



## ***Accounting for Growth***

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### ***H2 Builders chooses Timberline to expand presence on Hilton Head Island***

*When Roseanne Collins joined H2 Builders two years ago as controller, she knew right away what her first challenge would be – upgrade the software.*

*“I could see that the accounting system in use -- Quickbooks – was no longer sufficient to handle the scope of business the firm had taken on,” recalled Collins, who has 20 years of financial experience in construction. “That system may have worked in the early years, but the company had outgrown it.”*

*Indeed, H2 Builders has emerged as a leading builder of custom homes on Hilton Head Island and the outlying mainland in South Carolina. The company now builds 25-30 custom homes each year, ranging from \$400,000 into the seven-figure range.*

*As Collins began her search, she found she did not have to look far to find alternatives to Quickbooks. While Todd Hawk, president of H2 Builders, was attending a trade show, he saw a demonstration on a program called Buildnet. Convinced that Buildnet could do the job, H2 Builders purchased the system. It went live on Jan. 1, 2004, but Collins and her team soon realized that Buildnet would not be the solution they had hoped for.*

*“The system began falling apart soon after we installed it,” she recalled. “And the support was mediocre at best.”*

*Collins, Hawk and estimator Heather Pitts conferred on a course of action. All signs seemed to point toward Timberline; Pitts recalled having taken a course in college in which she used Timberline software, and Collins had heard good things about the software maker. They called Timberline headquarters in Portland, Ore., where a representative referred them to the Strategies Group, a Timberline reseller in Atlanta.*

*A Strategies Group team visited H2 Builders at their Hilton Head offices and gave a detailed demonstration of the Timberline product line. The presentation featured a video that spelled out exactly how the system worked -- and how H2 Builders could grow with it.*

*“The video showed us how user-friendly the system is,” Collins said. “What we found most useful was seeing how we could customize reports.”*

*Another feature that impressed the H2Builder team: Timberline’s ironclad security. Collins had been concerned that with the old system, which ran on Microsoft Outlook, someone could gain access to confidential information. But with Timberline, they were convinced their system would be secure.*

*“There is no way for someone to get in through a back door,” Collins said. “That is important in our business.”*

*Collins and her team were impressed, but after their experience with Buildnet, they committed to proceed with caution. They invited the Strategies Group team back to Hilton Head to answer another round of questions. After that second session, Collins was confident that the Timberline-Strategies Group combination would suit her needs.*

*“Craig Trussell and Shannon Ward (of the Strategies Group) were willing to spend whatever time we needed to get comfortable with this decision,” she said. “They answered all our questions – on two separate occasions. That was so much more useful than sending us a brochure, which is how a lot of other companies might have reacted.”*

*H2 Builders opted to purchase the entire Timberline accounting package, along with the estimating system and Builder MT. In the months leading up to conversion, Jenny Evans of Strategies Group took charge. She interviewed Collins, Pitts and Hawk to confirm their exact needs. She then customized programs to fit those needs. For example, Hawk wanted a screen that would show him real time budget status on every job in process. Collins wanted the ability to pull up accounting data on every job – vendor and subcontractor numbers, invoice numbers, or any other financial detail.*

*Three months before conversion, Collins spent four days at Strategies Group, taking classes on the new software. In a lab environment, she learned how to perform all the functions she would undertake in the course of her job. It proved to be a worthy investment.*

*“The training was the best thing I could have done,” she said. “When we went live, everything made sense. I was able to make a smooth transition, rather than play catch-up. For anyone looking to upgrade, I would highly recommend training before the conversion.”*

*During the week between Christmas and New Year in 2004, Evans and Pam Williams entered all the records in the new system. They went live on Jan. 1, 2005, and the software has worked without flaw since.*

*“The Strategies Group made the process simple for us,” Collins said. “They thought through everything, and I had every confidence that this would work.”*

*After her previous experience with major data conversions, Collins also felt relief.*

*“I’ve done several conversions in the past where we were still correcting errors months afterward,” she said. “This time, we have not found a single error.”*

*Now when Collins and her assistant log hundreds of invoices each day, they do so with an efficient accounts payable function that takes hours off the task each week.*

*“I now have everything on my screen, where in the past I had to print from various systems and hand compile reports,” Collins observed.*

*She also appreciates the tighter control she has with the Timberline Job Cost system.*

*“I can track overages before they occur,” she said.*

*Evans also customized the billing function around guidelines set forth by the American Institute of Architects.*

*“That cuts off several hours of billing time a week,” Collins said.*

*Collins hailed Strategies Group for their guidance – and service.*

*“Jenny and Pam have provided great service,” she said. “They have anticipated our needs and worked closely with us every step of the way.”*

