

RAWSO TRIPLES REVENUE IN JUST ONE YEAR USING LATEST TECHNOLOGY

Contractor uses full suite of HCSS software, GPS hardware, and drones to grow business without more overhead

By Krysten Powers



When RAWSO Constructors President Dylan Stephens built his own construction company from the ground up, he knew he wanted technology to be at the forefront of his business.

Stephens started RAWSO with a pickup and a skid steer, laying driveways and working other small projects. He has since grown his company to nearly 50 employees and 20-25 pieces of equipment, and has managed to triple his revenue in just one year with the help of technology such as **HCSS HeavyBid** and **HeavyJob**.

Recognizing the Technology Payoff

It all started with GPS on a dozer that he purchased for grading on one of the biggest jobs he'd ever had.

"I had a lot of guys who didn't really know about grading, so I wasn't going to do it without having GPS," he said. "That wasn't very common for someone with five or six employees to have a GPS dozer, but it simplified things so much for them. They basically just pushed a button."

It's not a strategy that most small companies employ, but Stephens said it made sense to him and continues to pay off.

"Technology costs money, but it doesn't cost nearly as much as having to add so many people," he said. "Normally, to grow this fast, you would have to add so many administrative employees, accounting employees, project managers. Having all of this technology has helped us basically triple our revenue and almost keep the same overhead."

Using Faster Estimating Methods to Win More Jobs

RAWSO started their in-office technology with **HCSS HeavyBid** estimating software, which helped them get away from confusing, time-consuming spreadsheets and bid larger work like municipal contracts against bigger contractors.

"We're all very detail oriented, especially when estimating," he said. "Before **HeavyBid**, we basically just had some custom sheet we'd built, but we couldn't automate it enough that we could just plug in crews or plug in every single little line item. If we wanted to bid a public project that had 100 items, it took two days to build the sheet to get ready to import takeoff numbers."

Now **HeavyBid** allows RAWSO's estimators to copy from

previous estimates or import activities directly from the project owner's bid file, speeding up the data entry process so they can focus on putting the right costs on the activities.

Comparing Actual Production to the Budget

To ensure they're using accurate production numbers, RAWSO also implemented **HeavyJob** time card and job costing software.

"We wanted to close the loop from estimating to the field," he said. "We were always too busy to sit down and look at a job at the end and dial into it to see what we did well or what we did badly. **HeavyJob** basically gives us the job costing capabilities of a \$100 million company that has 20 or 30 admins in the office that take all this data and turn it into reports. But it does it on a daily basis."

Foremen enter crew time and production data into **HeavyJob** in the field using iPads, and that information is sent directly to the office in real time so that both the foremen and the project managers can compare actual production to the budget and ensure the job is on time and profitable. If they're behind or losing money, they can spot the issue immediately to make changes while it still affects the bottom line.

Empowering Foremen with Performance Insight

"It's an empowerment thing," Stephens said. "Most companies don't want the people in the field, for whatever reason, to see the cost data or to see how much they're



making on a certain line item. But I think it's the missing piece. Everybody wants to exceed expectations, and for our guys to see it that day without having to wait six months down the road – knowing they did a great job today or did better than they were expecting – I think there is some satisfaction that the guys get by being able to see how they performed.”

Stephens said they rolled **HeavyJob** out to just a few foremen at first to get them used to it, while the office also learned the management side. The pushback he expected from older crew members to use iPads in the field never came, and the adoption rate exceeded his expectations.

“It helps not to have to worry about who is going to take their time in the office and carrying around pens and paper and all that stuff,” he said. “It lets them stay in the field and do their job and not have to worry about having to burn two or three hours out of their day to go turn paper in twice a week.”

HeavyJob also allows them to scale whenever necessary without a lot of added training.

“Now when we have a new foreman, we’ll show it to him and allow him to use it for about two weeks just to get used to it,” Stephens said. “After the second week they start submitting time cards and daily diaries, and then they’ll implement safety meetings. Our forms are all in there also, so they get used to filling those out.”

Checking Estimates Against Actual Production

RAWSO also uses **HeavyJob** and **HeavyBid** together to improve their bidding accuracy and ensure the office and field are on the same page.

