

D. MILLER ASSOCIATES

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Newsletter

WORKFLOW AND ACCOUNTS PAYABLE MANAGEMENT USING CHAMELEON

Although programs like The Construction Manger have brought significant productivity and reporting improvements to the accounting department, and enabled better cost control through its Job Costing modules, workflow has continued to be a largely manual and paper-dependent process. Employees rely on original and copies of Accounts Payable invoices, with varying degrees of tracking and control exercised until the invoice is actually entered and filed away.

With the introduction of a new program called Chameleon, however, you can significantly improve the productivity and profitability of your operation. Invoices can be electronically scanned, tracked, routed, managed, and approved inside Chameleon, and then automatically brought into The Construction Manager. Managers have information on the status of every invoice at their fingertips, resulting in improved cash flow, improved cost management, and easier access to important information for quicker and more accurate billing.

The actual processes involved in using Chameleon with The Construction Manager (TCM) may vary by company. What follows, however, is an example of how Chameleon is used in the office of a local subcontractor who relies on TCM and Chameleon to minimize their reliance on people and paper, and maximize their use of technology.

Invoices are initially scanned by the front desk person, who then "routes" (an electronic process similar to sending an email) the invoices to the appropriate individual. This process is quick and easy; 50 invoices can be scanned and routed in less than 15 minutes.

Once the invoice has been scanned and saved inside Chameleon, team members then use the routing, notes and email functionality inside Chameleon to index the invoices according to the TCM fields (Vendor, Job, etc.) and manage the workflow. Key to these processes is the "Approve and Route Again" function inside Chameleon, which allows the invoices to be routed multiple times, but maintains the status of the invoices as "Waiting (Approval)."

Marilyn, who is in charge of the accounting department, can view the "work list" and invoice routing reports at any time, so she always knows the last person to "touch" the document, and when the last time the document was routed or had its status changed. When a project manager or other individual has approved the invoice for either full or partial payment, the invoice is routed to Marilyn, where it shows up in her work list.

Marilyn has the ability to review the invoices and the coding, and then approves them inside Chameleon. Any invoices that were approved and routed to Marilyn, but not approved *by* Marilyn, stay in her inbox with a status of "Waiting," and are not imported into The Construction Manager. No one else has the ability to alter the invoices inside Marilyn's inbox; if for some reason they want to recall the invoice for additional research, Marilyn can route it back to the individual for further research.

The productivity improvements Chameleon offers are tremendous, and easy to achieve. If you'd like more information on Chameleon, please call (301) 261-5989, or email Info@DMillerAssociates.com.

TCM VERSION 9.2 (SQL) RELEASED

For some time now AMSI programmers have been working on the newest release of TCM, which is built around the Microsoft SQL/Server database management system.

Years ago, software programs incorporated their data structures and management functions inside the software itself. This meant that the data was stored in a "proprietary" format, unavailable to Microsoft programs like Word, Excel, Access, etc. AMSI was one of the first companies to separate their programs from the data, and to release software built around a Microsoft Database. The database initially chosen was Microsoft Access, but now The Construction Manager is stepping up to SQL/Server. SQL/Server is the world-wide standard for database management software. Its reputation for security, stability and performance is unmatched, and every company in the Fortune 1000 uses SQL/Server to manage one or more aspects of their operation.

In order for your company to convert TCM from Access to SQL/Server, you'll want to make sure that your File Server is running a supported version of SQL/Server. Supported versions include SQL/Server 2005 (Workgroup or Enterprise Edition) and SQL/Server 2008. If your company does not run TCM on a File Server, you can use the free version (SQL/Server Express) to run the SQL version of TCM on a workstation.

Once SQL has been properly configured on your Server and/or workstation, a data conversion program will convert your information from the Access to the SQL/Server format. The time required to perform this conversion will vary, and care is required to properly complete the process.

Ensuring that SQL/Server is correctly setup on your File Server, and that verifiable backup procedures are in place, will be critical to a successful conversion to the SQL/Server environment. We can help you make sure that your system is correctly configured for this transition.

If you've designed any custom reports, or use custom application software that links to the TCM database, these reports and applications may need slight modifications to adapt to the SQL format. If you have any questions about the move from Access to SQL, or wish to schedule implementation and conversion assistance, please call (301) 261-5989.

UPCOMING EVENTS

On Tuesday July 21, D. Miller Associates will be sponsoring another Chameleon "Lunch and Learn" opportunity from 11:00 to 2:00 p.m. in our Deale, MD office. Clients can obtain hands-on experience indexing, routing and searching using the Chameleon software. There is no cost for this seminar, and lunch will be provided, but space is limited, so please call (301) 261-5989 to register or for additional information.

On Wednesday July 29, D. Miller Associates will hold a "Mastering The Construction Manager" class from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in our Deale, MD office. TCM users will receive hands-on training in cost analysis and reporting, forms, SQL issues, using TCM with other programs, etc. The cost of the course is \$299.00, and includes lunch.

AMSI's Annual User Conference will be held in Orlando, Florida this year, from September 20-23, at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, and will offer classes and learning and networking opportunities. You can register at www.amsi.com, or call (301) 261-5989 for more information.

About Us

D. Miller Associates has been providing computer hardware, software and services to construction-related businesses for 25 years. Call 1-800-895-1698.

