

# Customer Case Study: Coakley and Williams



## Coakley & Williams Improves Communication and Business Efficiency with Prolog Software

Coakley & Williams Construction, Inc. (CWCI) is a privately owned firm with roots in the Washington Metropolitan region dating back to 1926. The recipient of numerous client commendations and awards from industry associations, CWCI is also ranked among the Top 100 Design/Builders and the Top 400 Contractors by Engineering News Record. The firm constructs a wide variety of facilities for both private and government clients across many product categories including office, industrial, healthcare, education, retail, and banking. CWCI provides services for Design/Build, as a General Contractor, and as a Construction Manager.



### Fulfilling a Business Need

Before adopting project management software in 2000, CWCI relied on Microsoft Office applications to manage its jobs. The typical – and tedious – process included a secretary typing a detailed letter to outline a project's scope and an engineer creating a log in Excel to manage details. Overall, it was a very manual process with no centralized record-keeping.

Executive and senior management at CWCI wanted to unify the development and management of project budgets and needed the ability to archive complete project information – from cradle to grave. Having a centralized project data repository was a compelling value. For a brief period, the company tried using project management software from Primavera. But after testing it on one project, they found it to be unwieldy.

Then, a joint venture introduced CWCI to ProjectTalk, an ASP project management solution from Meridian Systems that allowed online collaboration among the entire project

extended down the chain of command. In-house training programs have been developed to help staff get the most out of the software and internal user groups continually assess better ways to get things done.

Today, approximately 75 percent of CWCI's 210 employees use Prolog to manage nearly 100 projects each year that total more than \$200M in annual revenues.

### Growth through Efficiency and Consistency

It's been seven years since CWCI implemented Prolog Manager. And according to project manager Peter Davidson, the software has exceeded expectations. "We've experienced consistent growth over the years, which coincides with our use of Prolog," explains Davidson. "Prolog helps us work more efficiently because our process is now consistent across all projects. This allows us to handle greater volume while maintaining control and profitability."

have good practices – especially with repeat business. Because of Prolog, they see us as efficient with our business processes and that reinforces our excellent reputation."

Standardized communication templates within Prolog help CWCI reduce correspondence cycle times. For example, RFI turn-around times are significantly reduced compared to the previous manual process. The system is so impressive that the company's government clients have asked CWCI to host Prolog for them so they can experience similar efficiencies.

### Project Visibility

Senior management support is one of the main reasons that CWCI's deployment of Prolog has been so successful. The business visibility provided by Prolog's Portfolio Manager gives top managers a full view of projects and allows them to drill down to specific details.

Monthly reporting leverages Prolog's capability to track budget/variance, contract status, buyout information, and more across all projects. "Uncommitted costs are the first things to erode profit," says Davidson. "Prolog's reporting capabilities give us control over these costs by showing us what we can expect to spend on a month-to-month basis."

The size of each CWCI project team varies by job, but usually includes a core group consisting of a project manager, project engineer, and construction superintendent. The teams use Prolog during every phase of their jobs to track budgets and costs; manage change orders; document testing and inspections; log daily journal entries; and even create punch lists.

A significant source of CWCI's revenue comes from the design/build segment of its business. According to Davidson, Prolog helps facilitate this important revenue stream. "Fifty percent of our work is design/build," states Davidson. "With Prolog, we start the document management process during the design phase, tracking documents back and forth between

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*Peter Davidson, project manager, Coakley & Williams*

team. CWCI soon realized it had found the answer to its project management needs. The company eventually moved to Meridian's Prolog Manager, a self-hosted solution that delivers robust project management capabilities.

From the get-go, CWCI took a top-down approach to utilizing the broad functionality offered by Prolog. The company's widespread use started with senior management and

Consistency among projects has contributed to the positive development of the CWCI brand – its customers have learned to expect a high level of service, which the company delivers time and again. "The contracting community is small and cohesive. To remain competitive, we must deal with clients, peers, subcontractors, design partners, and even vendors on a continual basis in a professional manner," explains Davidson. "Our clients expect us to

architects and engineers. We may have 200 RFIs before breaking ground. Team members are often in different locations and we are able to track e-mail generated documentation, teleconferencing notes, and other correspondence in real time. Prolog helps manage it all!"

Prolog is such a vital component of CWCI's project management processes that they use remote access technology to enable job sites and satellite offices to utilize the software on a daily basis.

## Reducing Risk

Having detailed project tracking tools in place has mitigated financial risk for CWCI. "Every owner wants more work done for less money," explains Davidson. "By using Prolog to track all of our change orders, we are able to document extras and get approval before the work is completed. This lessens our exposure with project owners and ensures that we get paid for

changes." CWCI also uses Prolog to track subcontract change orders. This sets the stage for a seamless project close.

Year end is another area where Prolog helps reduce risk for CWCI. By better managing costing and projections, the company is better positioned when it's time to settle with risk management suppliers such as its bonding and insurance agents. "Our reporting is much more integrated," says Davidson, "and we know exactly what to expect at the end of each year."

## Centralized Project Data

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## CWCI Project Profile

Negotiated contract with DANAC Corporation for the design and construction of Phase One of the DANAC STILES Corporate Campus/ Manugistics Headquarters in Rockville, Maryland.

### Key Project Elements

- › State-of-the-art global teleconferencing capabilities allowing for instantaneous communication capabilities among multiple locations throughout the world
- › A mission critical Data Center with emergency generators and UPS systems
- › Computer Room Air Conditioning (CRAC) Unit
- › Upgraded Security & Intrusion Detection System consisting of computers, roaming patrol, and limited access measures
- › 32 LAN rooms, training rooms, projection rooms with rear screen projectors, and a fitness facility.
- › Original contract value for base building design and construction: \$30,530,737
- › Completion date for the entire project: April 15, 2002

### Results

The project was delivered under two separate contracts, one of which was a negotiated Design-Build contract with the Owner/Developer for the base building, and the other, a competitively bid General Contractor arrangement for the tenant work. The initial combined contract value for the project was over \$40 million. The expertise of the Team with Design-Build work and their ability to quickly respond to changes enabled this project to be delivered on its original due date of April 15, 2002.



Photograph provided by Jeffrey Sauers, Commercial Photographics

### Project Awards

- › 2002 Excellence in Construction Award for the Best New Project over \$40 Million from the Metropolitan Washington and Virginia Chapters of Associated Builders and Contractors
- › 2003 Award of Merit from the Baltimore Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors
- › 2003 Merit Award in the Maryland/DC NAIOP Inaugural Awards of Excellence program
- › Developer/Design-Build, National Design-Build Excellence Award from DBIA
- › Developer/Design-Build, National Capital Chapter Excellence Award from DBIA
- › Merit Award for Best Suburban Office Mid-Rise from the Maryland/DC NAIOP program



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