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BLUEPRINT for Progress

SUMMER 2011

CONSTRUCTION NEWS & INFORMATION FROM MINGHINI'S GENERAL CONTRACTORS, INC.



By Jason Willetts, President
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FINDING BID OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE NET

The entire bidding process poses challenges for both the general contractors and the subcontractors.

For the GCs (general contractors), locating qualified subcontractors can be difficult, resulting in rushed decisions on the bid day. On the other side, subcontractors can struggle to pinpoint general contractors that are bidding on specific projects.

Technology can help the entire process run more smoothly—GCs can use technology to locate qualified subs while subs can find business opportunities. Communicating online helps general contractors avoid a bid-closing day rush and slashes their bid preparation time. It also helps subs by opening up previously inaccessible business opportunities.

Minghini's General Contractors is in the process of adding this new technology to their website.

According to Berniece Collis, "One of the biggest benefits of the online system is the tool that allows GCs to post blueprints, specifications, addenda, and project details.

For construction companies, bid-management systems make it easier to send out invitations to bid and narrow subcontractor searches. It is interesting to see the new bidding systems that are coming to the market. While the concept of online bidding has been available to the Industry for awhile, more GCs and subcontractors are beginning to use these systems to improve efficiencies in the bidding process.

Willetts Systems Inc., founded in 1997 with offices in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, is an internet consulting, development and design company with extensive experience helping clients in the Construction Industry. The company's focus is 'from scratch' development with XHTML/CSS for layout, PHP for programming, and the MySQL relational database. The company employ a combination of skilled programmers, database engineers and web server technicians in order to provide clients a satisfying full-service web development solution. Willetts Systems can assist with virtually any web project big or small, Internet or intranet, dedicated server or shared, on-location or remote. ■

New and Completed Projects

Minghini's Project Featured in DCD

Minghini's Project, the New Operations Center for the Jefferson County Ambulance Authority, was featured in DCD (Design Cost Data) magazine. To read the full article, please see "News" at www.minghinis.com.



New Projects

Martinsburg North Middle School,
Classroom Additions, Martinsburg
Musselman High School, Classroom Additions, Inwood

Completed Projects

Southern States Retail Facility, Ranson
Berkeley County Parks and Recreation
(as shown in photo) "Berkeley 2000 Building 2010 Addition"

Associate Profile

WIP Your Management into Shape



Del Carden, Bond Manager
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Del Carden is one of the top bonding professionals for the Construction Industry in our region. He offers this advice to general contractors and subcontractors on how to get bonded and how to manage your projects. If you want to know what's going on with respect to accuracy of estimates, maintaining profit margins, knowing how much to bid upcoming jobs, and generally being in control of the company, read this article.

Bonding is required on government jobs (municipal, schools, state, Federal) in excess of \$100,000 and many private projects. The government agency has the option to waive the bond requirement on jobs costing less than \$100,000, but why would they considering they owe the taxpayer sound financial accountability? The bond is an insurance contract between the bonding (surety) company and the contractor that benefits the customer assuring that the contractor is going to complete the work according to the contract specifications.

According to Del, "In today's highly competitive bidding environment, being pre-qualified for bonding is more important than ever. It shows that a company is financially strong, has integrity, provides quality workmanship, has a good track record and its is managed competently."

A construction company's bond rating and the amount it can be bonded for is based on its past performance as well as its financial strength and management. And this is where Work-in-Progress (WIP) comes into the picture.

The WIP Schedule is an accounting method and monitoring tool that can be done with software or by hand. It is a critical tool for bonding managers in evaluating a company's financial status as well as an internal management tool. It lets companies know where a particular job or the company overall stand at any given time. Most companies update their WIP records quarterly, some more frequently.

