



How Westcor Companies Leveraged Big Data to Save Time and Money

8-Minute Read

Organizations today are drowning in data. Risk Managers and employees are flooded with data collected at every interaction and event that takes place, leaving them with an overwhelming volume of data sets.

Bringing a data initiative to fruition demands good data skills and best practices. Organizations need a good data system that automatically organizes data into a usable format for stakeholders in today's data-centric world. Having one will also empower employees to use time spent on preparing and processing data to instead act on it.

Westcor is a construction firm with various service divisions, including framing, concrete, masonry, material placement, and sanitation. Before tapping Intelligent Technical Solutions (ITS), construction conglomerate Westcor Companies dealt with thousands of datasets that were not put to good use. That was the case until they engaged ITS for its Data Analytics Service, which allowed them to visualize and understand their data in a more meaningful way.

The report was stale

Just like any other company, a construction firm like Westcor can leverage the power of big data to keep decision-makers on the same page, solve business problems, and derive informed insights for future growth. Big data can help companies complete projects on time, build more efficiently, and save on labor and other costs.

In particular, Westcor saw the value of big data in streamlining its accounting cycle and procedures. One of the biggest challenges they had for the initial project was the accounts receivable report and the countless hours wasted in creating it.

Before ITS came in, a controller would spend about four hours compiling the accounts receivable report out of their existing system every Friday morning. Then, the controller publishes it in PDF and emails it out to all the managers in the company.

Usually, like a few days later, the company's president would come in and ask about the report. His team would tell him that they didn't have enough data. It took them four hours a week to build the report, then immediately after, it was stale. Every hour after that, they didn't know what the information was supposed to be.





Using Microsoft Power BI, ITS helped Westcor build real-time reports so that when payments come in, the software would automatically calculate those payments and reflect them. It will also save their controller four hours a week, not having to build this report over and over, week after week. This allows them to free up to 208 hours of the controller's time to perform other strategic tasks. This also translates to over \$10,000 in cost savings.

The accounts receivable report is also published in Microsoft Teams and available to all company managers. Employees can easily go into Teams on their laptops, iPad, or wherever they're at to see what's going on.



 **Kevin Booth**
CCIFP, CFO of WestCor Companies

"We were unable to find the reports that we needed to give us the information that we needed.

With ITS Data Analytics, we were able to customize the reporting and get the data in an easier to read format, exactly the way we wanted it."

"Now we have on-demand reports; before, we used to get reports once a week. Live information is now available 24 hours, seven days a week, in real-time, anytime we want. It's available in the office, it's available on my phone, and it's available anywhere we go. We had instant access to the data," he said.

130 hours per month

Traditional information systems may be sufficient to record basic information about project details, designs, costs, and employee data. However, they are limited in enabling users to access significant amounts of data or input from various data sources for analysis. Construction data is large, heterogeneous, and dynamic, and such limitations can hamper construction companies from improving their operations and making better decisions.

Before using ITS Data Analytics, Westcor was using outdated software, which it had long outgrown. They had built out massive spreadsheets over the past few years that were all manually updated. According to Booth, it took their accounting people 130 hours per month to key the information into the spreadsheet. "That's a significant amount of time that they're spending on this spreadsheet every single month," ITS CEO Tom Andrulis commented.

ITS had to take that same spreadsheet and break it down into small chunks to build reports from it. The team at ITS only had to go back to Westcor's data provider and do a minor update to get access to their data. But overall, the outcome of the initial proof of concept went great, as Andrulis puts it.

When asked how this has benefited them, Booth said it had enabled them to have quicker response times. "It allowed us to react to problems faster. The main thing is just the faster reaction time and not having to spend time generating reports. The information is automatically available," he said.

Not only that, but Westcor was also able to save at least two hours per week and thousands of dollars in labor. "I'm sure we save over \$5,000 a year on the 1st report that we've got from data analytics," Booth said. Booth added that they're looking to do more with ITS Data Analytics with analyzing data for sales revenue, job cost information, and labor reporting.



STREAMLINING PROCESSES

Andrulis spotted an opportunity to provide Westcor strategic advice in improving its data reporting and analysis. It all started from a single question: he asked them how they measured their key performance indicators and metrics in the company. Andrulis was surprised to learn that Westcor was using a service they're spending \$5,000 a month on without seeing results.

Westcor got a couple of dashboards built from that company, but they didn't continue to engage with them despite paying them. They also couldn't see the different graphs, dashboards, and charts on their phones, which is another issue. The managers that are out in the fields and building houses can't get the critical information on their phones.

Coincidentally, Westcor was also looking for somebody to talk through some business challenges they had and do a little bit of business consulting. Fortunately, ITS was more than happy to oblige. "ITS came up with a simplified solution for this reporting that we had, which allowed us to streamline our processes and improve our efficiencies," Booth said.

Andrulis introduced Westcor to the ITS Data Analytics technology and asked them if they were open to doing a proof-of-concept with the managed IT company to see if they could resolve some of those issues. The next steps were to figure out how ITS can access their data and what Westcor wants them to accomplish.

Apart from getting their data reporting sorted, ITS also assisted in terms of simplifying processes and workflows. Westcor needed a sounding board, and Andrulis laid everything out on a whiteboard and talked through all his different ideas to see how they could optimize workflows, add new functions, and prioritize tasks.



"They know what they're doing, but like any human being, sometimes we get stuck in our way, and having somebody to bounce the issue off of is helpful. Sometimes, all you need is another person to talk through it to get past that issue," Andrulis said.

One of ITS' practical recommendations was the use of Microsoft Teams for departmental communication and collaboration. ITS suggested that Westcor use Teams to record tutorials for employees and build a library out on Microsoft Stream.



Above and beyond

Being able to take the information they already have and then manipulate it in a useful way for their business allowed Westcor to maintain its competitive edge. Access to viable data saved them time and money and also gave them insights into what was going on that they didn't have before.

"You know, in the construction industry, we've struggled to find the labor for many years, but the demand for construction is higher than ever. So that means we've got to do more work with fewer people. Technology allows us to do that. Technology is absolutely critical for us to continue to succeed in construction," Booth said.

When asked about what he thinks of working with ITS, Booth has this to say: "They have fantastic customer service. Everybody at Intelligent Technical Solutions is courteous, and they go above and beyond. They are extremely polite, accommodating, and they have a genuine concern to try to solve our problems."

Westcor has always had a good relationship with ITS. Booth adds, "ITS is constantly asking what they can do to help? And we've continued to find new ways to innovate to find efficiencies. It's just cutting edge. I think the most important thing is that ITS has allowed Westcor to stay at the forefront. We have the latest technology, the latest updates, and our technology doesn't get stale, and it stays fresh and relevant."