DPR Construction Sees Added Value Using Trimble WinEst and Modelogix in Estimating Process
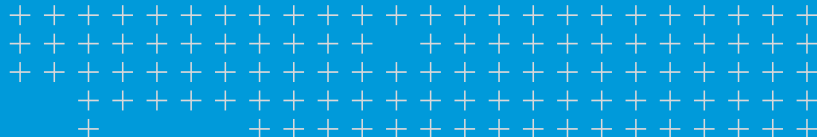
DPR migrates from legacy construction estimating application to standardize on Trimble solutions, build efficiencies into workflow, and optimize use of company expertise and project intelligence—past, present and future.
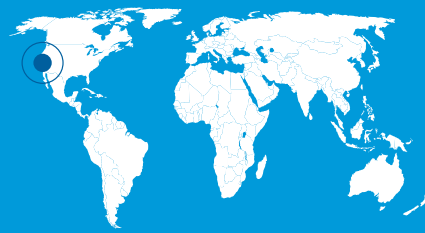
Solution

Trimble WinEst, Trimble Modelogix

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overview

DPR Construction is a national general contractor and construction manager specializing in technically challenging and complex projects.

Location
CALIFORNIA,
USA

CHALLENGE

DPR was looking to upgrade its legacy construction estimating application to a comprehensive solution that would allow the company to improve the use of project data, cost history and trends throughout project delivery.

DPR Construction is a national general contractor and construction manager specializing in technically challenging and complex projects. Founded in 1990 in Redwood City, Calif. with a forward-thinking and entrepreneurial spirit, DPR has grown into a multibillion dollar organization with offices in nearly every major region in the United States. This success has helped DPR rank among the top 50 general contractors in the U.S. by Engineering News-Record (ENR) for more than 20 years.

SOLUTION

Recognizing technology innovation is the cornerstone for delivering both greater efficiency for customers and competitive advantage, DPR recently switched from a legacy construction estimating application to improve and standardize its estimating processes on Trimble® WinEst, a comprehensive and highly customizable construction estimating system, and Trimble Modelogix for conceptual estimating and cost modeling.

Needing more from an estimating tool

Like all construction companies, DPR creates volumes of data every day, throughout every project. Use of that data — past, present and future, is invaluable to enabling DPR to build great buildings; engage the right people at the right time; establish best practices to eliminate waste and maximize resources; and to exceed customers' expectations.

Alan Watt, preconstruction technology leader at DPR explains how the company outgrew its legacy estimating system.

"As DPR grew, we realized we needed more than just a mix of estimating tools that performed takeoffs and generated bids. We needed an estimating platform that would help us make better use of project data, create insights, and allow our project teams and clients make better decisions by utilizing the incredibly valuable project and cost history that's created at DPR," said Watt.

A few DPR estimators had used WinEst about 10 years ago working on a joint venture with another construction company and liked what they saw. That sparked an evaluation of their estimating tools.

"We were looking for a technology partner that would help us help our customers through smarter, faster decisions based on data, not guesses. And, we wanted a partner that shared our vision for what our estimating platform could provide to maximize our investment. Trimble was that partner," Watt added.

After thorough evaluation of other applications, DPR decided to migrate from a legacy construction software and a number of in-house applications to WinEst due to its ease of use, powerful features, database structure, the ability to connect 3D models to the estimating process, the flexibility to adapt to DPR's processes, and speed in building out comprehensive, accurate estimates and reports.

DPR also selected Modelogix to extend its estimating best-practices through historical cost analysis and modeling, leveraging past project estimates using a variety of industry standard (Masterformat & Uniformat) and DPR-specific coding structures.

"We evaluated other solutions but once we saw Modelogix we realized it was a solution we needed," said Watt.

Setting up for success

To ensure a successful transition to WinEst and Modelogix, DPR's technology and innovation team — under the direction of Alan Watt — took the time to ensure the solution was "fully baked and ready to go" before rolling it out to the broader team of estimators and project managers. They spent about three months building the cost database and configuring the software to align with the company's workflow.

The team also established a training program, including the appointment of internal regional champions that would support the 350 estimators and project managers using the systems and gather user feedback during the pilot for additional process improvements during roll out.

Watt credits some success in implementation to Trimble support and professional services. "Anytime we ran into a challenge or had a feature request we were able to speak directly with a developer within hours. Access to Trimble's product management team and their willingness to work with us to address concerns or add features makes Trimble a great technology partner."

Once the training program was established, DPR was able to get everyone up and running with one-day regional training sessions.

Winning with WinEst

Feedback was immediate and positive. Users like the familiar look and feel of WinEst and the ability to easily customize options for their own preferences without disruption to their workflow. More importantly, users like the speed and ease of working in the estimating spreadsheet, accessibility to a central item-cost and assembly database, and the ability to easily maintain that information through the course of preconstruction.

For example, WinEst's powerful filtering capabilities and robust data import and export capabilities save time and help drive better decisions. XML import and export capabilities in WinEst allow administrators to write custom interfaces that extend the application to support additional workflows, export data out to DPR's highly customized reporting module, import a library of WBS codes supporting a client's preferred format or to import cost data from subcontractors and easily generate reports. "This type of customization and automation saves us hours of manual data entry work, freeing up time for higher value work," added Watt.

Modelogix: a game changer for preconstruction planning

Alan Watt describes Modelogix as a "game changer," helping DPR create fast, accurate, early phase cost models that can be compared against past projects of similar scope. Armed with this intelligence, DPR can leverage its deep experience and cost history of past projects and current prices to predict costs of a future project, better identify project risks, suggest value engineering ideas and present multiple options to the owner for consideration. This enables DPR to demonstrate proven experience, build confidence in partnering capabilities, and provider greater value in the decision-making process.

Watt recalls a recent example where Modelogix played an important role in winning the work for site development on a large data center project. "Using Modelogix gave us an early advantage in the planning process, changing the focus of the owner conversations away from simply driving to line items of an estimate. Instead, it allowed us to provide more valuable feedback about the challenges and opportunities for cost impacts on their project."

Speed also plays an important role in providing fast and accurate feedback to owner inquiries. "Using Modelogix we can come up with conceptual cost study or cost model in about 30 minutes, where previously it'd take a day or more to create something you'd want to put in front of an owner," adds Watt.

Standardizing on Trimble estimating solutions WinEst and Modelogix has not only helped DPR's estimating best practices, but also helped the company expand new disciplines. For example, DPR is also using Trimble Vico Office for model-based cost estimating on select projects and is exploring ways to expand its use as customer and project needs evolve.

"Trimble estimating solutions allow us to leverage the combined knowledge, skills and talent of the entire DPR team – past, present and future, by providing a platform that builds efficiencies into our practices and makes better use of our proprietary knowledge and collective intelligence to deliver better services to our customers," said Watt.

RESULTS

► Standardized estimating platform and processes across regional offices

► Increased efficiency and productivity of estimating processes – can eliminate up to 8-10 hours of manual data entry on a project, freeing up time to focus on higher value services

► By allowing users to import information directly from other sources, the software reduced time to create conceptual cost studies and estimates from days to hours or minutes

► Improved use of project data, cost history and proprietary intelligence to better inform project decisions earlier in the pre-construction planning process

"This type of customization and automation saves us hours of manual data entry work, freeing up time for higher value work,"

— ALAN WATT
Preconstruction Technology Leader at DPR

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