



## National construction firm thrives in tough times.

When the recession hit, Accent Building Restoration knew it needed to both increase productivity and cut costs to survive. With more than 80% of its employees working offsite at job sites, accurate time reporting became more important than ever.

### At a Glance.

Xora helped ABR increase profitability by 50%.

- A 100-person company, ABR handles apartment and office upgrades, property repaints, tenant improvements, and maintenance of commercial properties.
- ABR's 80-plus mobile workers use Xora installed on Motorola phones to electronically clock in and out of job sites.
- In just the first year of using tamperproof electronic timecards, ABR's profitability jumped 50% without making any other changes to the business.
- Lowering costs helped ABR drop prices – improving customer satisfaction and creating a competitive edge at a time the company needed it most.

Accent Building Restoration uses Xora to avoid layoffs, improve customer service and grow profits.

Like many companies in the construction industry, the last few years have been trying for Accent Building Restoration (ABR), which provides property and building services to customers on both the East and West coasts. Construction has been one of the hardest hit industries, pulled down by the national real estate implosion.

The 100-plus person company, founded in 1994, handles projects such as apartment and office upgrades, complete property repaints, tenant improvements, and maintenance of small commercial offices, complexes and multi-floor high-rises. Its customers include well-known brands such as Extra Space Storage, Public Storage Inc., TransAmerica, Home Depot, U-Stor-It, 7-11 Stores, and Homestead Suites. ABR prides itself on the fact that its workers are employees, not contractors.

"We are fortunate because we do a lot of property maintenance, since new capital improvements have declined since 2008," says Cathy Hartman, customer care manager for the Cerritos, CA-based company.

In 2009, ABR had had to trim its workforce to adjust to the decline.

### Reducing overhead to stay competitive

Fortunately, a decision the company made in 2005 may have avoided more layoffs than it was forced to make in 2009. Back then, ABR realized it needed better insight into the productivity of its employees in the field. Eighty percent or more of its employees work offsite at job sites as laborers or supervisors. Employees were tracking hours on paper time sheets, but managers began to notice that the hours were too predictable: Workdays always began at 8 a.m. on the dot and ended at 4 p.m. sharp.

"We began to do some spot checks and noticed small discrepancies with the time sheets," says Hartman.



**“In just the first year of using Xora, our profitability jumped 50% (by \$80,000), and we didn’t make any other changes to the business.”**

**Cathy Hartman**

Customer Care Manager, Accent Building Restoration

Hartman calculated that if all of the company’s hourly employees overstated their time by just 15 minutes a day, it would cost nearly \$200,000 annually in extra payroll costs, including benefits and worker’s compensation.

ABR’s wireless provider suggested that the company consider the Xora mobile enterprise software application for a better way to accurately track and understand employees’ hours, locations and activities.

Today the company’s 80 mobile workers use Motorola (i365, i680 and EVO) mobile phones with the Xora mobile app installed to electronically clock in and out of job sites. The Xora mobile app automatically transmits this data back to the solution’s management console. Field supervisors and branch managers use Xora on Android phones to track employees’ locations and activities in real time on Google Maps. Meanwhile, ABR’s customer service staff, based in its Salem, Oregon office, download the data from Xora and check timecards for accuracy.

Now, Xora’s tamper-proof electronic timecard feature has given ABR the ability to bill customers and pay their employees with the confidence that both invoices and paychecks are correct.

ABR workers also use Xora on their phones to clock in and out for “travel time” when they leave a job site to pick up supplies or to drive to another client. ABR managers view the GPS “landmark” mapping to the Google maps feature in Xora to locate workers in real time to ensure they are where they should be. If a worker’s travel time seems too long on their record, a manager can check the GPS routing to make sure he took a direct route, for instance.

#### **Cost savings and better customer service**

“In just the first year of using Xora, our profitability jumped 50% (by \$80,000) from 2006, and we didn’t make any other changes to the business,” Hartman says. “Our biggest expense is payroll, and since we deployed Xora we have grown profits each year.”

Xora costs ABR about \$2,000 per month for 80 devices; during the peak summer season when the company hires temporary staff, it runs up to \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month for 100-plus devices.

Beyond the payroll cost savings, there are customer service benefits, too. By having an accurate segmentation of billable versus non-billable time, customers know they are not being overcharged. “We have been able to bring down our costs and thereby lower customer prices,” Hartman says. “This

helps us maintain a competitive edge.”

#### **More productive and loyal staff**

ABR now also has more complete information for employee reviews. Workers who are efficient get rewarded. “If one guy makes six trips for supplies to do a small job and another guy makes one trip for the same type of job, that can indicate a problem,” Hartman says. “Employees are making better decisions now and reporting their activities more precisely and accurately.”

On the flip side, Hartman believes that Xora has helped the company retain people, because now ABR pays for every minute worked: “Not all firms in our industry will do this. If an employee works a lot of overtime, they may try to knock down his hours. We don’t because we have accurate information and that works both ways – in our favor and for the employees. As a result, we have people who have been here for 10 or 12 years.”