



GENERAL CONTRACTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

MySmartPlans accelerates information sharing

Ben Strobl is an experienced professional, a senior project manager at Kansas City-based JE Dunn Construction Group, with more than a dozen years specializing in building correctional facilities. He describes himself as “more old school than anything” in his approach to project management, but he has become an advocate for MySmartPlans, based on his experience delivering a 3,240-bed correctional facility in record time.

The year was 2007, the client was Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the mission was to complete the \$170 million La Palma Correctional Center in Eloy, Arizona, in 18 months instead of the typical two years or more.

“Verna Dowell came to our management team and was pushing this new software called ‘MySmartPlans,’” Strobl said. “The program would be able to share documents, submittals, plans, RFIs and do it all in a short timeframe.”

MySmartPlans is a digital project information management tool, with revolutionary capabilities to coordinate planning, scheduling and accelerate every step of the construction lifecycle, for every member of your construction team. This rich and secure desktop application provides a single virtual archive for all project documentation, from preconstruction to closeout.

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- Ben Strobl
Senior project manager,
JE Dunn Construction Group

“I am not really up on digital stuff,” Strobl said, noting he was accustomed to using copying and overnight delivery for information distribution, but he agreed to try MySmartPlans. The cost, at one-tenth of 1 percent of the project, made the decision a “no brainer,” he said, compared to “copying costs and overnight deliveries and lost time.”

Proving it: MySmartPlans was established as the standard on the project, and soon was pushing digital information to secure desktop dashboards used by about 35 subcontractors, plus the architects, owners and JE Dunn project managers.

“I recall one day when we received an important submittal at 7 a.m.,” Strobl recalled. “By 9 a.m. it was on the dashboard in the architect’s office. They reviewed it and had it back to us by noon. We were able to review it and get it back out by 2 or 3 o’clock. By 5 p.m., it was in all the subcontractors’ hands. It might have taken us two or three weeks before – and we did it all in one day.”

Strobl noted that MySmartPlans dashboard was used for all documentation on the project – meeting minutes, submittals, plans, site maps, aerial photos, certifications, safety process documentation, etc.

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Now JE Dunn Construction Group, ranked as the 10th largest general building company in 2008 based on revenues of \$2.6 billion, includes MySmartPlans in every corrections project it bids, Strobl said. It’s also used on other projects at Dunn, including the renovation of the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka and the courthouse development in Jefferson City, Missouri.

“It is so much more efficient,” he said. “What you need on the project is information, and this is the way to get it efficiently. The whole theory is sharing information, quickly and efficiently.”

The bottom line: The project was completed ahead of its aggressive schedule. “We beat the schedule – instead of 18 months, we did it in 13,” he said. “The (MySmartPlans) dashboard was a big part of the reason why.”

The client, CCA, was satisfied. Since JE Dunn introduced MySmartPlans to CCA, CCA now has adopted MySmartPlans on all of its construction projects in the United States.

Additional benefits: A key feature of MySmartPlans is the archival documentation, Strobl said. At the end of the job, the documentation included schedules, owner-training videos, photos, city paperwork, fire inspection reports and all the operation and maintenance manuals, plans, changes and details captured during the project lifecycle.



Instead of handing over boxes of binders to the building owner, Strobl delivered a single disc with everything, including 3D modeling documents and equipment manuals.

Strobl also praised the dedicated project information managers who worked the project from MySmartPlans. The project information manager handles document conversion, establishes the archive schema and pushes the materials to all project participants. "They really helped us, they went out of their way to make it work for us on our schedule," Strobl said.

"MySmartPlans solved a lot of problems," he said. "It saved us a lot of time."

For more information on JE Dunn Construction Group, see www.JEDunn.com.



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