

A growing construction company wanted to make a splash in the education sector. PlanGrid helped pull it off.

How does a young company distinguish itself in a crowded construction market? This was the dilemma facing Collaborative Structures Limited (CSL). Founded in 2003, the Ontario-based builder strives to embody the values found in its three-word motto: Project Execution Excellence. But to really break through, CSL had to prove itself more efficient and innovative than its competitors.

So when the opportunity arose to build a large extension for Conestoga College's campus in Waterloo, Ontario, CSL jumped at it. Winning the job allowed the company to use PlanGrid to prove they are an innovator in the marketplace.



An abbreviated schedule made swift, accurate communication essential

The Conestoga College project presented one big challenge: an especially short timeline. The expansion needed to be completed by September 4, 2018, so it would be available for the start of fall classes. The winning bidder would have just 16 months to build out a 170,000-square-foot space that included high-tech classrooms, commercial kitchens and labs.

The tight timetable required Collaborative Structures Limited to ensure jobsite and crew efficiencies. Of particular concern was document management. They needed a solution to easily roll out the constantly updated plans and minutiae of a complicated project. At Conestoga College, the trailer holding all the paperwork was a 15-minute walk from the site. If there was a question about any detail in the plans or a subcontractor was missing the latest change order, workers would lose time while supervisors ran to the trailer to sort through updates to make sure they had the latest.

That was why Jim Blair, CSL's Director of Construction Operations, needed a technology solution that could be rolled out to all the project's stakeholders. That way, Blair says, "the team could always have the most up-to-date drawings and information."

No one benefitted from this attention to efficiency more than CSL's site superintendent Adrian Vugts. With PlanGrid installed on his iPad, Vugts had the updated information he needed with him at all times. For a full year, he says, "PlanGrid never left my hand."

"I constantly get deluged with questions," Vugts says. "With PlanGrid, I don't have to run back to my office. I have all the changes and proposed change orders right there. Before having a digital platform, changes took weeks to get priced out and go through several iterations of drawings. Now with everything centralized and constantly updated digitally, my team could be sure everyone was on the same page."

Vugts estimates that PlanGrid saved him at least an hour each day and was exactly the sort of efficiency that the client needed to meet the project's compressed timeline.

"We weren't the low bidder on this project," says Vugts. "But our schedule management won it for us."

That same schedule management allowed Collaborative Structures to finish on time, much to the delight of Conestoga College, whose President, Dr. John Tibbits, couldn't say enough about it during a visit to the site.

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— **Adrian Vugts**
Sr. Superintendent

An enhanced experience for Conestoga College

Once the expansion was complete, the work shifted to renovations within the existing space. With the academics and construction teams working side by side, keeping the students and the staff safe was a priority. With PlanGrid, the team at CSL was able to work more efficiently and effectively, minimizing disruption to the campus. Tim Schill, the Sr. Director of Facilities Management at Conestoga College explained, "PlanGrid saved us a lot of time because it made everyone more efficient and improved coordination."

As CSL nears completion of the renovations, they are proactively thinking about turning over documents and as-builts. In the past, it might have taken months to transfer shop drawings and field notes to the project drawings, leaving the college waiting for information. When asked about project turnover, Tim explains that the Conestoga College teams feel that "receiving or getting as-built drawings is always a challenge. It takes forever to get them and the quality varies, but having good, accurate as-built drawings is important for maintenance, renovations, and future expansions."

With PlanGrid, turning over as-builts is not a concern. Since all the as-builts are already updated and uploaded to PlanGrid, CSL can quickly turn over high quality and accurate data to Conestoga. Through PlanGrid and a few iPads, Conestoga will have the information it needs for maintenance and upkeep forever.

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— **Jim Blair**
Director of Construction
Operations, Partner



Planning for the future

Using PlanGrid helped turn the Conestoga project into a big success for Collaborative Structures. Now the company is hungry for more. It has now deployed the software across 19 active construction projects, with plans for another six in the pre-construction phase.

"We can update as-builts 24 hours a day with all field verifications and shop drawings live, Blair says. "I used to have thousands of drawings in my office. Now I don't have a single one. It is night and day from before we onboarded PlanGrid."

Blair sees the company's use of PlanGrid as one more sign of CSL's continued growth. The software has helped CSL improve efficiency making the company more attractive to both future clients and talent looking to work in construction.

"It's key to attracting top talent," says Blair. "We preach in our job postings that we're on the cutting edge. People see us using innovative technical solutions, and they want to come be part of that."

Collaboration Stats

- **5,800+** Sheets
- **50+** Projects
- **12,100+** Annotations

