

Customer  
Case Study

Deltek Acumen

“Acumen provides more than a report that tell us status - it provides a foundation to help us make a better action plan.”

» Colin Thrift,  
Scheduling Executive,  
Gilbane Building  
Company



# Gilbane Building Company

## Leading Construction Firm Benefits from Accuracy, Visibility and Open Communication with Deltek Acumen

### The Challenge

Since 1873 Gilbane Building Company has been providing a full slate of construction and facilities-related services for clients across various markets. Growing to be one of the largest family-owned construction companies, with over 2,000 employees, Gilbane has a unique reputation for delivering projects on time and on budget, safely and efficiently. Gilbane’s commitment to delivering successful projects for its clients led the company to evaluate, and adopt, the Deltek Acumen suite of products.

Prior to evaluating Deltek Acumen software, Gilbane already had a keen understanding of the important role schedule risk analysis plays in realistically forecasting and planning projects. However, with projects ranging from a sprinkler retrofit to building an entire hospital campus, Gilbane needed a scalable and repeatable risk analysis process that could be implemented easily by the project team. Gilbane required a system that would generate honest discussion from the project team and provide them the utmost confidence when presenting risk results to its clients.

### The Solution

Gilbane turned to Deltek to take its project delivery to the next level. By implementing Deltek Acumen Fuse to evaluate and improve the quality of its schedules and Deltek Acumen Risk to assess project risk exposure Gilbane was able to get the most accurate information to the right people immediately. Deltek Acumen helped the company focus on mining the project team’s insight, which led to mitigation planning and, in the end, reduced risk exposure and improved forecast accuracy.

### Clear and Immediate Project Insight

As Gilbane knows, one of the most critical steps in running a schedule risk analysis is assessing the quality of the initial baseline schedule. This key step ensures that the results of the risk analysis are not based on a faulty foundation. However running this type of analysis manually can be incredibly time-consuming. Gilbane uses the schedule quality checks built into Fuse to pinpoint areas of the schedule that could cause problems during the risk analysis. This includes looking at the use of constraints, identifying any open-ended activities and pinpointing logic hot spots within the schedule.

“You don’t have to go hunting for needles in the haystack, Fuse actually tells you where they are.”

» Colin Thrift,  
Scheduling Executive,  
Gilbane Building  
Company

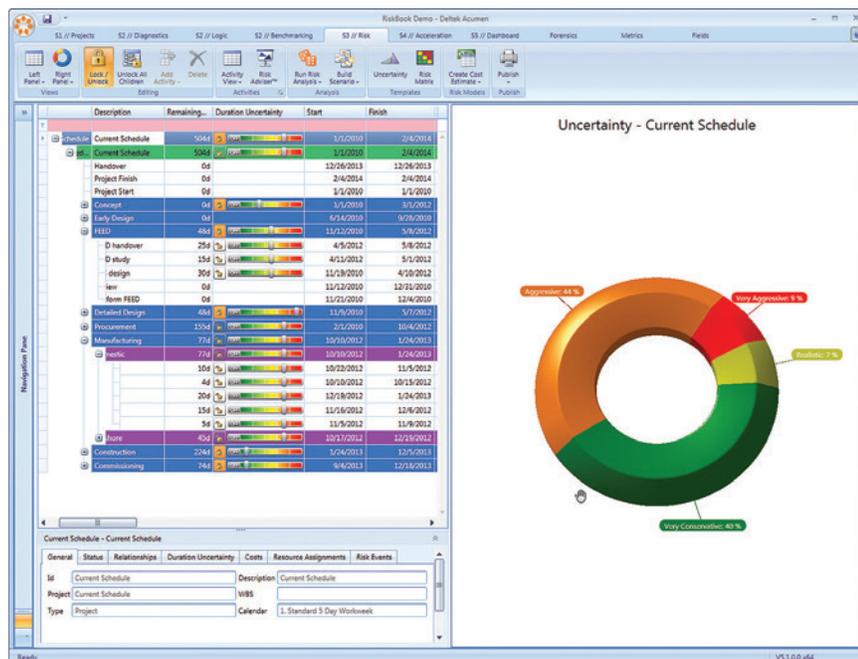


Figure 1- The uncertainty report in Acumen Risk provides insight into the teams’ perception of the schedule as planned.

