

Taking the pain out of tendering

Technology helps search for contractors and reduce the paper trail

Ledcor Construction is not only among Canada's largest construction firms – it is also in the forefront of embracing new technology.

The company, celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, was among the first to sign up for PlanSource – a computer-based method to issue tender calls and manage tender and construction documents.

Ledcor is among a handful of companies that can be considered “legends” in the Canadian construction industry. It was founded in 1947 as **Leduc Construction**. Its historic claim to fame was that it built the road and drill location for **Imperial Oil's** Leduc discovery, which

launched the modern day energy industry in Alberta.

Since that time, the company, which is 100% employee owned and operated across North America, has long since divided into six divisions: commercial construction, heavy civil, industrial, mining, pipeline and telecommunications.

Its headquarters are on the Vancouver waterfront in the new **Shaw Tower**, for which it was the general contractor. Among its many current projects is the new Shangri-La tower on Georgia Street. Ledcor has also been named general contractor on the \$1 billion 58-storey Bow Tower to be built in Calgary. It will be headquarters for the **EnCana Corp.**

Adam Cochrane is senior estimator with Ledcor. There is no doubt he is a fan of PlanSource, which was developed and marketed by **Infinite Source Systems Corp.** (ISSC) of Vancouver. Cochrane inherited it when he joined the firm, after moving west from Toronto two years ago.

Like most general contractors who have turned to PlanSource, Ledcor's primary use is in calling for subtrade tenders from their invited list. Cochrane first used it on the Cross Roads project, a mixed-use residential and office development currently going up at Cambie and Broadway in Vancouver. He says it has saved him hours of time and stacks of paper.

The system is basically fairly simple. Ledcor posts its job on its PlanSource website. An entire “package” is posted. It includes plans, letters, bid forms, schedules, scope of work, specifications and so on.

“In the old days,” said Cochrane, “we had rolled-up drawings and a stack of papers five inches thick for each package. We can put all of that on the site. All of the paperwork is gone.”

He has never sat down and put a dollar figure on the amount of time – and therefore money – PlanSource saves him. But he knows it is considerable.

“Say I'm going out for tender on a job and I'm looking for excavation, shoring, formwork, electrical and mechanical, and I'm inviting five companies for each of those. That's a lot of packages. In the old days I would order drawings and specs and send drawings out for copying. I would photocopy all the specifications and print out all my documents and bid forms and the scope of work. That's a lot of administration work. It takes up a lot of staff time. And while I'm doing that I'm not doing my real job, which is to estimate projects.”

Trade contractors can use the site to completely preview and review a job. If they decide they are going

to bid, they can simply order a set of drawings and PlanSource will have them printed and delivered. In some very simple cases, it isn't even necessary to order drawings. Someone bidding on supplying doors, for example, can just count up the number of doors directly from the online site and submit a bid.

Another important use is disseminating addenda, changes and updates to drawings. Sending out addenda and changes and receiving verification they have been received, said Cochrane, is “hugely important to us.”

“Disputes are rare,” he said, “but when they happen they can be large and can cost us a lot of money. It's not as though I can go back to my client and say there is an extra \$250,000 charge because I didn't ensure the contractor got this change.”

Once a project is under construction, Cochrane's role is finished, and the project manager takes over. At that point, he continues to use PlanSource to handle changes and updated plans. Ledcor doesn't just leave it to each subtrade to watch for them and have them printed. Ledcor has them printed and distributes them personally – often right on the construction site.

“You can't take any chances,” said Cochrane. “In a perfect world, the subtrades would just go on line. But think of the implications if somebody doesn't get a change. It could cost millions.”

Ledcor, he says, remains committed to the ISSC PlanSource system for tendering and for document handling.

ISSC supplies service across much of Canada and parts of the United States.

For further information contact: Steve Sulpher, Infinite Source Systems Corp, 3630 East 4th Ave, Vancouver, B.C. V5M 1M3. Tel: 604-294-6557 ext 109 in the Vancouver calling area; toll free 1-866-294-6557 ext. 109 for long distance. E-mail: ssulpher@infinitiesource.ca. ■



Tech solution: reconstruction and renovation of the giant Metropolis shopping mall in Burnaby was among the many jobs where Ledcor has used PlanSource, a computer based method of managing tender and construction documents developed by Infinite Source Systems Corp.