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Job Tracking Gives Daley's Drywall the Complete Picture

Knowing where you stand on the budget at all times can alleviate stress in the field.

You could say Daley's Drywall, www.daleysdrywall.com, Campbell, Calif., has a bit of a problem acting its age. Having recently celebrated its 50th year in business, the company still acts "very young and very progressive," says Craig Daley, company president.

Perhaps no place is this progressive nature more evident than in its affinity for adopting technology. It is one area Daley doesn't mind going over budget. That might seem to go against the grain for a company that lives and dies on its ability to manage overages. Not to worry, says Daley, because such tools are necessary to ensure they don't go over budget for clients.

But don't think there isn't a method. Find a problem, address said problem with tech; that is the mantra. Such is the case with Daley helping his foremen manage the budget from the field.

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As has come to be a familiar case with your typical construction company, Daley's Drywall was using paper-based processes for tracking the earned value of a job. And for a specialty trade like drywall that needs to manage many codes for any specific task, this can be inefficient. Often it wasn't until the job report would come from accounting that the foremen would know they were out of line with the budget.

"The simplest example is that you can have a job with a lot of framing codes and you might have one framing code for which you budgeted \$20,000. And you look at the job-cost report one week and it shows you've done \$16,000 worth of work, which means you only have \$4,000 left," says Daley. "If you are not deeply analyzing this you don't know what that \$16,000 means exactly. And by the time you get around to analyzing this, the code can easily go up to \$24,000. Suddenly that \$4,000 can get away from you fairly quickly."

All the while the foreman has little idea this is happening. Rather than having the tools to actively manage this process, the foreman would be at the mercy of having these overages brought to their attention.

"WE LINKED MEP TOOLS SO HARD WORK IN THE OFFICE ISN'T LOST IN THE FIELD."  **DAVID BURCZYK**
SEGMENT MANAGER - FIELD SOLUTIONS
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Enter DPC (Digital Production Control) from On Center Software, www.oncenter.com, The Woodlands, Texas. DPC integrates the takeoff and estimate through the process of tracking labor production and payroll straight from the field. The information is gathered in realtime and sent to the project manager's office.

Suddenly the process of managing overages becomes proactive, with the foremen working with actual numbers at every moment of every day. "He knows exactly where he is headed, so when he turns in that \$16,000 he no longer has to wait until the end when the accounting report comes out."

John Bettencourt, superintendent, Daley's Drywall, gets a bit more granular to the process, saying, "Using the software we can now select a specific wall (on the plan) and see how much it takes to get it done. At the same time it becomes very easy to see how much each person has to do in a single day."



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As Bettencourt describes, the process gets into the nitty-gritty of the details, telling him how much work needs to be completed per wall per worker within an eight hour day in order to stay within that budget.



"Let's say we select a wall that typically takes eight hours to frame, but in reality it only took the worker six, well that means we can track what is under on the budget," says Bettencourt. "We see what it takes to complete the wall; we get into the codes for framing, hanging, and taping—using DPC it all accumulates to show the cumulative earned value of a specific job."

Take the example of framing up a typical restroom, which may have six or eight framing line items; a nine-foot wall, a light pocket, door header, backing, ceiling framing, etc. Trying to figure out the number of hours it will take to build the structure using a print out of the estimate can become complicated. Using DPC you highlight it and the codes come together in one total for hours, which can be used to line out the crew.

Part of what makes it smooth is the fact DPC is integrated with Quick Bid for estimating and On-Screen Takeoff, a process that took a bit of trial-and-error to perfect, says Daley.

"There were some jobs we started with DPC only to give up in the middle when we realized our codes were just not trackable," admits Daley. "It took us a while to figure out what (is considered) too many codes or not enough codes and to make them seamless. It took us some internal re-writing of our codes and assemblies in Quick Bid to make it more DPC friendly."

But now that it is complete the immediate value comes with that transparency for the estimator to the field crew. This means there is no longer any question as to where the manhours on the job are and how the crew arrived at that point. And this now allows the foreman to know where he is each day with the budget, which is important because he is the person who can fix it.

Going one-step further, Daley Drywall is using DPC for entering in daily time cards for each employee.

"We are using DPC to both track the work and line out the work. You can highlight an area to see exactly how much the estimator figured for that area and you can line your guys out accordingly for that amount of work," continues Daley. "At the end of the day you can see if you accomplished that goal by highlighting what was done. It gives us a lot of transparency and a lot of simplicity."

This provides data to the estimator, adds Bettencourt, in the form of a weekly budget report. "He can tell instantly where we are at; if we are over or under the percentage per code for each build. It tells us if we are doing well for each code, and if not does that mean it was an estimator error (too low or too high on the bid) or was it more a matter of employee performance?"

In all, having a good technology partner is essential. Perhaps it is this stress-free relationship that allows Daley's Drywall to remain young and progressive, even at the age of 50. •

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