Canadian Railway Firm on the Fast Track; Operates More Efficiently with Acumatica Construction Edition

OVERVIEW

Over the past 14 years, Canadian railway service provider REMCAN Projects grew from its four founding members to a national player across Canada. Its legacy Sage financial software and disconnected software packages required a massive amount of manual work and stymied company growth. REMCAN deployed Acumatica Construction Edition, which streamlined operations, automated manual work, and gave the field services team access to critical data from anywhere.

KEY RESULTS

- Connected disparate financial systems into one integrated solution, streamlining operations
- Provided field services team robust mobile app functionality, increasing the speed of data capture
- Avoided hiring additional accounting staff as transactions grew, keeping employee count stable
- Returned 25 percent of accounting clerks time to complete more strategic finance initiatives
- Closed financial statements in a third of the time, closing in only 5 days rather than 15
- Shortened time to deploy new technology, rolling out new business entity in just 6 weeks
- Gained a single, flexible platform enabling future growth

CHALLENGES

REMCAN Projects service offerings initially founded on railroad culvert maintenance as a Langley, BC firm to help railroads maintain tracks and install culverts. The firm expanded those services and has since grown into a multi-faceted, nationally recognized maintenance and construction rail industry leader in Canada.

As opportunities arose, the company expanded its bridges and structures services to include railway maintenance, railway construction, civil construction, signals and communications, and Light Rail Transit. REMCAN's goal is to be the safest, most responsive, and innovative contracting firm in the North American rail industry. REMCAN Projects had been running on a patchwork of disconnected systems including legacy Sage that required a lot of manual work. "REMCAN had begun to max out the number of authorized users they were allotted in the system. This forced the team to push accounting, billing, and approvals outside the system to keep up with the rapid growth," says Jason Thomas, President of REMCAN.

Manual Entry Headaches

Without the ability to upload data automatically, every figure was entered manually, including a 200-page fuel bill that was input into Excel and then in Sage. "That one invoice took three to five days to enter into the system," says Andrea Deakove, Project Lead.

Getting the accounting clerk to provide a three-year history of some 120 credit cards in use across the business proved challenging as well. "The Visa program the business operated under saved roughly $3,400 annually but there was one person who manually entered every single card, which ended up turning into 25 percent of her time," Andrea says.

Field employees entered hours and expenses, known as field ticket reports, in a spreadsheet or on a piece of paper that was then photographed and faxed or emailed. "Then the billing team and the payroll team would type them twice, once for billing and then a second time so they could run payroll."

"Last year we processed 40,000 field ticket reports," Andrea says, illustrating the enormity of the manual processes. REMCAN couldn't sustain and scale with such rapid growth without adding a lot more people. "We had many shared offices with three people, and the back office was outgrowing their space."

The team first secured back-end infrastructure to support a modern ERP, high speed internet, smart phones, and wireless devices. Then they began the search for an ERP, one that could seamlessly connect to its field ticket program, had Cloud access, and was affordable.
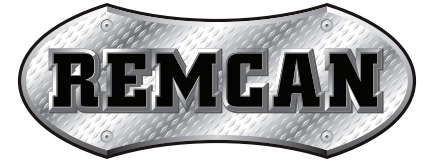
Company
REMCAN Projects
www.remcanprojects.com

Industry
Construction: National Railway Service Provider

Location
Langley, BC, Canada

Products
Acumatica Construction Edition with:

- Advanced Financial Management
- Multiple Currencies
- Contracts Management
- Fixed Assets
- Inventory Control

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Partner Details

constructivesolutions

Constructive Solutions for Business Inc.
www.constructivesolutions.com

SOLUTION

Modern, Cloud-First & Connected

The REMCAN team took an in-depth look at eight ERPs, including Microsoft Dynamics, Oracle NetSuite, Sage 300, and Eclipse by Explorer. The team had narrowed the choice to either Sage 300 or Eclipse. Then a provider suggested they also look at Acumatica Construction Edition. "We did a fair amount of benchmarking and decided to go with Acumatica Construction Edition in the end because of its API-based foundation, and because it would integrate well with our field ticket reporting tool," Andrea says.

The team eliminated many ERP systems because they were legacy systems with significant costs. "At some point, all of those tools require a ground-up rebuild and we would not have been super excited about facing that after doing a fresh implementation."

The team liked that Acumatica Construction Edition was cloud-based, provided requested data super-fast, and didn't require a large IT team to support.

Unique Licensing Model

"Pricing was a factor as well," Andrea adds, explaining that the field ticketing solution they use also charges by consumption rather than per user. "Our field ticketing has the same model, which enables us to scale and grow with known costs."

