Hausers, a top general contractor, saves time and nerves with Planyard

HAUSERS
MEILE MEELDIB EHITADA

Hausers is an Estonian main contractor for real estate development and construction. Most of their projects are designed and built by themselves – from idea to completion. Their mission is to improve people's living, leisure and working environment.

The company was voted the most successful Estonian construction company in 2020 by the business newspaper Äripäev and KPMG.

Challenges

"We had to allocate several days each month in order to work with Excel," says Tomy Saaron, member of the board at Hausers.

They first moved from Excel to a local software solution years ago for job costing in order to make the data flow between the budget and the accounting software.

But the software didn't have all the functions they needed and the user experience was lacking.

One of the biggest problems was that they couldn't see what's behind a certain job or contract – in terms of invoices etc. The lack of support and feature development was another problem.

"We started looking for other software providers. But none of them worked for us – they were general project management tools but our problems were related to budget management not task management," explains Tomy.

Using accounting and invoice digitization software wasn't enough either. The problem with sending invoices to the accounting software first is being always one step behind – not having a real-time overview of costs that are about to occur.

A gradual move to Planyard

Hausers decided to move to Planyard gradually. Old projects were kept where they were and new ones were added to Planyard as they started.

"It's been very easy to onboard new project managers to Planyard," comments Tomy.

The feedback from subcontractors has been positive as well.

Manual data entry and double-checking disappeared

Sending invoices over to accounting used to be a dull task – it meant creating folders, saving files, sending emails, etc. Planyard has changed that completely.

"Everything I need is displayed in the same place, I don't have to switch between different tabs, folders, and apps. This saves time and energy every single day," comments Erki Sander, project manager at Hausers.

The subcontractors save time as well. They don't have to send separate files to project managers. Progress reports, invoices and extra works are all collected and processed through Planyard. Without them having to even create an account.

Erki continues: "I used to have a calculator on my office table to manually double-check all the calculations in progress reports from subcontractors. There's no more need for that as Planyard automatically checks for errors and ensures compliance. This has reduced the time spent on the review process a lot."

Gert Tomingas, project manager, adds: *"It takes me just two clicks to send cost documents to Planyard through the Outlook add-on and I can deal with the documents later whenever I have time."*

Although project managers use Planyard the most, the site engineers have seen benefits as well. They can now upload invoices and receipts from their phone and comment what the cost was about. It will be linked to the right line-item and then approved by the project manager for payment. No more back and forth emails to find out what was behind the cost.

This all has ensured that the budget is always up to date.

Real-time overview of profitability forecasts and cash-flow

"As a construction manager, I'm mostly interested in the profitability of projects and cash-flow. Planyard gives me a clear overview of every project – what are the costs for a given project, what's the income and what's the profitability forecast. It's possible to even see how it has changed over time," explains Tarvi Jünimaa, construction manager.

One of the daily tasks of project managers is forecasting ongoing project costs.

"I really like that once I save a contract, I can automatically update the cost forecast for the contracted line items. A lot of time is saved since I no longer update the cost forecast for different line items separately," explain Erki, project manager.

Standardization goes a long way

Hausers has standardized budget management, progress reporting and billing through Planyard. The line-items in the budget are automatically interlinked with contracts, progress reports, extra works and cost documents. This means that it's not possible for subcontractors to make mistakes (knowingly or not) when sending progress reports and invoices through the system.

"Every decision and action gets logged. So, it's always possible to see what exactly got agreed on and how things have changed over time," explain Tarvi, construction manager.

Another thing is that the same cost codes get used across the projects which means there is visibility across the company into how much something costs and which subcontractor worked on what.

"We can now see historical prices per unit across projects. So, that I can estimate more or less what the price should be for a certain job or material," comments Tomy.

Nerves matter as much as efficiency

The biggest fear that Hausers had was that maybe this is another piece of software that doesn't go anywhere. Luckily, this didn't prove to be the case.

Tarvi sums it up: *"Planyard has developed into a solid and reliable product. It's a great solution if you're looking for a way to bring all the data together around job costing and avoid duplication of work."*

They have tried various other software solutions as well but construction is tricky – most of the work is still actual mechanical work. You can't digitize it. But job costing and budget management is something that Hausers wanted to and could digitize to make it as efficient as possible.

"We have won in time and efficiency with Planyard but maybe the biggest win has even been on our nerves – we don't need to make extra clicks or deal with illogical user experience anymore," says Tomy.