

MJ HARRIS IMPLEMENTS PROLOG MANAGER AND DATABRIDGE FOR TIMBERLINE®

M.J. Harris, Inc. (MJHI) is a leading general contractor specializing in design-build, pre-construction, construction and construction management. MJHI is the successor company to the Harris Construction Company (HCC), formed in September 1989. The principals of MJHI have more than fifty years experience in the construction industry on projects that include large complex hospital projects valued at more than \$30 million. MJHI works on these healthcare projects throughout the United States.

IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGE

MJHI project managers needed a single system to manage all critical functions, instead of relying on various functional groups within the company. MJHI needed the new system to

- 1) automate and streamline many manual processes, provide the tools necessary for project managers to have critical decision-making information at their fingertips, and
- 2) integrate with the MJHI accounting software, Timberline® Gold Extended from Timberline® Software.

DEFINING THE NEED

MJHI (www.mjharris.com) has deployed Meridian Project Systems' (MPS) Prolog Manager and Prolog Website applications company-wide for use on most of its projects. In 2001, MJHI identified the need for an improved system of managing and controlling fast-track projects throughout the country. Many of these were small projects lasting fewer than three months in duration. MJHI averaged approximately 60 of these projects per year.

In 2000, Meridian Project Systems and Event 1 Software, Inc. began development of a databridge between Prolog Manager and Timberline® Gold Extended. HardHat Technologies, the Birmingham area channel partner for MPS solutions, was involved in the development process for this databridge, called the Event 1 Integrator. MJHI asked HardHat Technologies to demonstrate the capabilities of Prolog Manager and the ability to integrate with Timberline® Gold Extended. Upon reviewing these applications, MJHI realized the potential for streamlining project management tasks and getting critical data into project manager's hands when needed.



IMPLEMENTING PROLOG MANAGER AND THE EVENT 1 INTEGRATOR

With senior management behind this initiative, Rick Norris, Controller for MJHI, began the process of gathering data located on various computers, residing in spreadsheets, word processor files, and miscellaneous database programs. MJHI worked closely with HardHat Technologies and Event 1 Software to develop an implementation plan that would deliver Prolog Manager, Prolog Website and the Event 1 Integrator to MJHI.

MJHI planned to use a majority of the cost control and document control features in Prolog Manager and all collaboration capabilities in Prolog Website. Remote Prolog Manager users would access the system by connecting to a Citrix server. Budgets and actual costs would be passed from Timberline® to Prolog Manager while contracts would pass from Prolog Manager to Timberline®. This sharing of data between Prolog Manager and the accounting system was a concern for MJHI staff. Once the databridge was implemented, it eliminated this concern and allowed MJHI staff to have total

control in deciding exactly how and when the accounting system was updated.

BENEFIT OF USING MPS PRODUCTS

With 10 users actively using this integrated system, MJHI has begun to reap the benefits of sharing information between Prolog Manager and Timberline. The amount of work to generate contracts and change orders has decreased for the accounting staff. MJHI project managers enter information that is shared with the accounting software. Actual costs are being passed to Prolog Manager, which gives the project managers faster access to information and enhances the powerful project control features in Prolog Manager. All project information now resides in one database and can be accessed any time, from any computer through Prolog Manager or Prolog Website.

LESSONS LEARNED

MJHI learned that implementing one new system is a challenge in and of itself. Implementing two systems at once more than doubles the challenge. A well thought-out implementation and training plan, complete with user acceptance testing, is paramount to success. These systems are so powerful, with many features, that it takes a very methodical, planned approach to customizing, integrating, testing, and user training. According to Norris, "Effectively merging data between Prolog and Timberline with the Event1 Integrator required buy-in from top management and a commitment to training in order to produce a successful implementation."

Commitment to training was vital to the success of this implementation and is an active part of the MJHI culture. Mandatory training sessions were held for all MJHI users. In addition, Norris stressed the need to have separate "test bed" databases that would test various integration scenarios.

"There is no better way to ease fears than to create test databases and test segments of the system to explore various scenarios that might occur."

MJHI found it helpful to have an experienced MPS channel partner to assist in the implementation. HardHat Technologies provided the training services for MJHI, performed all Prolog customization and assisted in the setup and testing of the Event 1 Integrator.



CONCLUSION

MJHI feels they absolutely made the right choice in selecting Prolog Manager as the project management and control system to integrate with their accounting system. Much of the data entered into the accounting system originates with the project management staff. Duplicate effort has been eliminated and accuracy has been improved. From the project manager's perspective, having project budgets set up automatically based on data that flows from estimating to accounting, and then to project management, is a tremendous value. Duplicate entry has been avoided and errors virtually eliminated.

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"Project managers now have more control over their project data. Prolog Manager and the Event 1 Integrator databridge allow project management and accounting staff to share current information in a timely manner. Also, elimination of duplicate data entry and the reduction of keying errors are a direct result of allowing project management staff to assume responsibility for the real time processing of their subcontracts and change orders."

Rick Norris
Controller
M. J. Harris, Inc.

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