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Case Study - Spreadsheet User Switches to VT for Pipe®

By Samuel Finney

Background

Rich Tyndall, Senior Estimator, Shoreline Grading Inc. worked for years to streamline his pipe takeoff methods while managing his day-to-day estimating responsibilities. He developed a quick-and-easy to use spreadsheet using Visual Basic macros. He entered structures, pipe types and lengths and had to classify the lengths by depth. Unfortunately, Rich realized he was still doing slow, repetitive work on his takeoff—measuring pipe depths by hand, and handling numerous "unusual cases" for each project requiring modification of his spreadsheet. While he enjoyed making improvements to his system, it was not the best use of his time at work or at home.

Shoreline Takeoff Methods and Estimating Philosophy

Shoreline Grading classifies all their pipe work by depth of pipe and applies different production rates to each depth class. Like most companies, Shoreline believes that *"you learn the job during takeoff, and you get a chance to think through how you will build the project*," and that "*accurate estimates stem from accurate takeoffs*." Shoreline differs from many companies by going further and employing technology to speed up estimating and takeoff tasks. According to Rich Tyndall "*you use software to gain time, and you use the time you gain to check your work, and ultimately to bid more work.*"

Shoreline Inc. Grading & Excavating

Why They Switched

Shoreline switched to VT for Pipe because **the system outperformed their spreadsheet**. They find the program offers a 30% quicker way to enter information and it handles conditions that their spreadsheet never handled, such as automatic depth classification, variations in finish-grades, and special items and fittings associated with trenches. They also like that the system organizes all their takeoff in one file rather than in many different spreadsheet files. So water, miscellaneous items and erosion control takeoff all appear in the same file with their storm and sanitary sewers.

Shoreline is committed to HCSS HeavyBid software for estimating, and the VT for Pipe interface is an exciting additional benefit the system offers. "*Instant error-free transfer to HeavyBid is another great feature*," according to Tyndall.

"Shoreline hopes to continue growing, and VT for Pipe will help us. Investing in new technology helps us get the best new employees. Plus, Fastlane's ease of use helps even a young estimator produce reliable and verifiable takeoffs very quickly."

"Our on-the-plan takeoff times are faster than they used to be and we produce our final takeoff more than 60% faster than we did with my spreadsheet."

It Was Worth the Switch

After a time with the system Shoreline was off and running.

"I wasn't about to run on a real bid before I tried it out, and the voice recognition part of the system took an hour-or-so of getting used to, but I could see the system worked. It checked out against the spreadsheet version of the job within a few feet. Now that we use the system in regular estimating our on-the-plan takeoff times are faster than they used to be and overall we produce our final takeoff more than ***60% faster than we did with my spreadsheet****. I am really happy with it. But mostly I am happy to spend my time on things other than pipe calculations."*

"I love gadgets and new technology, and Fastlane has that, but I could see right away that VT for Pipe was what my spreadsheet should be, and much more."

-Rich Tyndall, Senior Estimator, Shoreline Grading Inc.