

Dexter + Chaney's Forefront Construction Management Software Integrates Processes and People

Dexter + Chaney's Forefront Construction Management Software integrates accounting, operations, jobs, project management, human resources, document imaging, equipment, purchasing, service, remote access and data sharing.

Forefront Version 12: New for 2004

Since 1981, Dexter + Chaney has been a technology leader in the construction industry. Recently released Forefront Version 12, designed for SQL databases, introduces significant enhancements to this robust software. Forefront's SQL database provides some distinct advantages, including:

- fast and easy access to data;
- database security;
- extensive user security management;
- interoperability and data warehousing;
- web-enabling of Forefront data; and
- scalability.

Hundreds of new features have been added to Version 12. Here's a look at a few highlights.

Forefront Tasks is an exciting new tool that allows users to create roadmaps for step-by-step execution of specific processes. Each step in a process links directly to the corresponding screen in Forefront. A user can

"step" through each item until the process is complete.

Forefront Tasks is ideal for walking users through procedures such as month-end closing or the creation of regular job cost projections. Forefront Tasks integrates with Microsoft Outlook for scheduling automatic reminders. Users can actually execute the task directly from the reminder—a real time-saver.

Document Imaging has two important new features in Version 12. Batch Scanning is an option that allows documents to be scanned separately from the transaction entry. Images can then be assigned to transactions at a later time. For remote Forefront users, the new cache option allows copies of images to be stored locally. This speeds both the scanning and retrieval of documents.

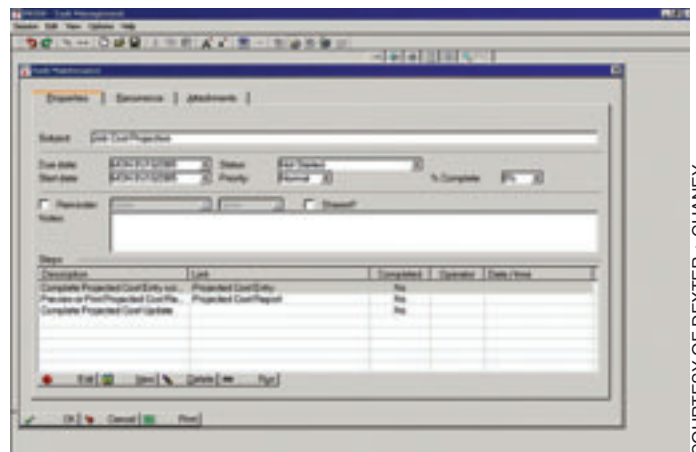
Forefront Version 12 was developed for construction companies of all sizes and complexity. Whether an organization is running a single company at one location with a few users or multiple companies and locations with hundreds of users, Forefront's scalability allows companies to grow while enjoying unparalleled performance and profitability.

Contractors face many challenges as they strive to integrate construction operations with finance and accounting processes.



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Forefront integrates the people throughout an organization.



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Forefront Tasks steps users through the process of running a job cost projection.

es. Company-wide integration allows for:

- information access and sharing a common database;
- controlling job costs and profitability;
- document control/management; and
- streamlined workflow.

Dexter + Chaney's Forefront Construction Management Software supports these functions and more. The suite of products integrates accounting, jobs, project management, human resources, document imaging, equipment, purchasing,

service, remote access and data sharing.

In addition, Dexter + Chaney's Forefront software integrates the people throughout an organization and helps focus on a common goal: profitability.

A Case for Integration

For example, SME, Inc., Seattle, uses Forefront to automate and streamline processes that were once disconnected and labor-intensive. SME bridged the divide between its project managers, field foremen and accounting department.

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Forefront Document Imaging ends the need to dig through archived filing to find a piece of paper.

Integrating Project Management with Accounting: Confidence in the Numbers

Before implementing Forefront, SME's project management and accounting staff operated independently of one another.

"Each project manager had his own spreadsheets. At the same time, accounting used its own software. The two weren't sharing information," Adam Pinsky, co-owner and CFO, says. "Accounting would receive a change order and have to work with the project manager to tie it back to a job. When it came time to close out, there was no central database of change order information. We could never be certain if we billed everything or not."

Forefront changed that.

Now, Pinsky says, "We have all our information in Forefront and everyone can access it. We no longer feel like we're working in a 'sieve' and worrying about how much money might be 'leaking out' of our process. Forefront improves communication throughout our organization and gives us confidence that we're all looking at the same set of numbers."

Job Cost Projections: An Early Warning System

Because information is available in real-time, Forefront provides an early warning system for a job that's not on track. "It's much easier to solve a problem when you're 20 percent complete than if you're 80 percent," Pinsky says. Forefront's Job Cost Projections capability—used as an early warning system—helped SME save a job that was in trouble.

"We were about 20 percent complete with the job and saw that we were already well over our labor budget," Pinsky says. "We pulled together the foreman, project manager and contract manager and made some adjustments. It was really something to deal with the problem early on, make a correction and see the results."

According to Pinsky: "As a direct result of taking early action, we brought the job in under budget by about \$30,000." Forefront's ability to project final job costs at any phase of completion enabled SME's entire project team to see the problem so they could correct it.

Integrated Document Imaging Saves on Employee Overhead

SME used to file job information in three-ring binders. The paperwork, says Pinsky, really stacked up. "We would generate a stack of paper about a foot tall every week. If we didn't keep up, it was like the leaning tower of paper."

Add to this the burden of retrieving documents. "We often had to search in files and job books, or even on somebody's desk, for a single piece of paper. And if you had to find something that was misfiled, you could spend hours looking for it."

Enter Forefront's integrated Document Imaging software. Electronically filing documents such as AP invoices, timecards and job documentation streamlined SME's filing and retrieval systems. "We don't have to go on a search to find a document. It's literally right at our desks, in the software on our computers."

Forefront Document Imaging—designed-in from the ground up—has improved SME's processes and its bottom line.

"There are lots of document imaging programs out there, but the fact that this one is a seamless component of Forefront has saved us an enormous number of labor hours and enabled us to streamline our processes so that we can keep our overhead low," Pinsky explains. "If you're looking for savings, this has literally reduced our staffing levels by an entire person."

Three Keys to Success With Forefront

According to Pinsky, success with Forefront can be attributed to labor, cash flow and job costs.

"We view labor like a hose and the spigot is always on," Pinsky

says. "Once you spend a dollar of labor, you can't take it back. The number-one key to our success is the efficient use of our labor force," he says.

Number two is effective management of cash flow. "That's AP, job costing and receivables—working on somebody else's money."

The third key is controlling costs on jobs "by making sure that everybody knows what the job scope is and ensuring that we're getting paid for things outside that scope."

"Forefront improves communication throughout our organization and gives us confidence that we're all looking at the same set of numbers."

Pinsky can quantify SME's financial gain from implementing Forefront. "From an administrative standpoint, our overhead as a percentage of sales has declined by a couple of percentage points—about \$300,000—since using Forefront. This is not from cutting overhead, but by increasing sales without adding overhead."

The Final Word on Integration

"We've grown substantially, and administratively we've been able to hold down our overhead," Pinsky says. "I absolutely attribute this to Forefront and its functionality. The integration is the driving force that has helped us increase profitability."