The team knew that giving the field direct access via an ERP could be transformational. With Acumatica the team would have the ability to see real-time profitability.

REMCAN deployed Acumatica Construction Edition with help from Acumatica Partner Constructive Solutions for Business Inc.

BENEFITS

Real-Time Financial Visibility

With Acumatica Construction Edition, REMCAN sees real-time profitability, something it didn't have previously because it took so long to get data into the system to do any analysis. "Before, we had issues with latency and accuracy," Andrea says. "The ability to bring the whole team onto Acumatica for expense processing was a huge advantage."

The accounting team no longer types expenses and payroll into two systems. Employees submit expenses and hours via their phones or through an iPad, and the data flows automatically into Acumatica without extra processing.

"REMCAN is excited to start using the AP Artificial Intelligence invoice recognition," Andrea says. "We're processing well over 2,000 invoices a month, and the AP AI will allow us to be way more efficient."

Increased Employee Satisfaction

With automatic data feeds and the ability to track and consolidate several entities, REMCAN executives close out monthly financials faster than it took with legacy Sage. "The longer it takes to close, the less value-added tasks staff gets to do," Andrea says. "And when you are closing for three weeks, you lose the ability to do detailed analysis as you are in closing mode all the time."

When you are always closing a month, your quality of life deteriorates, she adds. "If staff can't take time off during a close, then their personal lives are impacted in a big way."

Instant Accounts Receivable Snapshot

With Acumatica Construction Edition, REMCAN Projects executives have better insight into data. For example, they can see where the company stands when it comes to accounts receivable. "Before Acumatica, our aged AR reporting was very limited," Jason explains. "The team has real time data and it's been a big improvement."

Jason loves the instant access he has to real-time data, which allows him to see how the company is performing and where the team needs to make corrections. "Having access to almost everything and being able to drag and drop and drill down, has been transformational," he says.
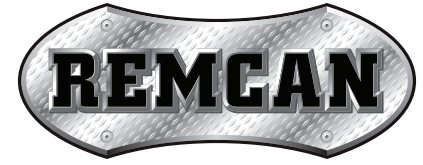
> *After spending significant time re-developing our chart of accounts and reporting structure for Acumatica, we're now able to run reports and analyze data in a much more meaningful way to support our strategic decision making.*
>
> – Andrea Deakove,
> Project Lead,
> REMCAN Projects

Employee User Adoption

"Employee user adoption of Acumatica Construction Edition has been exponentially better than I expected. Our go-live success is a testament to the thoroughness of our UAT testing and end-user training, our team and the system were extremely well prepared," Project Lead, Andrea says. REMCAN has quadrupled the number of people using the financial solution and that figure will increase once they fully roll out the expense functionality to the field service team. The staff likes the power of the new business solution and its automatic workflows.

Andrea adds that master data standardization has also been vastly improved with Acumatica and systems integrations ensures that data records are kept completely aligned. "Using API we can pull comparable data from multiple systems and prepare dashboards using Power BI giving us valuable data visibility in real time" Andrea notes.

Rapid and Remote Deployment

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, REMCAN was still on its legacy software, and accessing it from home over a VPN was painfully slow and riddled with disconnections. "None of those challenges happened with Acumatica," she says. "We're super happy with Acumatica's speed. Overall, it's been a very big success."

REMCAN spent time making sure the new business solution operated as expected before bringing on their second entity, Narrow Passage Rail. "The new railway construction and maintenance group operating out of Quebec, Canada began operations in the middle of May, and we were able to get them live with Acumatica on July 1st. When I consider deploying new technology in just six weeks, that pace is quite remarkable."

On Track for Future Growth

REMCAN looks forward to adopting Acumatica's Canadian payroll functionality when it is released later this year. The company also plans to add Acumatica's Project Management module and is evaluating the addition of an estimating tool. One of the reasons REMCAN chose Acumatica Construction Edition was Acumatica's open platform and an extensive community of third-party developers and applications, which seamlessly connect to Acumatica.

"We pride ourselves on being highly innovative, genuinely responsive, and bound by integrity. We promise work that is safe, focused on environmental sustainability and delivered with the highest quality," Jason says, reciting the company mission statement. "We are committed to growing our business and bringing our services to the next level."

To that goal, "Acumatica's unlimited user license structure will enable us to scale, and once we have the AP AI bank feed, it will help with cash reconciliation, electronic reconciliation, and bank fees. We have more timely information, and much more opportunity," he says.
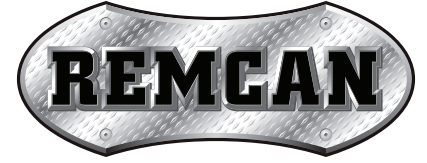
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