P.J. Hoerr, Inc. \$51,706.00

Rail City Construction, Inc. \$65,262.35

Beniach Construction Company, Inc. \$73,105.00

R.A. Cullinan & Son, Inc. \$81,009.84

Reconstruction of 4.36 Miles of I-74 in Peoria County

Walsh Construction Company \$45,716,849.59

R.A. Cullinan & Son, Inc. \$48,339,312.02

All are HCSS Customers!

Wetland Mitigation at LaGrange Wetland Bank

Freesen, Inc.'s bid of \$377,012.36 left only \$14.14 on the table!



If you have any questions about how to use software to improve productivity in your business, contact Mark Reeves, your Software Consultant for Illinois at MarkR@hcss.com or 800-683-3196.