

# CONSTRUCTECH



## Some Owner Assistance

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Corporate building owners have always been particularly interested in being able to get projects online faster, track them more accurately, and make sure costs stay inline through completion. Construction technology is an enabler in achieving such objectives, yet in a time when cutting costs remain a high priority some owners could look at these tools as unnecessary expenditures.

This hasn't stopped members of the project team from bringing construction technology and construction software to the table. These firms realize the important role they play and consider some technology assistance to be a core component of their services.

One such company is GreenbergFarrow, [www.greenbergfarrow.com](http://www.greenbergfarrow.com), Atlanta, Ga. The company provides architectural and engineering services to such national retailers as Carl's Jr., Texas Road House, and In-N-Out Burger, among others. Hughes Thompson, principal, development services, GreenbergFarrow, says many clients are interested in the capabilities of online project management yet are not quite ready to make the jump to their own system.

Therefore, the company presents clients with schedules, budgets, and project statistics via an online project management system developed in-house using the platform of USGN, [www.usgn.net](http://www.usgn.net), Phoenix, Ariz., called ProjecTrac.

The company uses the USGN platform because it enables it to customize forms within the system based on the requirements of each individual owner. Thompson says each client seems to have specific information they want to track using the system, but the common thread amongst all is some link to the overall schedule.

"One of the things we have developed is a scheduling system," says Thompson. "We use Microsoft Project to schedule bid development projects for clients. The schedule is very detailed with hundreds of items, and clients are only interested in certain parts that relate to them. So we have been able to sync Microsoft Project schedules into USGN so the detailed scheduling happens on Microsoft Project side, and USGN handles the reporting so you can report out only the things that particular clients are interested in, handling things like task assignments (notifications). So the two products work well together to handle detailed scheduling and individual task assignments."

Thompson highlights a custom workflow built within the system that has been particularly successful with clients. "We have built a workflow system that takes an RFI (request for information) through six different stages as it goes through the overall approval process. With the system you can track each stage and check where each RFI sits at any time. The system takes care of notifying users about status," says Thompson.

While custom developed is one way to go, it is certainly not the only avenue. Volkert & Associates, [www.volkert.com](http://www.volkert.com), Mobile, Ala., which provides program management and construction management to owners in such industries as education and utilities, is using technology from e-Builder, [www.e-builder.net](http://www.e-builder.net), Plantation, Fla., to handle the different reporting needs of its diverse client base.

Using e-Builder Enterprise 7, which integrates cost, schedule, process, and document management, the firm centrally manages all project communications, milestone schedules, cost control, and cash flow forecasting for multiple clients across a wide geographical range.

Alongside handling the aforementioned reporting needs, it helps standardize things such as change order requests and pay requests. According to the company, the technology has shortened cycle times and established consistent processes, ultimately leading to tighter schedules and lower project costs for clients.

When viewed as just another line item on the job, technology might not seem all that necessary to complete a job. However, when balanced against the high cost of a project that comes in off schedule and over budget, that technology price tag can seem like a bargain.

While some owners are still reticent to implement technology on projects, it might be worth it, as a partner, to bring such a tool to the table. It could leave a lasting impression on your clients.