

## Electronic Advantage

October 2005

Constructech Staff

While many industry terms and buzzwords have a limited shelf life on the information technology (IT) agenda for construction companies, 'going paperless' remains a hot topic, as the benefits continue to go beyond reducing shipping and handling costs.

A monthly savings of \$4,000 to \$5,000 is certainly nothing to ignore. That is precisely what general contracting firm Elford Inc., [www.elford.com](http://www.elford.com), Columbus, Ohio, saves in paper, labor, and other overhead costs using document management software. The company uses technology from Cabinet NG, [www.cabinetng.com](http://www.cabinetng.com), Huntsville, Ala., across its entire organization—including five remote locations.

Like many other growing contracting firms, Elford needed to curb the unnecessary costs associated with printing, shipping, and other related document procedures. Yet aside from reducing costs associated with the aforementioned tasks, Brad Montgomery, IT systems administrator, Elford, points to a 20-30% speed increase from its accounts payable department and the ability for upper management to access key documents related to any project at any time as added benefits to the technology.

Elford has done its best to extract the most value from the solution, integrating it with accounting. Next on the agenda, according to

Montgomery, is bringing human resources and marketing into the loop, further reaping added benefits.

These added benefits of going paperless is what peaks the interests of more construction customers, according to Patrick Aragon, product marketing manager, Adobe Systems Inc., [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com), San Jose, Calif.

"I see many customers being concerned with authenticity; meaning when I send you a document, how do you know it is from me and how do you know if it's been tampered with or not," says Aragon, adding it is easy to hide modifications in a paper-based environment. "In the electronic environment, if you're using PDF format, you can actually take some precautions; a user can certify a document or electronically sign a document (which can be validated by the recipient) Additionally, Acrobat can alert a user whether that document has been modified since it was signed."

This becomes highly critical in the world of construction where things such as invoices and change orders require an electronic signature at some point during the business process, says Aragon.