

IPIN (Internet Planroom Information Network)

IPIN is a computer program that allows construction reporting agencies, like Builders Exchanges, to completely change the way they have done business for the past 100 years.

Innovation - Before IPIN was created in 1997, every reporting company mailed construction reports to their members / subscribers. The information was late, limited and expensive to deliver. IPIN has allowed companies to completely eliminate hard copy reports in favor of the internet, providing more information in more innovative ways.

Changes: Prior to the internet, construction reporting had not changed in 50 years. Constant phone calling between reporters and architects, typing a minimum of information which was then copied and mailed out, often on a weekly basis. Addenda were often missed due to the painfully slow distribution of information.

IPIN has changed everything about our business by removing the constraints of the printed reports being sent via US Mail. We now provide **real-time** information to our members, which is vital due to the reduced bidding time allowed by the owners. Also, we include much more information such as complete plans, specs and addenda, expanded bidders lists, estimate break-downs, e-mail links, website links, etc., plus our members can retrieve the information in a variety of ways.

Information gathering has also changed, although the telephone is still very important, IPIN uses a program that constantly checks websites for new bidders, new projects, apparent low bidders, etc. Automation has been the key to the success of IPIN. It allows the gathering and dissemination of a phenomenal amount of information with a minimum amount of people. Prior to the IPIN system, the Cleveland Builders Exchange reported on approximately 2,000 projects per year. We are now on target to exceed 9,000 projects for 2002.

However, the most dramatic change for the construction industry is that on-line programs have allowed contractors and suppliers to bid dramatically more projects which in turn has driven down the cost of construction to the end user.

Our *PRIVATE PROJECTS* program is beginning to change the way general contractors issue their Invitations To Bid to the industry. They may now, with a single click of the mouse, set up their own project website, complete with plans, specs and addenda. Visitors are logged upon entry to the site and their actions tracked while using the site so that the general contractors have more knowledge regarding their bidders.

Finally, IPIN has opened the industry to information that has never before been available to anyone. Users can instantly retrieve data on companies that would have taken days to gather prior to IPIN. Bidding patterns, company activity, most active companies, mailing lists, etc. can all be accessed at will.

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Origination: A group of eight Builders Exchange executives met in Cleveland, Ohio, in the summer of 1996 to begin the process of laying out the IPIN system. Six months later IPIN went on-line in Cleveland, Ohio. IPIN has been continually updated since its inception with ground breaking features and faces a limitless future.

Users: IPIN is the most popular internet reporting software used today. Over thirty-five reporting agencies use IPIN both in the United States and Canada including The Cleveland Builders Exchange, the Builders Exchange of Texas, the Pittsburgh Builders Exchange, the Construction Notebook in Las Vegas, and many others.

We are currently in discussions with nine plan centers in Washington State, the Construction Association of Michigan in Detroit and several Florida Builders Exchanges.

Another benefit from the Exchanges using the IPIN software is that many of them have greatly expanded their reporting territory. In Cleveland and San Antonio, for example, local Exchanges now cover their entire states, respectively, increasing their number of projects from 1,500 to over 7,500 each.

Although it is difficult to extract exact numbers, we estimate that over 10,000 construction companies are actually using the system on a regular basis covering approximately 60% of the United States and a large part of Canada.

Conclusion: Although IPIN is extremely powerful, it's features exciting and it's future limitless, the most remarkable aspect of the system is it's ability to be implemented on a small local application. The smallest reporting agency may now walk stride for stride with the mightiest of competition walking far ahead of them.