CLIENT CASE STUDY
Featuring David Green of Swinerton Builders

SWINERTON BUILDERS

How one of California's most prominent general contractors employs preconstruction technology to stay at the forefront of the commercial building industry.

Tell us about yourself, David Green.

I have been in the business for about 20 years. The last 16 with Swinerton Builders. I am a licensed Civil Engineer and have a Civil Engineering degree from the University of Texas and a Masters in Construction Management from University of California at Berkeley. I have spent most of my career in project management and transitioned to estimating and preconstruction about 5 years ago. I currently manage preconstruction, estimating and oversee BIM for the Swinerton Builders Northern Region.

Tell us about Swinerton Builders – what do you build and where?

We are headquartered in San Francisco and the Swinerton Family of Companies provides commercial construction services throughout the Western United States. Established in 1888, Swinerton formally incorporated in the State of California in 1908 and holds California Contractor License No. 92. Today, Swinerton offices are located throughout California, in Colorado, Hawaii, Texas, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington, and is celebrating their 125th Anniversary this year. We are a 100% employee-owned company and recognized as one of the top general contractors in the U.S. We have built a reputation for having the flexibility and financial strength to deliver added value to our clients and stay ahead of building trends. We've had a great deal of success across a wide range of markets in the industry including Renewable Energy, Healthcare, Federal, Education, Corporate Interiors Services, Mission Critical/Data Centers, and Hospitality. In addition, having built our first green roof in 1971 and now with a third of our staff LEED AP certified, we have always strived to be at the forefront of green building and remain a national leader in sustainability.

Describe the pre-construction process at Swinerton – from prequal to bid day, including the number of employees, subcontractors, plan files, etc. involved.

Hard bid: We typically have a Senior Estimator lead the bid with 10-12 people involved on Bid Day. Generally a typical bid will include 300-400 subcontractors with all communication and plan distribution done through SmartBidNet.

Negotiated Preconstruction / Guaranteed Maximum Price (Most of our work): This will generally involve a lead estimator/preconstruction manager with two-three people helping at various times. It requires bidding/budgeting to a pre-qualified list of subcontractors (usually 3-5 per trade) with phased bid packages. We use SmartBidNet to issue revisions to selected subcontractor(s) throughout preconstruction and into early construction before the project team transitions to our construction management system.

How did you traditionally handle invitation to bid?

Swinerton Builders has always been an early adopter of invitation to bid systems. For close to 10 years we had been using ISQFT for ITB and document distribution.

How long has your company been using SmartBidNet?

We have been using SmartBidNet for about a year and a half with full implementation for a year.

What features of the product influenced your purchase decision during the buying phase?

Our primary driver was ease of use for subcontractors, our clients in a bid situation. The ability to have one database for multiple offices and ease of use for our employees were other primary factors.

Which employee roles use SmartBidNet within your company and how often?

We have about 275 of our 1,000 administrative employees who use the system in some capacity. Their roles include estimators, project managers, and administrators.

Describe the most recent project in which SmartBidNet was essential for preconstruction.

Swinerton Builders was recently awarded preconstruction of a $60M retail project in downtown San Francisco which we only had one week to budget. Use of SmartBidNet was essential to be able to get documents and communication out in an expeditious manner for subcontractor feedback. We are now continuing to use the system for preconstruction and value engineering efforts.

What other technology did you use during the preconstruction phases of this project? How does SmartBidNet fit into the mix?

SmartBidNet doesn't necessarily have a direct tie-in to other technology we are using on the project but is consistent with Swinerton Builders' practical use of technology for preconstruction. We are using Revit, P6 and 5D estimating tools for our additional preconstruction efforts.

How has your company's use of software solutions evolved since you first started working there?

Swinerton has always been ahead of the curve on adoption of technology. When I first started with Swinerton 16 years ago we were using a Swinerton developed construction management and accounting software that was accessible to the field via modem, P3 scheduling software and Lotus 123 customized spreadsheet solutions for estimating. This evolution has continued with early adoption of web-based invitation to bid systems and web-based document distribution.

Currently, Swinerton is a leader in the adoption of BIM 3D, 4D and 5D solutions. Our most recent push is to bring these technologies into the field with paperless offices, using tablet-based project management/monitoring tools. We are again an early adopter of cloud-based BIM software and collaboration as well.

Over the next decade, in what ways do you hope to see construction technology evolve?

We would like to see integrated applications that can freely exchange data. We would like the ability to delete all paper and migrate pricing/bidding online as well.

If any of your users have downloaded the SmartBidNet mobile apps, how do they assist in mobile preconstruction?

We do use the mobile app, mostly for access to our subcontractor database and phone numbers, etc. for bidders.

How do you like the new Version 12 of SmartBidNet?

It is a much cleaner interface, faster, and the dashboard has improved. We like how it gives you more control over your interface.

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