

# BUILDING SUCCESS



## featured

- Grant Contracting
- Foundation Software

## Highway Sign and Utility Company Finds Financial Direction with FOUNDATION® for Windows®

For businesses like Grant Contracting, finding ways to save money and increase productivity is key to survival. This no-frills electric/utility subcontractor must be the lowest bidder among the competition if it expects to win jobs. In business since 1990, Grant Contracting faces the never-ending challenge of keeping costs low while maintaining high quality standards.

With annual sales in the range of \$20 to \$30 million each year, Grant appears to be winning jobs. This West Columbia, South Carolina company employs about 100 workers and is one of the state's largest utility subcontractors and installers of highway and interstate signs, traffic signals, fiber, and wiring. Most recently, it completed a \$20 million lighting and signage job for the new Cooper River Bridge in Charleston, notable as the largest suspension bridge in the U.S. Today, the \$500 million project is drawing praise for its unique twin "diamond-like" tower design.

So how does Grant Contracting succeed where other subcontractors cannot? The answer lies in its focus on the financial side of the business, according to Mike White, Controller for Grant Contracting and several affiliated companies. Over its history, Grant Contracting has evolved into a profitable company, in part because of its ability to choose cost-saving technology best suited for its business.

Thirteen years ago, for example, Grant chose a construction accounting software package to help them understand and control job costs. "Given what technology was available at the time, it answered our needs," White said. In 1997, however, Grant was in need of a replacement system when their software vendor announced that it was going out of business.

After looking at several different packages, Grant Contracting chose Foundation Accounting System (FAS). Several years later, they converted to FOUNDATION® for Windows®. "From the standpoint of what we do," White said, "FOUNDATION is pretty much the best fit. It is a labor-intensive package, and we are a labor-intensive business."

### THE CHALLENGE

A large workforce with changing payroll requirements. Lots of equipment and inventory to maintain. An intense billing system that must meet various general contractor standards for subcontracts, purchases, and change orders. These are just some of the accounting issues that Grant Contracting had to consider when it began looking for a new construction accounting system.

Having worked in public accounting prior to joining Grant Contracting, White had the advantage of

## CUSTOMER

### GRANT CONTRACTING

## CORPORATE PROFILE

West Columbia, SC  
Electric / Utility  
Employees: 100  
Annual Revenue: \$25 Million

## SYSTEM PROFILE

### Foundation Software Modules in Operation

- Job Costing
- Payroll
- General Ledger
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- DataGenie Designers
- Project Management
- Unit Price Billing

## BENEFITS

- A “perfect fit” for this labor-intensive contractor
- Reporting features satisfy everyone from owners and project managers to lenders, insurers, and auditors
- Integrates beautifully with Grant’s network server and other applications
- Foundation Software understands construction!

knowing what type of information his company would need to prepare financial reports and run the business. He also knew what he didn’t want in a software company.

“I was in public accounting for 20 years, and I worked with a variety of businesses and a variety of software packages,” White said. “One of the problems that I ran into most often is that you may have very skilled programmers, and yet not one has a clue how the business works. Many companies did not – or could not – respond to users’ needs. That is not good for our business.”

After installing the Foundation Accounting System and later upgrading to FOUNDATION, White said it is obvious that Foundation Software understands the construction business through and through. “Not only did we get excellent support going from our former product to the new product and then from the DOS version to Windows, but we are always seeing improvements being made to the product,” he said. “This is just another thing that keeps us attached to Foundation Software.”

## THE SOLUTION

Since switching to FOUNDATION, Grant Contracting’s accounting system is doing exactly what they want it to do.

**“It meets our needs as a construction company,” White said. “From financial presentations to the lending and insurance communities to providing management reports to owners and project managers, everyone is satisfied. So that’s a home run.”**

What sets FOUNDATION apart from many other job cost accounting packages is its valuable – and numerous – report writing functions, White explained. “When you can look at a management report and then drill down to a receivable and then drill to the job and again to the individual people responsible for those jobs, well, that’s very helpful and useful in terms of management,” he said.

Aside from job costing features, White said FOUNDATION integrates beautifully with the company’s new terminal access server as well as other Microsoft products and other products they employ. Another nice fit for their business (which has 25 current users) is the security mode, which allows White to set specifications on what employees can and cannot do in FOUNDATION.

“The system has worked very well for us, and the information is excellent,” White said. “We just started using an additional module, Unit Price Billing, because most of what we do is unit price bid.”

As a former public accountant, White had this advice to give contractors looking to switch accounting systems: “Look, most importantly, at your management’s information requirements, then your financial management requirements, and finally your third-party reporting requirements. Start by answering these questions, and then take the next step. Find the package that offers the best fit.”



Grant Contracting installed the lighting, traffic controls, and signs for the new Arthur Ravenel Bridge. Opened in July 2005, the bridge spans Charleston’s Cooper River. (Photo courtesy of SCDOT)