

Industryinsight

Technology for the
data-driven contractor



IN AN INDUSTRY WHERE MONITORING LABOR AND COSTS AT ALL TIMES IS PARAMOUNT, NOT JUST ANY SET OF TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS WILL SUFFICE.

Getting a handle on costs

In a world where more than 50% of the cost of your project is focused on labor, you need a set of technology tools to manage that job most effectively. If not, a simple overrun on hours of 10% will end up costing you dearly in the end.

So how do you assure the job at hand is staying on task? You need to know what is happening on the job at all times; you need to know what your estimated costs are vs. your actual costs; you need to know how you are doing against the budget; and whether or not an overrun is developing, and if so, where exactly that is impacting your job.

In other words, you need a set of software solutions that truly get into the nuts and bolts of cost management and labor management, and that is where the WennSoft suite of applications fits in best. Our set of job costing and field/equipment management technology is built for companies that view cost as an important aspect of the way they do work. These are the contractors that manage labor, purchase all the parts, conduct thousands of transactions that need to be processed and charged out to all of their jobs, work orders, and maintenance contracts.

There are a lot of forces driving these contractors to look at technology today. Most prevalent is the fact their existing systems do not provide information in a timely and easier manner. I equate this to steering a ship by looking at the wake—you have no idea where you are going, you just know where you have been. We are also seeing an environment where customers are simply demanding more from contractors. They are not only asking contractors to track the job, they also demand reports in the way they wish to see it—where was the money spent, how was the money spent, when was this built, when will it be done, cash forecasts, etc.

Most contractors are meeting these demands by adding more overhead. They are adding personnel who are tasked with inputting data into Microsoft Excel, taking data out of the systems and keying it in over and over to produce various reports for different parties involved with the project.

Our customers tell us that once they implement the Microsoft Dynamics WennSoft Solution – it gives them much more information much faster. These customers look up after six months to a year after they have gone live and suddenly realise they have grown their company anywhere from 15-40%.



Learn how you can manage the costs on your projects with a Job Cost Success Kit!



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Best of all, they experience this growth without adding any overhead; instead they are just getting rid of the redundancies associated with their day-to-day jobs.

A key piece to this transition is integration. Companies are starting to look outside of their core business systems with a wish to automate other key aspects. For example, they have a system for work orders and maintenance contracts. Well, now they want some sort of portal for customers to get information, or they want a mobile solution to automate paperwork that goes back and forth from the field.

Just a few years ago what you saw was a lot of individual technology companies coming to market with solutions that address these needs independently with the promise they could be integrated with bigger systems. That may be true, but what contractors have found out is the integration ended up costing the company four or five times that of the original cost of the software. Even worse, these are not simply one time costs; rather, it is a continual fee associated with the fact that every time one of those programs goes through an upgrade someone needs to go back in and rework the integration.

When you work with the Microsoft Dynamics WennSoft Solution all the periphery things- time and expense entry, Web-based applications, mobile, portals—that surround the core business processes are all integrated into our system right out of the box. And when we say integrated, we truly mean integrated.

Our system is built entirely on the Microsoft platform, using Microsoft SQL Server and Windows Server; Outlook for email and calendar; Microsoft Dynamics GP (formerly Microsoft Great Plains) for financials; Microsoft CRM (customer- relationship management) for contact/campaign over and over to produce various reports for different parties involved with the project.

There is a core difference when we say integrated as opposed to some other companies in the market. Simply passing a general ledger transaction to the accounting system is not integration; it is merely a link.

The Microsoft Dynamics WennSoft Solution allows us to utilise functionality that matches the way a contractor conducts business. For example, we add line item distribution to purchase orders as opposed to just at the header level. This also allows us to develop customer portals that enable customers to request and track maintenance service, or project management portals that contain custom templates and workflows designed around the way contractors conduct work.

Looking at a job I can see the amount of labor, materials, and equipment. It allows you to drill into cost codes, purchase orders, and transactions. Being able to show that information in dashboard views is very valuable. These are the demands driving the contracting industry today. Integrated and custom-focused technology help provides all of these metrics and places them at the fingertips of management. It helps your company understand what is happening with the business today and where it is headed tomorrow.

Jim Wenninger is the chief executive officer of WennSoft and has over 20 years experience in the field service, construction and equipment rental industries.

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 visit www.pa.com.au/microsoft



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I'd like to improve on:

- Project/ Job Management
- Financial Management
- Reporting and Budgeting
- Field Service

* Only genuine business enquiries will be responded to.

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We are planning on reviewing:

- Now
- In 3 months
- In 6 months
- Not planning