However, simply improving the quality of the plan was not enough to satisfy Gilbane’s commitment to superior project performance. The company wanted to evaluate and improve the accuracy of its project plans and that requires completing a schedule risk analysis.

Prior to Acumen, running a schedule risk analysis at Gilbane meant interviewing the engineers, construction managers, and team members; leaving with the data to run the analysis; and, reporting results at the next meeting. With Acumen, the analysis can be run in real time in front of the team. According to Colin Thrift, Scheduling Executive at Gilbane Building Company, “Running the risk analysis live in front of the team makes the conversation very interactive and discussing the problems gets increasingly more accurate. I can say to the team, ‘based on what I’m hearing these are the results, what do you think?’ I’m able to refine each step with the team improving the reality of the schedule. It’s a very proactive approach.”

As team members provide input, Deltek Acumen’s responsive reports immediately update. For example, in the uncertainty report, the team can watch the fluctuations in how aggressive or how conservative they view the project schedule as they provide the input.

### Keeping Lines of Communication Open

Throughout the evaluation process, Gilbane Building Company was looking for a tool that would ease the typically complex process of schedule and risk reviews and encourage communication amongst the project team. Acumen delivered that and more.

The challenge was to conduct schedule and risk review meetings without getting bogged down in each and every detail. This focus on minute detail rather than bigger picture goals and objectives led to lengthy meetings and endless discussion.

“The uncertainty sliders make our internal meetings and client communication interactive. We get an immediate outcome on uncertainty, and then we can look at the risk drivers report and ask, does this make sense?”

» Colin Thrift,  
Scheduling Executive,  
Gilbane Building  
Company

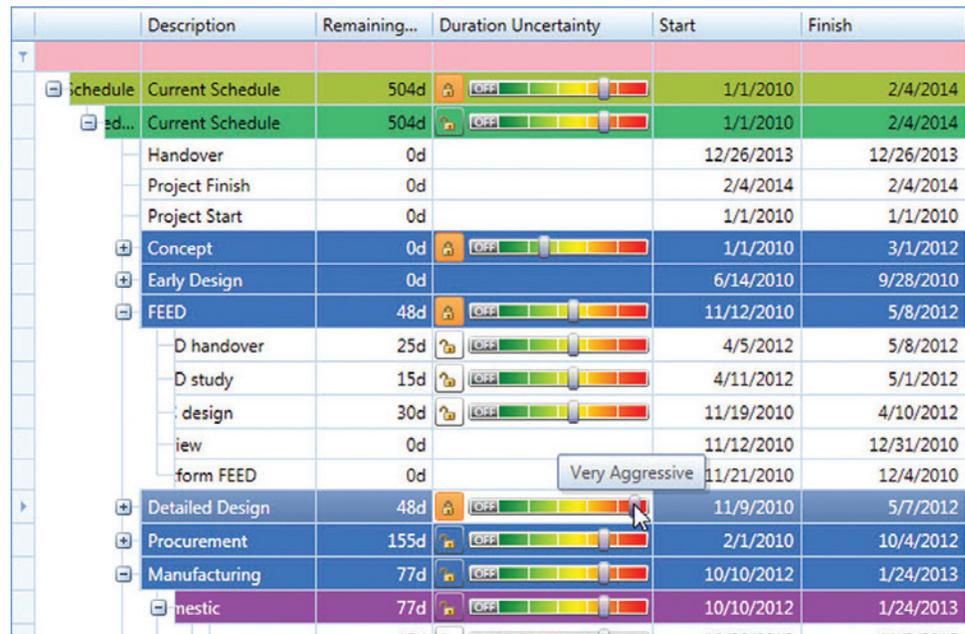


Figure 2 – In team interviews, The Uncertainty Sliders provide a common standard and facilitate honest discussions around the project scope.