WIP will reveal, for example, the job contract price, the estimated cost, the amount invoiced to date, the actual costs to date, and the estimated cost to complete the job. It will give a running total to-date of jobs, thereby circumventing surprises at the end of a job or the end of the year. WIP will also show the gross profit margin, whether the company is overbilling or under-billing, whether profit fading is occurring on jobs-- and at what point in the process, whether project managers are controlling jobs efficiently, and much more. It will tell management whether the company is earning what it should or whether it needs to step up the marketing and bidding to meet their goals. With respect to change orders, the WIP schedule can alert management to "handshake change orders" and if unbillable work is in progress.

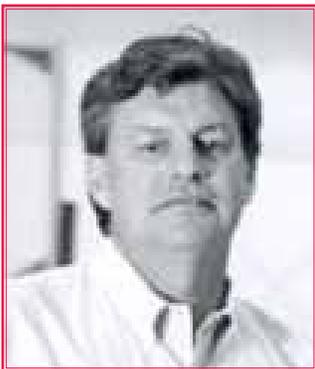
Del has offered to show any manager how WIP works and demonstrate the accounting software or show how to do WIP manually. He also has a 45-page booklet explaining the process.

"Companies with bonding have a leg up in bidding jobs, and bond managers look at whether they are managing with a WIP schedule as an indication of their financial capability," state Del.

"Minghini's bondability has continued to grow by leaps and bounds," notes Del. "The company can literally bid any construction job Craig and Berniece are interested in up to 18 million. Minghini's uses the WIP program very accurately and this keeps me comfortable with their progress. In fact, I don't know of a better relationship between a general contractor and its bonding company. Minghini's is top-notch in my book."

Tisher Surety serves as the bonding division of Wright Gardner Insurance. The company was spun out of Tisher and Company 10 years ago and Del has been the Bond Manager for the past 7 years. He works with general contractors but the majority of his customers are subcontractors. ■

Client Profile



Steve Catlett,
Executive Director
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Steve Catlett is widely recognized as the driving force behind the outstanding parks and recreation program in Berkeley County. For the past three and a half decades he has served as its Executive Director and during this time has used Minghini's for many projects. The latest, however, is the largest they have worked on together – a half a million dollar 5,000 sq. ft. extension to the Berkeley 2000 Recreation Center. The construction focused on two parts: a 1,000 sq. ft. extension of the Mason Multipurpose Arena used for indoor soccer and other activities. The extension provided a formal entrance, lobby and restrooms; also a 4,000 sq. ft. extension to the gymnastics wing comprising 2,000 sq. ft. for a dance room for classes and 2,000 sq. ft. for a new administrative office area.

States Catlett, "I've been working with Minghini's for 35 years and I've never worked with a finer general contractor due to its integrity and honesty. It's been a real delight working with them on this major project and I only wish I could use them more often." ■

Editor's Insights

By Berniece Collis



Berniece Collis
Vice President

Technology and Communication

I'm in awe at how much our lives have changed in the last two decades due to technological "progress." Remember when the electric typewriter came along, and then the word processor? Lo and behold, the fax was the be all and end all, bringing our businesses into the rapid world of telecommunications. Then we got all sorts of bells and whistles on our telephones, like call holding and call forwarding.

NEXT CAME THE INTERNET AND ALL BETS WERE OFF.

Now we've come to expect instant answers to any question; to be able to talk to anyone, anytime; to be entertained 24/7; to have a spellchecker to compensate for days we weren't paying attention in Language class; to watch real-time news with live photos from around the world; and even to have medical diagnoses in hours not weeks. However, if these expectations are not fulfilled – due to a technical problem with our computers or the internet broadband – our stress levels shoot up like rockets.

Besides speeding up our time lines, technology has changed the way we interact with others as well. We talk in acronyms, forget salutations in our emails, sign off with initials, and sometimes forget or don't bother to respond to emails. When a friend has a serious personal problem, we may send an email instead of holding their hand or providing a real shoulder to cry on. Our learned etiquette has been morphed by cyberspace and, to my way of thinking, we have lost some of our civility.

