

# MSUITE HELPS JACKSON & BLANC EXPAND FAB OPERATIONS AND WIN BUSINESS

AN MSUITE CASE STUDY



Overcame worker fear of technology.  
Expanded the fab shop.  
Enhanced capabilities.  
Won more business.



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Brian Underwood  
Fabrication Shop Foreman  
Jackson and Blanc



## OVERVIEW



Jackson and Blanc is Southern California's pre-eminent mid-sized mechanical systems specialist, serving the Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional markets. As a Service Contractor, Jackson and Blanc provides preventative maintenance programs, service, and repair for Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC), and other mechanical systems.

Brian Underwood, Fabrication Shop Foreman at Jackson and Blanc discusses how MSUITE helped his Mechanical Contracting firm overcome challenges, expand fab shop operations, enhance capabilities, and win more business.

## THE BUSINESS CHALLENGES

### Jackson & Blanc Expands Fabrication Shop

Back in 2017, Jackson and Blanc had a very small 500 sq ft. fabrication shop. At that time, leadership was deciding if they were going to expand the shop or continue leaning a great deal on field fabrication to meet their schedule obligations (e.g., setup welders and pipes on jack stands on the jobsite). Ultimately, they decided to expand the fab shop to 8000 sq ft.

"At that point, it was just constant email after email with pictures of their isometric drawings that field staff took on their phones. Sometimes we would get PDFs to print and add cut lists to them ourselves. If we wanted the guys to know what pipe to cut, we had to figure out all the take-offs for them. Then we kept track of deadlines and progress on spreadsheets. Every single step was manual," said Mr. Underwood.

In 2018, Jackson and Blanc again recognized their need to grow and expanded their fabrication shop capacity from 8,000 sq feet to 16,000 sq feet. Having MSUITE in place gave the firm confidence to double capacity and output with ease. "Although the expansion is still in progress, it is never a guessing game anymore and it is easy to push the growing number of projects through to stay on schedule and budget.

### Overcoming Challenges

- » Fab Shop expansion.
- » User adoption is impossible--Staff will not use technology in the fabrication shop.
- » Ditching the spreadsheet.
- » Eliminating paper as much as possible.
- » Tech is for big contractors and their shops

### Moving from Spreadsheet to Automation



Mr. Underwood struggled with relying on his Excel spreadsheet he called the "Productivity Chart." This manual effort included tracking fractions of labor hours, worker shifts, completion dates, materials, quantities, and multiplier formulas to calculate estimates. "I built this nightmare of a spreadsheet, thinking there's got to be a better way, but living with it for a couple of years.

## THE APPROACH

In 2017, Mr. Underwood met Britton Langdon, Chief Executive Officer at MSUITE, at an MCAA Conference. "From the very first conversation, I was sold because I was searching for something to replace my Productivity Chart that was running our shop and taking all my time." After that meeting, Mr. Underwood and their Sr. Project Manager immediately alerted the fabrication shop team that they were bringing in a new software program to help fabrication operations increase productivity and reduce mistakes. It was also crucial for expanding and developing the fabrication shop further.

"Most of the team at Jackson and Blanc was excited, but there were a couple of staffers that were very skeptical about using the software in the shop. All they wanted to do is weld," so the gauntlet was set.

## THE TRAINING & IMPLEMENTATION

As Team MSUITE arrived at Jackson and Blanc, training and implementation went quickly. It began with training the fab shop staff and management and configuring the software to support Jackson and Blanc's workflows.

After a week, the fabrication team was working comfortably within FAB. BIM training went even faster because only one person required training. MSUITE also provided online chat support, which helped with adoption by the shop staff.



**It took the guys only a week to get comfortable running on FAB. The software is user-friendly and designed for fabrication workers that have never used technology before."**

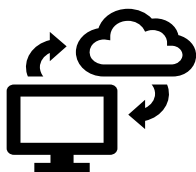
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### Overcoming Shop Worker Skepticism & Fear – Easy to use software designed for fabricators.