“The uncertainty sliders in Acumen Risk are my tool for asking questions. Rather than going to the team and asking them to define three-point estimates or plus/minus durations for each activity I can simply ask them, ‘do you think the schedule is aggressive or do you think it is conservative?’ I haven’t found a single person, on the project team, that doesn’t understand and value this concept—often even better than they understand the CPM schedule,” said Thrift.

Acumen Risk provides a slider for each activity, or group of activities, that allows Gilbane to rate areas of the schedule on a scale from ‘Very Aggressive’ to ‘Very Conservative’. The ratings map back to a common template where Very Aggressive might be defined as an activity where the best-case scenario is as-planned and the worst case scenario is 50% longer than planned. The common template provides consistency across the project and enables team members to give true and honest input instead of trying to guess the best and worst case scenarios for each activity.

Acumen Risk’s ease-of-use and simple interface enabled team members to give true opinions when asked to review planned durations without getting bogged down in the nitty-gritty detail.

“The CPM schedule represents our optimum plan, which includes the known risks. But a CPM plan does not include the unknown risk or the impact of known risks should they occur. With Acumen we were able to have the conversations necessary to look at what could go wrong with the project,” said Thrift, “It’s not a schedule audit, it’s just a way of evaluating how confident we are with the plan in place. This improved the accuracy of our planning and helped us prepare for issues before they became problematic.”

Once uncertainty and risk events had been incorporated into the risk analysis reports like the Risk Drivers report pinpointed the biggest threats to the project.

“It’s all about the conversation, the results are hugely important, but Acumen helps us ensure we’re having the RIGHT conversation early in the project.”

» Colin Thrift,  
 Scheduling Executive,  
 Gilbane Building  
 Company

### Evaluating Scenarios

One of the key capabilities of Deltek Acumen that Gilbane employs is running and comparing multiple ‘what if’ scenarios. The ability to simulate everything from uncertainty around the realism of a new contractor’s proposed scope of work to a delay in approvals or issues during execution is helpful in identifying where mitigation efforts are best spent and evaluating which mitigation option should be applied.

“We run many, many “what-if” scenarios. In one case, we had a contractor that had scheduled two weeks for approval and 12 weeks of work. In actuality, there were more steps than originally planned, including multiple contract revisions and submittals,” said Thrift, “In a CPM schedule you don’t always pick up on the missing steps. With Acumen Risk you not only spot these gaps, but gain immediate understanding of their impact on the schedule.”

With each scenario the team can step back and evaluate the results. The data powers the conversation so Gilbane can leverage the team’s experience and expertise and identify any disconnect with the plan.

### Gilbane Process

Gilbane continuously sees the benefit in Deltek Acumen software. The conversations facilitated by the tools’ vivid and immediate reporting enable the company to identify a proactive approach to enabling success and reducing risk exposure. Acumen’s ease-of-use and clear results give Gilbane confidence when sharing analyses with its client and help the organization maintain a competitive advantage as a reliable construction company with consistently successful projects.

