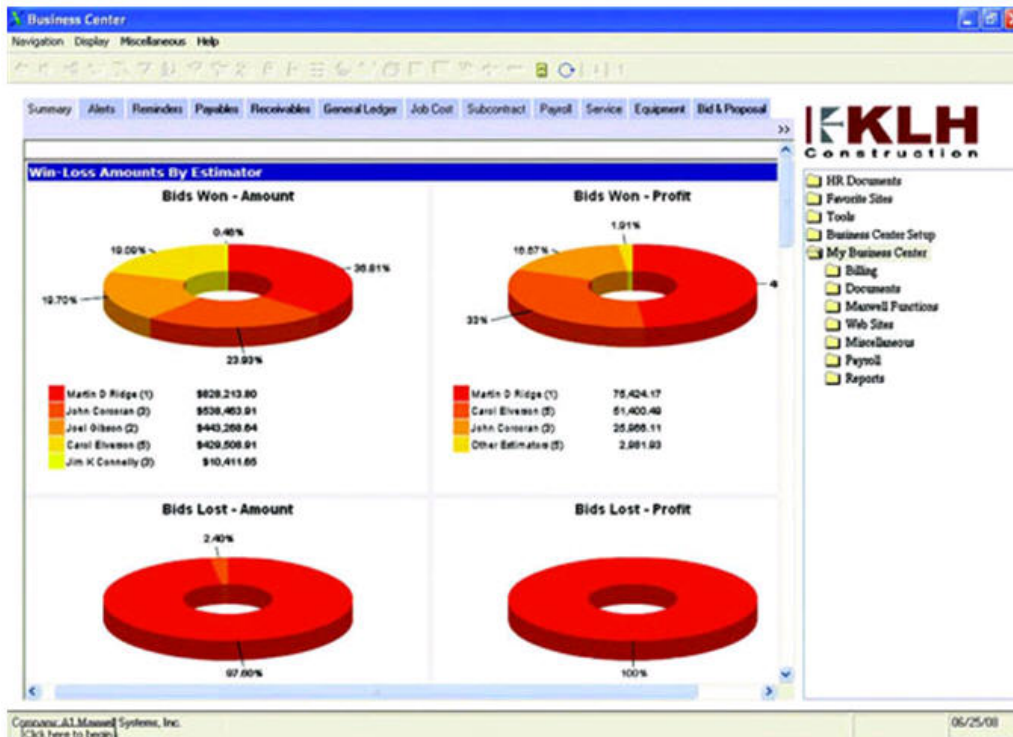


The competitive edge: How to choose the software that fits your business

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Most contractors today—including metal construction companies—are feeling the negative effects of the current economic climate. That means construction business owners are focused on staying afloat as opposed to growing their business. However, a down market is actually a strategic time to find better ways to manage the company and implement new product and service offerings that improve productivity and cut costs.

Do you have streamlined processes in place that reduce data entry and increase accuracy? Do you know the what and why of your greatest expenses? Can you identify obstacles to profitability or opportunities for new revenue?

Today's integrated construction business management software can help you answer these critical questions, delivering a necessary competitive edge to succeed in these economic times.

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Software Selection

The evaluation and selection process for such informative, efficient software cannot be taken too lightly. You must ask yourself important questions, such as:

- Are my software solutions easy to use, cost-effective and flexible?
- Have they been designed specifically for my specialty and the way I run my business?

When evaluating software, you also must consider the qualities of the vendors behind those software solutions. Are they long-standing and stable? Do they provide training and support if you need it? Maintenance is another key toward assessing their commitment to their solutions. Look for a vendor partner that also provides its customers with on going communication—newsletters and informative articles, as well as opportunities for software users to provide feedback on product features and functionalities, suggestions for enhancements, and events where they can share and learn.

Selecting the right technology partner will help you maximize your existing and future technology solutions. Consider these guiding points during evaluation:

Experience: Dig deeply beyond the sales pitch and into the qualifications of software providers. Find out how much construction industry and specialty experience they have and whether they are members of accredited industry associations. Obtain references from current customers who are about the same size as your company and face similar business challenges. Look for a broad portfolio of customer success stories that provide details of their evaluation process, implementation, key features and return on investment.



Proven track record: Find out how long the vendor has been providing software to the construction industry; how many customers it currently serves; and its contract renewal rate, which indicates satisfied customers. Check into the vendor’s financial stability. You do not want to purchase a solution from a vendor that might be out of business in a year or two.

ROI: The cost benefit of a solution cuts deeper than whether the price tag fits within your budget. It is important to consider that the more effective the software package, the greater your ROI. Inexpensive software that delivers little benefit and increases workload is a costlier investment than software that appears more expensive at first glance but outperforms the competition in the end. A software provider that offers multiple solutions that integrate seamlessly will further increase your ability to achieve optimal productivity and return on your technology investment.

Service: Find out what services they offer their customers and how those services are delivered—online, over the phone or in person. What training programs do they offer? Is support and maintenance a focus of their offerings? Additionally, when talking to customer references, make sure you ask them if they feel the customer service and training teams are knowledgeable and pleasant individuals.

Get Ahead

Whether you are a metal manufacturer, contractor or supplier, you will face business challenges in the coming months and years. This is your opportunity to look long and hard into your business and assess your operations. Take a step back and make sure you have the right technology solutions in place to provide your business with true ROI.

For example, with an advanced estimating software solution that fits your specialty, you will be equipped to bid more quickly, more accurately and more often, increasing the chances of winning more projects—with better profit margins.

By choosing the software vendor that understands the unique needs of the metal construction industry and provides solutions and expertise to overcome your obstacles, you can run a business that operates efficiently, effectively and profitably.

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