Previously, Stephens said they never really checked estimate numbers against actual production to ensure they were bidding accurately.

“We didn’t necessarily always go back and look at our cost data from the field, because we didn’t trust it,” he said. “Now we have legitimate data from the field, the estimators can tap into it any time. What helps is being able to go and look at something that we’re putting too much money on or being too conservative on, and if the field is outperforming what we’re estimating, they can lower the price to be more competitive or rebalance the estimate based on previous jobs.”

Using Safety Software to Maintain a Zero-Incident Record

In addition to **HeavyBid** and **HeavyJob**, RAWSO also uses **HCSS Safety** to run safety meetings, perform inspections, and report incidents and near misses – although they haven’t had a lost-time incident in six years – and they even offer the free inspection app to their project owners.

“A lot of larger general contractors are very proactive about their safety and having safe subs in projects,” he said. “We’ve brought up being able to give them the inspection app, and they’re just so blown away that we would be willing to do that. I feel like, if you’re not willing to, you’re not really serious about safety.”



Getting the Most out of Equipment by Integrating Telematics
HCSS Telematics helps RAWSO feed runtime data from all of their equipment – including OEM GPS units – into **HeavyJob** and **HeavyBid** to ensure they are reporting accurate equipment usage.

The automation between the equipment and the integration with the software, Stephens said, is worth every penny.

“Not only do we track hours and location, but we track idle time and get weekly reports on utilization rates for each job,” he said. “Being able to use that and run it directly through **Telematics** and back into the time card is huge because it saves them that much more time. The equipment run time is just as important as the employees’ time, because you’re not going to have accurate job costs otherwise.”

The Growth Continues

RAWSO remains competitive by using technology throughout their entire business. They are currently using **HCSS Plans** document and plan management software to store all their job paperwork digitally. Crew members anywhere can zoom into the plans to see more closely or show inspectors on the job site without having to lug around a ton of paper.

And **HCSS Trucking** has allowed RAWSO to better manage a couple of complicated jobs in which they were performing large amounts of cut-and-fills on site.

“It was going to be hard for us to justify payments on the job with how we came up with these load counts,” Stephens said. “After the first two days, they didn’t believe we’d hauled that many loads. They said basically that we’d worked too fast and they couldn’t keep up with us. But we pulled up the automated ticket counter on **HCSS Trucking** and showed them, and they were just blown away that the technology even existed.”

RAWSO’s technology adoption extends to usage of **HCSS Cloud** to host all of their HCSS software so that they don’t have to maintain their own server or manage the IT components of the software. With **HCSS Cloud**, anyone can work in the same estimate or job at once, even remotely, and the data is guaranteed to be protected.

"It's an added fee, but it's worth it," Stephens said. "Your server can go down, and you can lose all of your information. And it's very expensive to have even a small server. We're

very lean, and I just feel like we could double our size again, and HCSS would just grow with us. It wouldn't be hard to just continue to rely on the software to do all of that for us."

RAWSO CONSTRUCTORS OVERVIEW:

- Founded with one skid steer and a pickup truck.
- Performed small subcontractor work like laying driveways.
- Purchased and installed GPS hardware on all equipment regardless of age.
- Wanted to grow to compete with larger contractors on DOT and municipal projects.
- Uses drones software as well as Agtek, and other new estimating technology on par with larger companies to attract younger workers.

HOW HCSS SOFTWARE HELPED:

- HeavyBid allows estimators to bid faster with an easy-to-use import and estimate-building capabilities.
- HeavyJob allowed foremen to send in time and production data from the field quickly and easily.
- Foremen took ownership of improving production thanks to HeavyJob's accurate production reporting and forecasting capabilities.
- Estimators bid more accurately using actual data from

the field.

- HCSS Telematics helped improve reporting and equipment management.
- HCSS Trucking helped improve billing and payments on large, complicated hauling jobs.

RESULTS:

- RAWSO tripled in revenue from 2017 to 2018.
- Increased staff from 20 to 50 employees (mostly field) and 25 pieces of equipment.
- Able to bid DOT work and municipal contracts on par with companies three times their size.
- Able to scale quickly without drastically increasing overhead, increasing profit margin.

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