

News from LANTDIV

Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic Division

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LANTDIV Earns Hammer Award

The Electronic Signature Team from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic Division (LANTDIV) won a Hammer Award from the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR). Angela Garvin, from NPR, presented the award to Bill Crone, George Malamos and Brian Crowder Dec. 21.

Rapid innovations in electronic technology are forcing major changes in engineering design and acquisition processes. Affixing the designer's professional seal, signature and date to contract engineering plans and specifications has traditionally been a manual process. Complying with state laws and regulations requiring original approval signatures, seals and dates on engineering drawings, and enabling the engineering profession to improve its business process, called for an innovative solution.

The team replicated this process electronically, while assuring the validity, authorship and liability of the professional engineer's signature. The solution is a win-win government/commercial/private sector partnership using commercial-off-the-shelf software to electronically sign and authenticate engineering drawings, thereby replicating the "wet" signature process.

"The Hammer Award represents the core principles of reinvention," Garvin explained. "Those are delivering great service, fostering partnerships and community solutions, and getting the job done with less. It focuses on the accomplishments of talented federal employees like all of you, who are doing the right things in government."

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Scanning originally signed documents was time consuming, expensive, and resulted in lesser image quality and larger file sizes than direct conversion from computer-generated images. The electronic signature software provided the raw technology to sign and authenticate the drawings. The LANTDIV team tailored the software to our business process.

Savings result from having plans and specifications available electronically, saving reproduction, shipping and storage costs, not to mention the time involved signing each individual drawing page. A typical \$4 million project consists of a solicitation set of documents containing 130 drawings and 1100 specification pages. When applied across the full range of projects issued each year by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, those production savings approach \$1.9 million.

"Bill Crone (LANTDIV Engineering and Design Director) pushed us to a higher level of effort," Malamos added. "It enabled us to move beyond just our needs to a broader application of the technology."

Once the customized application was completed, it was thoroughly tested on in-house designed projects for over a year. The team then exported the process to LANTDIV design and construction contractors in two, one-day training sessions attended by representatives from the Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard, the Virginia Port Authority, local municipalities, and approximately 85 A/E and construction firms.

A second part of this initiative has facilitated changes in state laws and regulations regarding electronic signatures and electronic bid solicitations. Presentations by the team to the Professional Licensing Boards for Engineers, Architects, and Land Surveyors in both Virginia and North Carolina convinced these boards to review our electronic signature solution, revise their state regulations pending approval after public comment period, and replace the wet signature process. According to Bill Crone, had the team not intervened and approached the state boards with this electronic signature process, the regulations could have taken years to revise.

"I was so struck by the reach of your work," Garvin continued. "Not only did your initiative result in the Naval Facilities Engineering Command adopting your process as the standard, you have also facilitated changes in state laws and regulations, even though, as a federal activity, you are exempt from them."