Certainly, the anonymity of the www allows for global crime and incessant spam from people trying to steal our money, assume our identities, crash our computers, or sell us something. So naturally we are afraid of these unknown stealth intruders who can come into our offices or homes with codes and keystrokes.

Still, I think we have to make a concerted effort in our personal and our business dealings to be more human. Just because we have these tools doesn't mean we should be self-centered, impatient, impolite or thoughtless with those with whom we interact. Actually, I think we've got to make a concerted effort to counteract the distance and anonymity that technology has brought with it. I am talking about bringing more genuine warmth into our technology assisted relationships, remembering that there are real people at the other end who are under the same pressures and who have the same needs as do we.

Having the ability to communicate with technology doesn't give us permission to bother business associates or family members with stupid forwards of every dumb joke we receive, the latest UTube phenomenon or refer their names to marketers without their permission... just because we can. Social networking sites have people more competitive too: wanting to have the latest, cutest, smartest tidbit to share.

But don't we still need to use common sense and courtesy in all our relationships regardless of the way we communicate? ■

Subcontractor Profile



David Ring, Owner
Ring Painting
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David Ring is the third generation to own and operate Ring Painting, a primarily commercial painting company established in 1912 by David's grandfather, which offers a wide range of services, including dry wall, interior and exterior painting, and wall papering. Although 90 per cent of its clients are general contractors, Ring Painting also does some residential work. The company employs 14 experienced painters and administrative staff. In 2012 the company will celebrate its 100th anniversary, an impressive benchmark by anyone's standards. Ring Painting has worked with Minghini's on many jobs over the years – from schools to banks. Recently the company did the Southern States rebuild in Charles Town and Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority remodel on Tabler Station Road.

According to David, "I wish all contractors were like Minghini's. They're extremely easy to work with because they are so organized and they treat their subcontractors so well." ■

Community Service

Minghini's helped a local family by constructing a handicapped ramp for their home and received, in turn, this note of gratitude: "We wish to thank everyone who put up the ramp in front of our house. Your company was a blessing to us, making it so much easier to enter our home. Our grandsons think the ramp was put up for them and their toys. The workers were very kind and considerate to us. Thank you again, Mike and Donna."

Berniece is busy these days working on two volunteer projects. She is helping to organize the 5th Annual Friends in Action of the Eastern Panhandle's Tastes and Sounds of the Town, which will be on Saturday, September 24, 2011. She is also working on the Women of Distinction Awards for the Girl Scouts of the Nation's Chapter, which will be held on Wednesday, September 28, 2011.

Give Life! Don't forget to give blood when you can to the Red Cross. Summer is travelling season and accidents increase the need for blood.

Staff News

Don Miller, Minghini's Estimator welcomes a new grandson to the family. Hunter was born to Nathan Miller and Laura Langowski in August 2010.



*Hunter David Miller
August 18, 2010*



*Don Miller's holds his
newborn grandson.*



Morgan Collis, son of Craig and Berniece, recently completed the Project Management Course provided by the Associated Builders and Contractors-Cumberland Valley Chapter's Barr Construction Institute. According to Bob Simmers, Education Director, "Morgan is an excellent student of Construction Project Management. His ABC Carpentry Education, field experience, combined with his people skills and character make Morgan a future 'state of the art' project manager."

This 45 hour course includes: Organization, Communications, Safety; a strong emphasis on company liability and responsibility for safety, Planning;

Job Structure; Resources; In depth study of Estimating;

Cost Control; Purchasing; Forecasting; Scheduling Issues and Techniques; Information Technology Systems (that are available to construction project managers); IT Application and Potential for streamlining project management; Various Available Software, including virtual project management programs, smart phones, etc. The class instructor is Scott Kline, a certified ABC instructor with 30 years experience as a general contractor.

The Collis's are also happy to welcome a new daughter into the family as Morgan will marry Jennifer Watson of Martinsburg on August 28.

Minghini's golf team recently won the James Rumsey Technical Institute Golf Tournament.

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