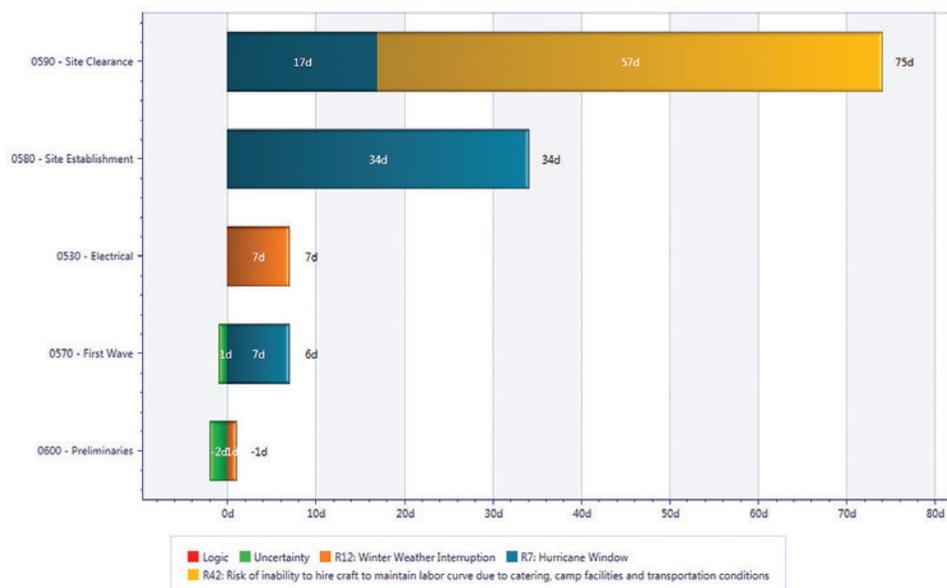
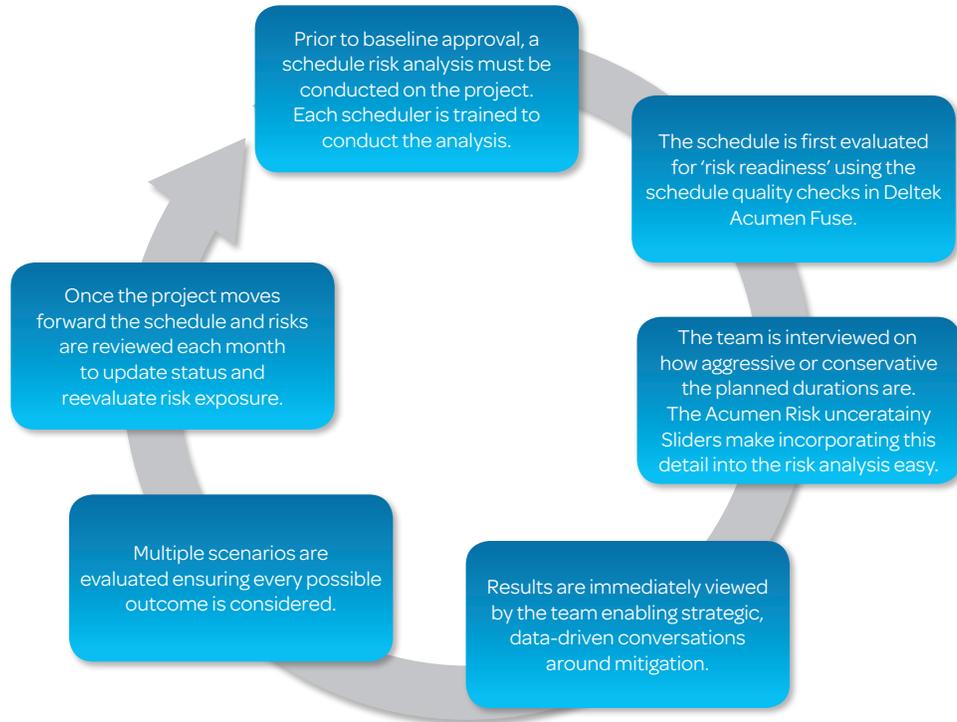


Figure 3- The Deltek Acumen Risk Risk Drivers report highlights the highest-risk areas of the schedule allowing the team to zero in on what needs their attention.

## Gilbane Process



## About Gilbane Building Company

Gilbane Inc., based in Providence, Rhode Island, is one of the largest privately held family-owned real estate development and construction firms in the industry. Proudly family-owned and operated since 1873, our rich history combines with our extensive knowledge of today's ever-changing demands, allowing us to deliver the best facility solutions for our clients.

We are steadfast advocates for our clients, our employees, and the communities in which we work. Through community involvement, sustainable business practices, and unwavering integrity, we are always striving to be better and to do better.

<http://www.gilbaneco.com>

### The Deltek Advantage

- Improved schedule reliability
- Reduced risk exposure
- Improved forecast accuracy
- Streamlined schedule and risk review processes

[deltek.com](http://deltek.com)  
[app-projectconsulting.com](http://app-projectconsulting.com)