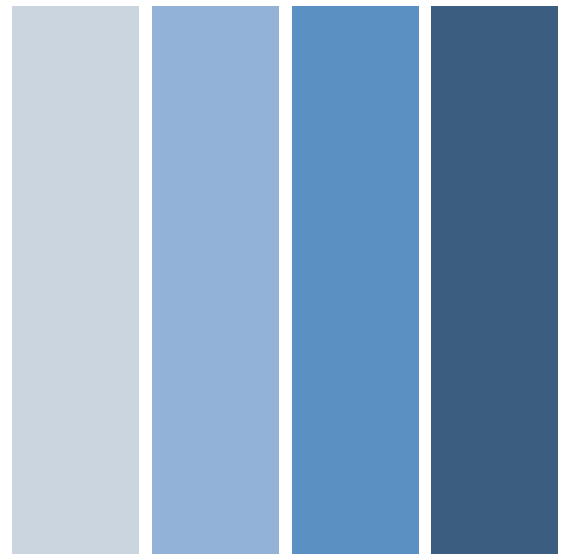


# Blois Construction

Anatomy of a Modern Construction Company

Winning More and Making More



## Fierce Competition

It's no surprise that the construction business in Oxnard, California is extremely competitive, with 15% of its trade school and college graduates holding construction-related degrees. Combine the trade focus on infrastructure with its booming construction opportunity, and competition between contractors becomes fierce.

Oxnard-based Blois Construction knows that managing the company's growth couldn't stand in the way of productivity and competitive edge. Now a leader in underground utility construction, the company utilizes technology designed for their specific business issues in order to maintain control and profitability while enhancing the company team. The result? More business is bid and won, and more projects are brought in under budget. By combining cutting edge software with strong mentorship and project management skills, Blois not only manages its 5-year, 142% growth with ease, but passes on internal efficiencies to their clients. What a great way to stay ahead of the competition.

## Veteran Tradespeople, Visible Community Projects

A family-owned business that began in Goleta, California in 1965 with a backhoe and a laborer, Blois has grown to more than 100 employees: Project Managers, Project Superintendents and Leadmen, beginning their careers as their fathers had at Blois. Training, growing and promoting from within are staples at Blois Construction.

What sets Blois apart from its friendly competitors in Ventura County is its reliance on this experience under the philosophy of "servant-management." Blois' fifteen Project Superintendents boast 170 years of field management at Blois, four of them in excess of twenty; the four newest, with only ten years of running projects, have been learning at Blois for nearly fifty years.

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**- Jim Blois, Blois Construction**

Blois' highly-visible projects have included massive and intricate sewage systems at Amgen, Inc. in Newbury

Park; the backbone trunk lines for storm drain, sewer and water systems at Camarillo's Spanish Hills Country Club; the complicated rebuilding of infrastructure at the expanding Pacific View and Janss Marketplace shopping centers, and, more recently, the wet utilities for the hangar that will house Ronald Reagan's Air Force One at the Presidential Library in Simi Valley. Blois' base of operations has expanded throughout the past decade to accommodate the explosive growth of schools, housing tracts and the commercial and industrial projects that serve them in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties.

## Producing a Winning Bid is Only Half the Battle

### Winning the 11th-hour Bid

After many years using Hard Dollar's Estimating package, agile bidding processes are just one benefit that Blois now sees on a daily basis – but the resulting business is what keeps Blois a leader in the area. Using Hard Dollar to estimate and bid projects, Blois now has the ability to analyze risk and lower supplier costs to bring in more competitive bids – even at the 11th hour.

Using Hard Dollar, Blois can easily monitor and change their estimates right up to the time of submission. In one case, Blois was able to take a phoned-in cut from a material provider in final minutes before bid submission, quickly enter it into the estimate, and make a decision about how much to lower the price to maximize profit while still winning the \$11,221,226 job with Castaic Lake Water Agency. Blois is also able to use historical bids as templates to build complete budgets in very little time, and thus provide quick pricing information to our clients when necessary.

"In the last 3 minutes of the bid, one of our piping suppliers dropped their price by \$1 million, and we were able to take advantage of the reduction in our bid proposal," said Jim Blois, CEO of Blois Construction. "In the 3 minutes we had left, we could analyze the risk on the project and communicate the new price to win the bid. The fact is that Hard Dollar made winning the \$11 million job much easier."

And local project owners and general contractors know Blois can bid quickly when asked to participate. "We're invited to more bids because owners know we can bid quickly for fast-tracked projects," explains Blois.

## Revolutionizing Project Management: Execute on Projects with Half the Effort

The combination of lean operations and veteran tradespeople at Blois requires that all employees carry much responsibility for project and corporate operations. Project Managers and Project Engineers bid the work and supply the Project Superintendents with the support required to build it. Resource Management support staff provide the correct material and equipment in a timely manner to allow the Project Superintendents to concentrate principally on the construction in the field.

