MRCE Streamlines Billing and Improves Project Management with Unanet A/E powered by Clearview

At MRCE, "It all starts with the soil" is a common refrain. As this highly experienced group of engineers knows, a foundation to properly support the structure is needed. However–while its engineers were creating strong foundations for buildings around the world – the foundation of the firm's business operations was at its breaking point.

"We were running an antiquated ERP solution that had been acquired by Deltek but was no longer being supported," says Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers (MRCE) Director of Finance and Administration Joseph Courtade. "What we were doing was state of the art 20 years ago – to move forward we needed something that was state of the art today."

One of the biggest drawbacks to running the old ERP system was its inability to support electronic timesheets. Project managers had to submit project timesheets by hand and timesheet data entry alone took at least six hours a month. Even worse, project managers would often not properly code their tasks and accounting staff would need to track them down for clarification. All told, it was costing the firm hundreds of lost hours each year.

EVALUATING THE OPTIONS

The time had come to choose a new ERP solution, and Courtade began by evaluating options from both Deltek and Unanet A/E powered by Clearview. In terms of features, Courtade was focused on project management: "The biggest thing was allowing project managers to know and track how much money they're spending on projects." Cost was also a consideration, and "Unanet A/E was clearly the better value," says Courtade.

ABOUT MRCE

Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers (MRCE) provides geotechnical and foundation engineering and design of underground and waterfront structures. MRCE was founded in 1910 as the nation's first engineering firm to combine a geotechnical speciality with structural foundation design engineering. They have completed more than 10,500 projects worldwide, including high-profile projects such as the new World Trade Center, the United Nations Headquarters, the Golden Gate Bridge and Yankee Stadium. MRCE employs nearly 100 geotechnical and foundation engineers, with a total staff of more than 135 plus eight partners.

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Ultimately, it was the personal relationship and level of service Unanet could provide that led MRCE to choose the all-inclusive Unanet A/E ERP solution. "It came down to trust," says Courtade. "I knew Unanet would be easy to work with, and that they would support us in what we wanted to do."

During the MRCE implementation, Unanet proved that trust was well-deserved with a nearly flawless rollout. First, several small customizations were made, such as changes to billing schedule types. Next, Unanet came in and backed up all the company's data, some of which dated back more than fifty years. When it was time to make the switch, the process went off seamlessly. "In less than a month from the time we switched everything was running extremely well," says Courtade.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

After implementation, Unanet A/E instantly began stabilizing the foundation of the firm's business operations. Rolling out electronic timesheets was a game-changer for the accounting department, eliminating hundreds of hours each year spent on manual data entry and trying to figure out how to properly code tasks. "Now, when the project managers enter a job number there is a list of codes and you have to pick a task to move forward," says Courtade.

The finance and accounting department has also used Unanet A/E to improve billing speed and closely monitor the critical accounts receivable process. "Anyone in this industry knows that getting paid in a timely manner is often one of the biggest challenges, and the Unanet A/E Accounts Receivable module helps facilitate that process," says Courtade. In addition, implementing Unanet A/E has allowed the department to do more with less by limiting the need to hire additional accounting staff as MRCE has continued to expand.

"We've achieved return on our investment in Unanet A/E with efficiency improvements alone – we can get the detailed financial data we need quickly, right when we need it. Unanet A/E has also added visibility and accountability. Now, every project manager knows exactly how much money is in their project budget and how much they're spending, which is critical when you're working big projects with tight budgets."

- Joseph Courtade, Director of Finance & Administration, Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers

MRCE's clients have also benefited from the implementation of Unanet A/E. "It's now much easier and faster to accommodate client requests for specific project financial information and give them increased access to the information they need," says Courtade. "That's really important to our clients, and they appreciate our ability to accommodate their requests."

ATTAINING NEW INSIGHTS

Perhaps most importantly, Unanet A/E has allowed MRCE to improve accountability and productivity, particularly at the project manager level. "Now that every project manager has a project dashboard right on their computer, it's a different ballgame," says Courtade. "Project managers tend to focus on getting the job done and forget about the money side of things, but Unanet A/E allows them to see exactly how much they're spending and keep close tabs on their budget – it takes away any excuses."

The firm's partners have appreciated the ability to closely track productivity and profitability with Unanet A/E's reporting functions. "We can see

exactly what all our project managers are doing by generating productivity reports by person," says Courtade. "It's an easy way to see objectively who the top performers are and help select the right people for advancement within the firm."

In his conversations with other engineering firm CFOs, Courtade hears plenty of grumbling about the lack of support provided by many of the 'big guys' in the business, and he's always happy to recommend an alternative. "The staff at Unanet is excellent – everybody there cares and will go the extra mile to help you," says Courtade. "They listen really well, and if you want something they figure out a way to make it happen."

After implementing Unanet A/E powered by Clearview, MRCE:

- Modernized the firm's outdated and time-consuming paper-based timesheet process, saving accounting staff hundreds of hours each year.

- Provided a more efficient system for project management, including project management dashboards and remote time sheet capability.

- Improved productivity tracking and management with the ability to create detailed productivity reports by project or individual.

- Enhanced customer service for clients with the availability of detailed, project-level financial data.

- Enables the firm's finance and accounting department to 'do more with less', limiting the need to hire as the firm continues to expand.

- Improves cash flow by improving billing speed and facilitating a robust accounts receivable process.

Unanet is a leading provider of ERP solutions purpose-built for Government Contractors, A/E, and Professional Services. More than 2,000 project-driven organizations depend on Unanet to turn their information into actionable insights, drive better decision-making, and nurture business growth.

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