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## Scheduling for Best Practices

Accurate bidding and estimating tools are allowing contractors to win jobs more efficiently. Yet when it comes to the actual execution of the project, the improvements can be somewhat limited.

As contractors look to add efficiency and establish best practices across the organization, experts believe many are neglecting the role cutting-edge scheduling solutions play in this process.

“There is still a lack of solid execution of projects across the industry,” says Mark Sullivan, president of Congistics Corp., [www.congistics.com](http://www.congistics.com), Wilton, Conn. “Companies (have improved) their planning and cost tracking but are not actually executing any more efficiently than they had in the past. Instead they are using whiteboards and spreadsheets, which can make the sharing of information and the accuracy of that information suspect because the schedule is typically handled by one person and not shared across the organization.”

While Sullivan sees great progress in the way projects are planned and estimated, there is a lack of improving execution on projects through the use of information. He believes electronic scheduling forces discipline in the area of execution that they now must be proactive rather than reactive.

“When a foreman calls and says that he needs a piece of equipment or people out at a job those resources will be sent out; that is not scheduling it’s just reacting to day-to-day needs,” adds Sullivan. “The most successful firms are planning ahead, even if it is just a few days or a week. I am talking about execution scheduling, actually determining who has what equipment and what resources next week. Companies that are doing this are the ones that are growing their businesses. They are able to hire an additional person to do the schedule and share that job so that they are not relying on any one person to get the work done”

He believes the ability to capture scheduling information in one database, as opposed to multiple spreadsheets, can form the basis of turning the schedule into a measure of best practices. Rather than guessing the number of workers and equipment it takes to do a job, a company can analyze resources based on past jobs instead.

Jim Rogers, director of industry and product marketing with Primavera, [www.primavera.com](http://www.primavera.com), Bala Cynwyd, Pa., definitely sees a trend of contractors capturing existing schedules that have performed well and creating a standard template or methodology to be used by other schedulers in an organization.

“There is a rich history of doing good detailed schedules but not a rich history of sharing those throughout the organization for repeated success on other projects,” says Rogers, noting technology tools are now allowing this to happen with more consistency.

Through the use of accurate schedule technology, example schedules can be detailed out to specific projects and end users can customize schedules to capture best practices and share them with others.

“Companies can actually access the schedules from a different project in a different location and start out from step one and use that schedule as a baseline,” says Rogers. “That (applies) throughout the entire team: subcontractors to general contractors to owners.”