COMPUTER GUIDANCE

CONSTRUCTION SOFTWARE REVIEW BY SHELDON NEEDLE

Your trusted guide for software selection since 1983
Overview

eCMS Construction Management System is a fully integrated financial and project management solution suite with 28 comprehensive applications delivering mission-critical information for informed decision-making and optimized business processes. The comprehensive financial accounting solution is specifically designed for the construction industry, managing job cost, equipment management, subcontractor control, management and reporting for self-performed work, contracts change orders, and financial applications such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger, purchasing, and time & material billing.

Project Collaborator is Computer Guidance’s advanced project management solution linking all critical project information, between remote job sites and corporate offices. Features include business process and project data integration with eCMS’s 28 applications for effective control of project costs, deadlines and communication.

Computer Guidance was acquired by Explorer Software in early 2014.

User Experience

A browser-based solution specifically developed to increase speed and efficiency by:

- Improving communication and information flow across your organization
- Allowing real-time response and access to project information anytime, anywhere
- Enhancing performance with standardized processes and easily accessible project data
- Connecting extended project teams to images, documents and information

Value

Computer Guidance delivers the financial and project management software of choice for 20% of the ENR Top 400 contractors – and has consistently been voted one of the leading job costing and accounting software applications by the highly-respected CFMA IT survey. The product is a strong fit for commercial GCs, Heavy highway, Specialty and Electrical Mechanical contractors, as well as for mining, architecture and engineering firms with a minimum 100k budget. Typical revenues of customers are 100 mil to 3 billion.

By freeing you from dealing with complex personnel issues, eCMS allocates valuable employee time to where it is best utilized. The personnel applications contained within the suite can accomplish your time management goals, without forfeiting access to information needed to satisfy any internal or external query. The more effective your communication is, the more profitable your project will be. Project Collaborator improves information exchange among the project, design and owner teams.

Pros

- Very robust applications
- Strong project management for companies with many field offices
- Anytime, anywhere web access with eCMS
- Good custom report writer
- IBM Premier Partner

Cons

- Requires use of IBM i Series as data and file server
- Training and support intensive for initial phases of implementation
- Support can be spotty
Ease of Deployment & Training

Computer Guidance’s Hosted eCMS is developed on a Software as a Service (SaaS) application platform where users access and operate the feature-rich, fully-integrated construction management software over the Internet through a highly secure Web portal. The managed services solution eliminates the need for upfront investment, on-premise installation and ongoing management of an IT infrastructure.

Further Reading

Computer Guidance Corporation

Founded in 1981, Computer Guidance is the trusted provider of software solutions for the construction industry. For over a quarter of a century, we have been committed to setting industry standards in financial and project management software development for North America's leading construction, architecture and engineering companies.

Computer Guidance delivers the financial and project management software of choice for 20% of the ENR Top 400 contractors – and has consistently been voted one of the leading job costing and accounting software applications by the highly-respected CFMA IT survey. Computer Guidance provides a strong solution for any company seeking flexibility, dependability, and superior performance in a software suite.

The product is a good fit for commercial GCs, Heavy highway, Specialty and Electrical Mechanical contractors, as well as for mining, architecture and engineering firms with a minimum 100k budget. Typical revenues for customers are 100 mil to 3 billion.

eCMS®, the centerpiece in their family of solutions, was developed with the input of leading North American construction companies. This browser-based financial accounting solution consistently delivers precise mission critical information that empowers organizations with complete real-time visibility across the organization.

Solutions

Financial Construction Management Solution – eCMS Construction Management System

A fully integrated financial and project management solution suite with 28 comprehensive applications delivering mission-critical information for informed decision-making and optimized business processes. The comprehensive financial accounting solution is specifically designed for the construction industry, managing job cost, equipment management, subcontractor control, management and reporting for self-performed work, contracts change orders, and financial applications such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger, purchasing, and time & material billing.

eCMS' integrated accounting applications provide superior monitoring and analysis of not only financial, but also operating performance. With advanced functions for tracking subcontractor performance, document compliance and contract management features, your accounting perspective is broader than ever before.

eCMS allocates valuable employee time to where it is best utilized. The personnel applications contained within the suite can accomplish your time management goals, without forfeiting access to information needed to satisfy any internal or external query. It is this type of functionality that drives the eCMS software suite.
Project Management Solution – Project Collaborator

Computer Guidance’s advanced project management solution links all critical project information between remote job sites and corporate offices. Features include business process and project data integration with eCMS’s 28 applications for effective control of project costs, deadlines and communication.

Managing your projects successfully in today’s construction workplace can be difficult due to their diversity and complexity. Computer Guidance Corporation has developed Project Collaborator to help construction companies take charge of their most challenging jobs and field operations. This advanced project management tool is easy-to-use and fully links all critical project information from remote job sites to the corporate office. Real-time project information, shared seamlessly with Computer Guidance’s eCMS financial software, will ensure your projects are managed effectively, so you can control project costs and drive profitability.

This browser-based solution is specifically developed to increase speed and efficiency by:

- Improving communication and information flow across your organization
- Allowing real-time response and access to project information anytime, anywhere
- Enhancing performance with standardized processes and easily accessible project data
- Connecting extended project teams to images, documents and information

Project Collaborator Benefits

The more effective your communication is, the more profitable your project will be. Project Collaborator improves information exchange among the project, design and owner teams. You now have the ability to interact from a central database and provide updates to the project team immediately via e-mail or fax.

