

Case study: Saunders Construction

Saunders Construction professionalizes scheduling company-wide with Powerproject



Powerproject has helped the rapidly growing construction firm adopt standardized scheduling practices and apply those to every job, regardless of size. The software's ease of use, affordability, and robust feature-set designed for construction made it the logical choice to extend Saunders' competitive advantage.

Colorado's top commercial builder makes plans to stay that way

Saunders Construction is ranked by ENR Magazine as one of the largest general contractors in Colorado with 440 staffers and annual billings topping \$450 million. The company has steadily grown and taken on projects of increasing complexity since its founding in 1972. Their clients come from a diverse mix of industries including healthcare, retail, manufacturing, religious, governmental, and K-12 and higher education.

With an increasing number of complex projects running simultaneously, a better, more systematic approach to scheduling was needed. The

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professionalizing of project scheduling at Saunders sought to reduce risk while increasing management visibility. In 2013, the company hired a seasoned scheduling manager to oversee the transition.

One of the new scheduling manager's initial tasks was to find and standardize on a new scheduling system. Saunders' staffers were so frustrated with the outdated Suretrak system that many simply didn't build formal project schedules. Those that did use it, needed the company's IT staff to downgrade their computer's operating system to Windows XP in order to allow Suretrak to run. A couple of copies of Primavera P6, purchased for one RFP requirement, sat unused due to its excessive complexity.

After a competitive search, the company chose to adopt Powerproject enterprise-wide, providing shared licenses for all its superintendents, project managers, and project engineers.

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"The software is now used for every job – regardless of project size," says Bill Jack Daniel, scheduling manager at Saunders. "It's a corporate initiative and it truly helps us better manage and track all jobs."

Making the switch to Powerproject

Saunders recognized that senior management buy-in and proper training would be critical if the new system were to be fully adopted.

Company owners and senior management were heavily involved in the ultimate selection process and in setting up guidelines for its use. "With Powerproject we now have a very effective and efficient tool that is helping us achieve all of our goals of improved scheduling and planning throughout Saunders," said company president Greg Schmidt.

Initial training on Powerproject was conducted by regional ElecoSoft resellers Project Integration. The system was so intuitive to use, most Saunders' staffers in the training sessions were making schedules within a couple of hours. Daniel was also able to then train future sets of users internally.

The transition from Suretrak (or no scheduling at all) to Powerproject on every job was completed in 2013.

The Saunders team finds plenty to love about Powerproject

Impacts of the adopting Powerproject were evident throughout the organization quickly. Saunders' accounting and financial team appreciated the cost savings over other systems. Thanks to concurrent licensing, the scheduling software runs

“ I thought this was going to be hard. Why does P6 make this so difficult? ”

on 200 computers with only 30 licenses – a savings of more than \$400,000 compared to Oracle Primavera, which does not offer concurrent licensing. Additionally, because it is intuitive to use, less time is spent training staff. And, there's less IT department time needed for maintaining the system and the machines needed to run it.

Project engineers and managers also reported high satisfaction with Powerproject for its simplicity but powerful functionality. As one project superintendent said, "The tool is so easy, I actually use it!"

Custom templates have allowed Saunders' schedulers to reduce the time spent entering tasks on common projects. Robust reporting and the ability to easily share project files have also led to the software's successful adoption.

Finally, Saunders is able to deliver more accurate and real-time information to clients because they can build schedules much further in advance. Powerproject's robust reporting tools paint a clear picture of the progress and remaining steps. Earlier communication helps avoid costly surprises late in the construction process.

Saunders has a goal to go paperless and will adopt Powerproject's new Site Progress Mobile app when it launches this summer. The app will allow for easy progress reporting from the jobsite.



About Saunders Construction

Saunders Construction is one of the largest and most respected commercial builders in the Rocky Mountain region. Since 1972, the company has built some of the area's most notable landmarks while establishing a reputation for quality and on-time delivery. The company's 440 employees specialize in construction for a wide range of industries including healthcare, industrial, retail, religious, education and government.

The University of Colorado Boulder's Center for Community (seen on pg. 1) and the Adams County Government Center in Brighton, Colorado (above) are just two examples of the company's vast and lasting legacy.

For more information about Saunders, please visit www.saundersci.com.

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Powerproject: The power behind successful projects