Foglio, president of Graciano Corp.: Increased company’s sales and profitability year after year

Illustrating the point, Foglio describes the production standard database that he championed, designed, developed and implemented for Graciano in the 1980s. "It was probably the most important thing I've done in all my years with the company," he said. The effort was revolutionary for its time and involved creating a successful, motivated, opinionated organization away from a yellow-pad-and-sharp-pencil estimating system into the world of database management.

The first step was compiling the information. "I realized that, over all those decades of craftsmanship, problem solving and project management, our company had never systematically collected the data from actual job performance and put it into a system that would statistically give you an accurate production standard with a high confidence level built into it," he said.

The early stages were statistically sophisticated, although technologically rudimentary. "We were feeling our way, recording the data from each job manually and filing it in a binder," said Foglio. As the available technology caught up with his vision, he said, "we coded the data so we could do statistical analysis on it and build 95% confidence intervals around our production standards, all based on historical data."

"Now, for example, our estimators can call up a line item and see that caulking should be so many tenths of a man-hour per linear foot, and that's the basis for our bid, for our schedule, and for our success on the project," said Foglio. "It's one of the things that separate our company. We're outstandingly confident of our production standards. When we can document the fact that we've eliminated 95% of the uncertainty, that tells our clients two things: One, our number is not just competitive but super-tight. And two, we really can do what we say we're going to do."

For a confessed “systems guy,” Foglio retains a deep respect for the masters of the craft he worked with decades ago. "It's more complicated now," he said. "The close oversight from engineers and historic architects, the specifications, the recording procedures, the safety standards, the CPM scheduling software...But it all ties back to the stonemason in the field. He doesn't need to read the specs. Come on — he wrote the specs."