- Submittals allow you to track documents to all related parties with multiple review cycles.
- Meeting Minutes individually track discussion items with electronic notification to all parties involved.
- Request for Information (RFI)
- Provides detailed documentation to manage project changes – keeping team members informed about questions and proposed solutions.
- Issues Management tracks potential problems or misunderstandings quickly by linking all related items. Issues can be tracked to resolution.
- Reports are easily generated – capturing all financial and project information. Flexible projected cost will accurately forecast detailed cost projections. All open issues are available via hot lists.
- Letters can be generated and stored within the project database and linked to the issues journal. This ensures immediate availability for potential problem discovery.
- Punch Lists let you track items by responsible party. You can also find out when issues were corrected and who provided final approval.
- Daily Reports record site conditions, deliveries, weather, personnel, and contractor/subcontractor equipment at the job site.
Transmittals can be generated "on demand" from any function within Project Collaborator.

- Drawing Logs are essential features that offer revision history and distribution tracking to digitally coordinate contract drawings, sketches and red line drawings.
- Dunning Letters enable the issuance of periodic reminders to your entire project team to notify them of overdue or upcoming items.

*Change Management* allows the user to track changes from the initial request through approval and contract update. As changes are initiated, the system controls the process of requesting quotes from the subcontractors (the RFP process) and passing the information (the COR process) to the owner. Once the owner has approved the necessary quotes, Project Collaborator will update the owner’s schedule of values and reflect the additional income potential. The RFP process will then update the subcontractor’s schedule of values and reflect the additional budgeted cost.

Project Hot Lists provide timely information and the status of project items to the rest of your project team. Everyone involved can immediately view these project-critical assignments.

Cost Control features allow you to access, control and maintain all actual and committed costs, while updating all information in the job cost module.

Accurate Forecasts let you make projections on percent complete, estimated cost, or current quantity in place, making a revised forecast readily available. All potential and actual costs are easily accessible.

Owner Billing facilitates the preparation and negotiation of monthly requisitions and streamlines the process with complete integration into accounts receivable.

Contracts/Subcontracts can be easily created in Project Collaborator, using all of your own contract language and required schedule of values. This eliminates the need to generate contracts off-line and then re-enter the information into the accounting system. These documents are saved with all other project documents and can be automatically distributed via Project Collaborator.

**Document Imaging & Electronic Workflow**

Computer Guidance’s innovative set of productivity tools allow users across the entire organization to share, create, archive and retrieve business-critical project data, documents and forms in real time and on demand. Electronic forms and documents are integrated into the project workflow and are made available in eCMS and Project Collaborator remotely at job sites and in the back-office.

**Business Intelligence**

Computer Guidance’s advanced reporting solution allows users to easily design reports and inquiries from project data, whether it is in the accounting database (eCMS), or any other database, such as Microsoft SQL or Excel. This powerful and easy-to-use tool supports data from multiple databases at the same time, and presents information in a variety of formats customizable to meet specific business needs. Information is also made available on a user-friendly dashboard and portal application.

**Equipment Management**

Computer Guidance’s Equipment Management integrated application provides effective management of the entire fleet of equipment. Information provides ability to track equipment location, manage associated costs, assign equipment charge rates, corrective & preventive
work orders, and evaluate equipment performance as it relates to overall project and company financials.

**Service Management**

Computer Guidance’s Service Management application provides a full array of construction management services functions, including call recording, work order creation, order dispatch, and cost documentation. Service contracts and warranty data can be entered and retrieved, while all pertinent service request information is updated throughout the eCMS applications.

**Personnel Management**

All key components of human resources are managed through a single application that integrates directly with other applications of Computer Guidance’s eCMS solution (i.e. Payroll). Key functional areas include training and development, employee profile, benefits, safety standards & regulations, performance management, recruiting and payroll.

**Hosted eCMS**

Computer Guidance’s Hosted eCMS is developed on a Software as a Service (SaaS) application platform where users access and operate the fully-integrated construction management software over the Internet through a highly secure Web portal. Users leverage the powerful financial, project and productivity management applications for their business-critical processes as the traditional enterprise-class eCMS system. The managed services solution eliminates the need for upfront investment, on-premise installation and ongoing management of an IT infrastructure.

**Pros**

- Very robust applications
- Strong project management for companies with many field offices
- Anytime, anywhere web access with eCMS
- IBM Premier Partner

**Cons**

- Requires use of IBM i Series as data and file server
- Training and support intensive for initial phases of implementation
- Front end user experience is weak, looks too much like old minicomputer software
- No dropdown search mode for records (e.g. invoices) must know the number
- eCMS project collaborator too complex for many field people to use
- Limited size fields for phase, cost code descriptions, only 20 character descriptions.
- Reporting: mainframe style, many pages of reports but not management oriented
- Many users have to develop their own custom reports in Java for front end and Crystal for report formatting

**Applications**

- General Ledger
- A/R & Contracts
- A/P & Subcontract
- Time & Materials Billing
- Payroll
- Human Resources
- Canadian Payroll
- Job Cost
- Project Collaborator
- Order Entry Inventory
- Bill of Materials
- Purchasing
- Service Request
- Equipment Accounting
- Equipment Maintenance
- Business Intelligence
- Property Management
- User-Defined Database
- Plant Sales
- Document Imaging
- Electronic Workflow
- Intelligent Dashboard
About Sheldon Needle

A former CFO, consultant and software designer, Sheldon Needle has authored or co-authored more than 20 books on software selection and has contributed articles to major publications, including the Journal of Accountancy and Nation’s Business. CTSGuides.com has the distinction of being the very first company to do hands-on, independent evaluations of software for the middle market.

Sheldon speaks with business owners and managers every day about software selection and makes personalized recommendations based on their needs and budget. He is widely known and respected throughout the business software community for his independence, integrity and expertise.

As part of registering for our free software selection kit, you receive a 15-minute consult with Sheldon. Sheldon understands financial and business issues and speaks your language.

He knows the leading software companies—how they compare, their strengths and weaknesses, where they fit into the market and which ones would be suitable for your business.