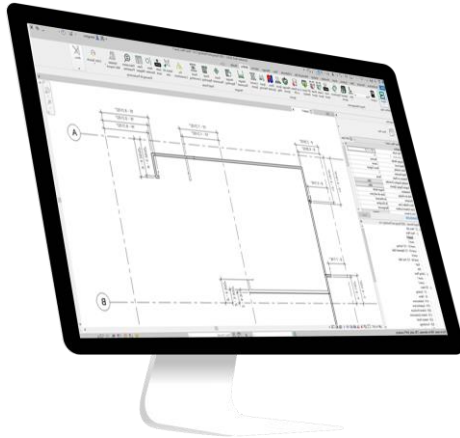
The first words out of the mouth of one long-time employee on the first day of training were, "I'm going to figure out a way to break this thing and not make it work cause I'm one of those guys that just likes to weld." A few weeks later, he had no problem using FAB to track his activity and see his work instructions. "Even for the small to midsized shop and crew, FAB is effortless to use."

### SaaS Software - Accessible anywhere and anytime.



In February of 2019, Mr. Underwood went on vacation to France for three weeks and left a few people in charge. Because MSUITE's products are cloud-based, he could still login into MSUITE's BIM and FAB to check and release drawings to the shop. He could also see where the team was with deadlines and communicate with the team via email. "Fortunately, I even caught a couple of emails that weren't being monitored, so even though I was in France, I could upload them into FAB to alert the staff."

## THE SOLUTIONS



**BIM saves me 20 minutes per drawing. That's 3x time savings"**

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### BIM for Design

BIM is standard operational software for Jackson and Blanc's shop. The product is vital to their fabrication process because every paper drawing the shop receives is redrawn in Revit, uploaded into BIM, then seamlessly sent to FAB for production.

"I don't have to sit here with somebody else's drawings and figure out the take-offs for their 90s in their flanges. MSUITE BIM does all of that for me and creates a cut list standardized for how the guys are reading the material they are pulling off the shelves. I have a standard for everything, and it works easier with our machines." The defaults are built-in with Revit and BIM. Standardization saves the fab shop substantial time and mitigates costly mistakes.

### FAB for the Shop

#### Enhanced Material Tracking, Coordination

FAB allows Jackson and Blanc to track vendor orders, which is crucial because most materials do not ship directly to their job sites. Almost everything filters through the fab shop, ranging from materials used in the shop to materials that the foreman needs on the jobsite. The fab shop is tasked with counting, confirming, tracking, and shipping EVERYTHING by project.



Before MSUITE, there was a great deal of paper flying around the fab shop. Today, MSUITE FAB helps digitally track materials and the status of order acknowledgments. "Vendors send me the order acknowledgment, and I upload that as a drawing in FAB so staff can easily see it." Excel CSV files are also uploaded as check-off lists for materials, even for internal requests for items in stock. "MSUITE FAB is an exceptional tool for tracking, ordering, and receiving materials with outside vendors and throughout the shop. Communication, coordination, and collaboration are capabilities that FAB offers our team."

#### FAB helps accelerate fabrication productivity between stages.

Before implementing MSUITE, Mr. Underwood had one person in charge of staging the product. That individual always ran from staging station to station troubleshooting issues and ensuring the product was progressing. "This headache is gone because of FAB's timing and notification capabilities. Using FAB, we know in real-time if there's a problem at any of the stations, including welding, carting, prep and fit, and so forth."



## FEATURED PROJECT - FAST TRACK

A large local pharmaceutical company awarded Jackson and Blanc a Cooling Tower and Underground Piping Change Out project, which required a quick turnaround. The entire project went through the fab shop, where all materials were sent directly by a mechanical engineer with all the piping and cooling tower components in Revit. This was the first project where the team converted all files from the Revit family over to fabrication parts and Jackson and Blanc had ownership over detailing and determining where the breaks, branches, and flanges were placed.

**Jackson and Blanc overcame significant challenges in getting all the heavy piping under the stationary cooling towers with extensive planning.**

"We had a crawl space of only about 3 foot 6 inches to get everything in and put in new hangers and do all the welding. We looked at it from many angles - what kind of carts were needed and how the tools would look - from the required weight, size, number of turns and branches needed, etc. Hence, we were able to model and eliminate a lot of paper because everything was using Revit, OneDrive documents, and relying on FAB for the entire team."