*“[We] make better project execution decisions because we’re working from the most accurate and up-to-date information from the project site.”*

**– Jim Blois, Blois Construction**

To create a holistic approach to project management, Blois uses Hard Dollar software as the basis for managing costs from estimates all the way through to project completion. Blois uses Hard Dollar for much more than just estimating and bidding projects, but to make agile changes to those estimates at the 11th hour, and then rely on those same figures to forecast costs and anticipate changes throughout awarded projects. “Once the projects are awarded, we have more credibility with owners because we can produce estimates of change order costs quickly, accurately, and with the correct back-up,” explains Blois.

According to Blois, using Hard Dollar Execution modules including Timesheet Collector and Timesheet Warehouse in the field, has allowed Project Superintendents to revolutionize project management for Blois. Not only do field personnel eliminate several hours per project previously spent capturing time entry from the field, but accounting doesn’t have to re-enter that information in order to produce cost reports. The result is a modern real-time approach to project management that relies on simple, electronic collection from the field, instant publishing of those figures at the end of each day, and a view of the project status (and forecast) the next morning.

Daily electronic submission of work reports not only saves Superintendents time and hassle over traditional methods such as pencil and paper and having to deliver them back to the office. Instead, the entire

process takes just minutes per day and provides Superintendents, Management and Owners with access to daily cost information that previously was unavailable for a number of days or even weeks. This information helps the Superintendents focus their attention and use resources efficiently to optimize productivity in the field.

“Since superintendents save so much time on paperwork, they can spend more time optimizing resources, and Project Managers are able to get info more quickly from the field in order to make materials decisions back in the office — without going out to the job or track down super and get this info,” explained Blois.

After time entry is complete, project managers can follow the labor calculations through the system to a forecasted cost at completion.

“Superintendents in the field have eliminated hours of time-consuming paperwork by updating quantities and job status remotely in just minutes. This allows us to make better project execution decisions because we’re working from the most accurate and up-to-date information from the project site,” continued Blois.

*“With the estimate data available in Hard Dollar, we were able to easily access the data that allowed us to successfully resolve a difficult situation with the owner and increase our contract value by \$100,000.*

**- Jim Blois, Blois Construction**

## Managing Change to Increase Revenues

Anyone in the construction business knows that project changes can mean the difference between a profitable project and a failure. The key is spotting problems early while corrective action can be taken.

In a recent project for the Brine Line, Blois was able to identify significant potential cost overruns. Using Hard Dollar to manage the day-to-day cost status, they were able to identify projected negative variances on a summary activity, and were able to dig in to the forecasted issue immediately in order to see what sub activities were affected, and take corrective action. With instant access to cost and forecast data from the field, the company can simply drill down

into a forecasted loss on a project, view each activity from the estimate to the costs, and assign corrective action to the project team - all in a matter of moments, based on Hard Dollar's ability to forecast costs instantly. As a result, the project is now back on track with the estimate.

What's more, Blois clients know they can receive accurate and easily identifiable cost updates. In one recent project, the soil type didn't match what was specified at bid time, which resulted in major cave-ins and hours of extra work that required trench and production changes. Blois knew that they had been moving more slowly because of cave-ins and had to use additional men and equipment.

Since Blois was able to access bid and production rates in escrow, they were able to compare the bid price with how much time this portion of the project actually took. Blois explained: "With the estimate data available in Hard Dollar, we were able to easily access the data that allowed us to successfully resolve a difficult situation with the owner and increase our contract value by \$100,000.

Project Managers are able to track job progress much more accurately because of the daily electronic submission of work reports, without having to spend all of their time on the phone or in the field. And the advanced features of the Hard Dollar system allow the managers to filter and highlight the job cost and production data in many ways to quickly visualize any problem areas in the field. Recently, one project manager was able to identify a changed condition in the field on a job that was affecting productivity, and

was able to provide complete and accurate back-up information to the owner to justify the ensuing change order that kept the job profitable. Because of the real-time data, and the ease with which it can be organized, managers are able to spend their time dealing with issues, rather than wasting their time organizing reports from several different places. .

## Company-Wide Benefit

The cross-job reporting feature of hard Dollar gives upper management the tools they need to quickly and easily analyze jobs and/or managers profitability, allowing them to efficiently focus their attention on the jobs and/or managers that require it and therefore maximize their impact. The system also gives a clear picture of cash-flow and other financial information which gives upper management more information with which to make decisions. Overall, Blois' enthusiastic adoption of the integrated and advanced system gives employees at all levels the tools they need to effectively and efficiently perform their jobs.

By adopting technology early, and continuing to partner with its systems providers, Blois continues to see accelerated productivity and efficiencies across the board. But their commitment to providing the best tools to their employees is what will keep Blois not only competitive, but a leading place to work.

By becoming early-adopters of an integrated and advanced technology system, Blois has been able to grow to be one of the biggest players in the ultra-competitive California construction market. By continuing to work with Hard Dollar, they plan to stay there.