

ProEst®

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY



**TECHNOLOGY + PEOPLE:
A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS**





PROFILE

Company: Collins Construction Company

Company Type: General contracting and construction management

Specialties: Commercial construction, pre-engineered buildings

Location: Fall River, Massachusetts

ProEst Users: 15

Years in Business: 93

\$5-6 M

Average annual value

OVERVIEW

Collins Construction Company was founded in 1928 in Fall River, Massachusetts, by Francis Collins, a local masonry contractor. Today, the company is led by his great-granddaughter Rebecca Collins, and has grown to include 15 full-time employees, generating an average of \$6M in annual revenue. Most recently, the company has become an authorized reseller and installer of pre-engineered fabric structures in Massachusetts and neighboring Rhode Island.

With a growing portfolio of projects that includes schools, banks, and other commercial structures, Collins Construction is fully committed to the implementation of end-to-end cloud-based technology that includes both ProEst for estimating and Procore for project management. The company creates an average of 120 estimates a year with an average awarded project value of \$1M, projecting growth of 75% over the next five years.

BACKGROUND

A ProEst client since 2019, Collins Construction had previously relied on modified spreadsheets to prepare their estimates, a legacy system that was established in the 1980s and remained virtually unchanged for nearly three decades. A change in leadership in 2017 prompted the company to explore new technological platforms for their back-office systems; Procore was implemented in 2018 to automate project management tasks, followed by ProEst for estimating 1 year later.

Their choice of ProEst in the push to innovation was a carefully considered one; after being introduced to the software by the Procore team, Collins executives evaluated a number of competitive solutions, but ultimately found that they had limited functionality and were significantly outside of their budget. According to owner Rebecca Collins, the move to ProEst has already delivered far-reaching benefits, significantly reducing estimating and takeoff time and providing much-needed connectivity between office and field teams.

Collins Construction Company is a women-owned, fourth-generation business that has completed new build and renovation projects throughout the Southeastern MA + RI.



“ I was looking for something that would collaborate with Procore. The cloud piece of it was huge. ”

PRIORITIZING SEAMLESS SOFTWARE INTEGRATION

With a decidedly people-centric management style, Rebecca Collins is redrawing the lines of leadership for construction companies—something she believes will yield significant business benefits over time. Collins refers to her management style as “kinder and gentler” than that of her male predecessors, yet she remains true to her business convictions, a balanced approach that, in her view, serves the needs of her employees, subcontractors and clients well.

The same is true of the company’s all-in commitment to technology; in her role as President, Collins wants to make sure that the business stays on the leading edge of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In a technology-driven environment, she explains, integrated, web-based estimating and construction management solutions are an essential part of long-term success.

“We found ProEst through Procore,” said Collins. “Our first bite into anything electronic, other than Quickbooks, was Procore, and I was looking for something that would integrate. We did look around [at competitive products], but for us the cloud-based feature was huge.” In addition to user access, the unlimited pricing model of a cloud-based solution was a major factor in her decision; Collins envisions the day when the use of ProEst expands to project managers and other stakeholders throughout the company—and paying “by the seat” may not be financially feasible if it’s only accessed sporadically. Collins wants her field superintendents to work with ProEst from their onsite trailers, a time-saving step up from the paper and pencil calculations they’re doing now.



“ Using ProEst and Procore together has helped me bid and manage more effectively. ”



GETTING UP TO SPEED WITH ON-DEMAND TRAINING

Collins is the first to acknowledge that the adoption of a new, unfamiliar estimating platform was intimidating to her users at first, but reports that ProEst released (recently) which turned things around. "Honestly, they are everything," she said. Not only did they explain key processes clearly, said Collins, but they were available on-demand as often as necessary, which helped accelerate learning and adoption. She also appreciates that ProEst set no limits on the amount of live training offered during implementation. "Some of the other people we talked to would only give us half a day of training," she said, "and that was it." Collins reported, "One of the things we liked about ProEst is that they didn't hold us to a specific number of training hours. They told us that if we needed help, they would help." That open-ended policy, combined with a variety of training formats, gave Collins users the support they needed to work with the software independently; within months, company estimators had transitioned completely from spreadsheets to the ProEst cloud platform. Eight months in, even those who were reluctant to change are enthusiastic converts. Collins reports that her most experienced estimator, at first loyal to the old spreadsheet system, is now the company's biggest ProEst advocate, taking full advantage of the system after just a few months. "As an estimator, he knows what he needs, and ProEst delivers it," she said.

MOVING TOWARD A CONCEPTUAL BUILDING MODEL

Collins has used her new leadership role to move the company away from the traditional design/bid/build construction model, adopting a more conceptual approach that requires early involvement in the project planning and development process. The goal, she explains, is to minimize competition for cost-focused hard bid work and instead add value as a collaborative partner from the very beginning of each project. There, too, Collins finds ProEst to be invaluable. "They [clients] don't want to see just one number at the end. They want to see things nine million ways," she said with a laugh. "Now there's a format for getting that done. We have the ability to modify the look and quickly turn around revisions to clients."



“ ProEst helped us create a dialogue that really defined and formalized our estimating process. ”

GAINING EFFICIENCY THROUGH DIGITAL TAKEOFFS

Collins is especially impressed with ProEst's on-screen takeoff feature; thanks to the software's combined takeoff and estimating functions, the company is able to save hours of time per bid, all with the kind of precision that gives her new confidence in their numbers. "I would say that we save about eight hours an estimate with ProEst, or about a day's labor," said Collins. Even more important, she notes, ProEst takeoff functionality eliminates the need to make educated guesses about labor and materials costs. "It gives you the ability to do takeoffs so much easier," she said. "Now, we can use the software to build assemblies and crews to pull together estimates confidently and accurately."



Collins Construction Company has installed pre-engineered fabric structures for commodity storage and general warehousing in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.



BLENDING NEW IDEAS WITH VALUED TRADITIONS

Like most construction companies, Collins felt the impacts of the 2020 pandemic year, but in characteristic fashion, Rebecca Collins saw the pause as an opportunity to make much-needed changes to the organization. “It gave me the ability to think out of the box,” she said. “The problem with a multi-generational company is you do what they did. So, when things were slowing down, we were able to do a lot of training.”

Much of that training, says Collins, involved ProEst for project estimating and preconstruction management, which proved to be a benefit to the business overall. As her users became more proficient with the software, Collins explained, she was free to spend her time filling the project pipeline and developing the business. The result is a strategic plan specifically focused on client acquisition and business growth, a first for the company in its 93-year history.



Yet, as progressive as she is, Collins also appreciates the history and traditions typical of a multi-generational, family-owned company, including a profound sense of community. Four Collins employees have been with the company for twenty years, while two others have been there for thirty. “We treat our employees well,” she said, “and they tend to stick with us.”

In the end, Collins believes, innovation—technologically, culturally or otherwise—has to comfortably co-exist with what has come before. While she, and other women like her, are having a significant impact on the industry, Collins understands that there is much to value about the past. “The nice thing about it [construction] is that it’s such an old-school industry. It’s not super sensitive. We can move the needle and still have a good time.”

GET TO KNOW PROEST

ProEst provides advanced construction estimating capabilities for leading companies and public sector clients in the United States, Canada and Australia. Our cloud-based platform combines cost estimating, digital takeoffs and bid day analysis in a single powerful solution—a proven way to reduce costs, ensure accuracy and streamline pre-construction workflow.

Visit www.proest.com to learn more.