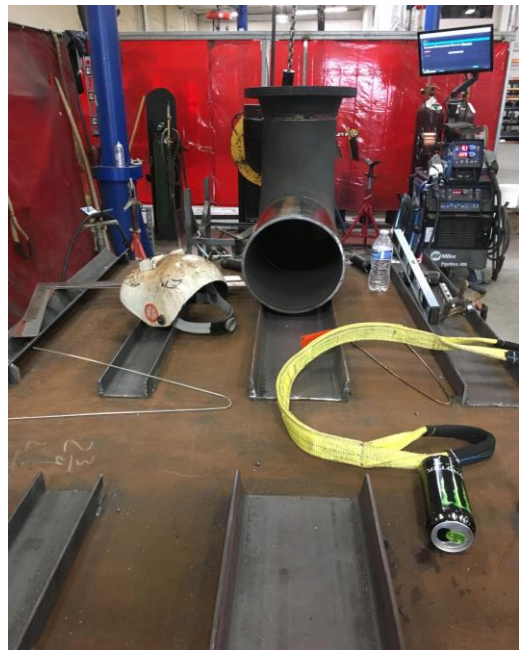
During this project, a feature called Refresh Sheets was released by MSUITE to help the Field and Fab Shop communicate and address necessary changes to keep the project on its tight schedule. "It was a lifesaver because once we finally had everything spooled, changes during the project were handled easily."

For example, requests such as "I need another 8-inch branch put on this piece" would not require breaking the spool to redraw it, as was the old way. With a simple touch to the Refresh Sheet button, he could add a new branch and easily upload the new sheet into FAB.

The Fab Shop and the Field Foreman were also able to communicate via uploading Excel CSV files into FAB with instructions for the Fab Shop.

**“ We eliminated a lot of paper because everything was using Revit, OneDrive docs, and relying on MSUITE FAB for the entire team.”**

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# WINNING NEW BUSINESS WITH EXPANDED CAPABILITIES

A leading General Contractor (GC) won a project to renovate a facility where the mechanical equipment was causing extreme reverberation. The mechanical equipment was previously set directly on the floor, so every office in the building vibrated when the mechanical equipment was running. A major concern for the GC was to stay on schedule, track everything that needed to happen, and limit disruption.

“ The GC asked Jackson and Blanc when they were looking at the building, "why you guys," and "what are you going to do differently?"

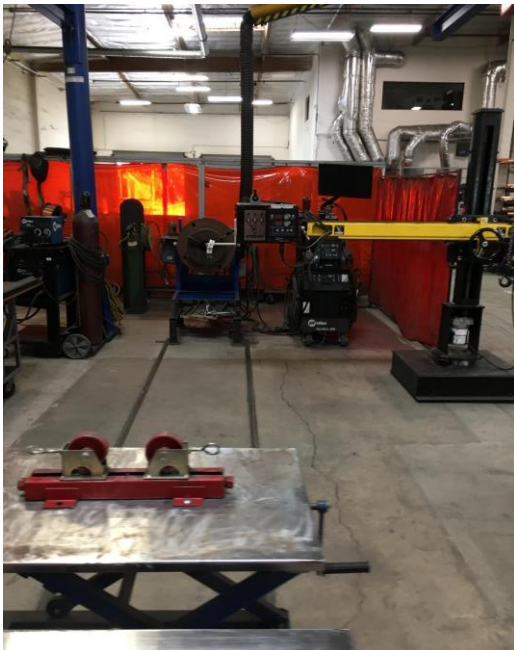
Matt Cunningham, the Vice President of Operations at Jackson and Blanc, brought in the GC's staff to give them a tour of the fab shop. One of the first agenda items presented was how MSUITE helps differentiate its capabilities to answer what they are doing differently.

"We demoed BIM, and FAB on the computer before the GC's Reps stepped into our shop, and then we walked station to station and showed them how staff move the material and how they see it from one computer to the next and how that flow worked."

## The advanced fabrication capabilities helped us win the business.

"Although there many reasons that could have helped us win the business, MSUITE gives us a competitive advantage and confidence to deliver high-quality products on schedule and budget. These capabilities help a firm like Jackson and Blanc compete with much larger contractors," said the 20-year construction industry veteran.

In the end, by using MSUITE software, Jackson & Blanc delivered on customer expectations and was able to come in on time, on budget.



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## MSUITE

MSUITE is cloud-based suite of management software to connect BIM, Fab, and Field Construction Teams. MSUITE helps you track, manage, and share data throughout the entire life-cycle of a construction project. Stemming from a Mechanical Contractor in Iowa in 2015, MSUITE's products have been a solution to a problem that the construction industry has needed for decades.

## JACKSON & BLANC

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**DEWALT****CONSTRUCTION  
TECHNOLOGY**

SUITE

