

CASE STUDY

IPSC Gains Transparency and Reduces Errors with Contractor Management





Company

 Intermountain Power Service Corporation

 Delta, Utah

 Utility

Challenges

- Manual system to determine worker availability, leading to errors and delays
- Productivity loss from use of manual systems
- Miscommunications and errors in overtime assignment process
- No visibility for contractors on materials, rentals

Results

- Fair and even-handed overtime allocation
- Gives employees responsibility, resulting in increased morale
- Contractors now have full visibility on rentals, materials, and times

IPSC Gains Transparency and Reduces Errors with Prometheus Contractor Management

ABOUT INTERMOUNTAIN POWER SERVICE CORPORATION

Intermountain Power Service Corporation (IPSC) is a not-for-profit corporation that provides personnel to operate and maintain the Intermountain Power Facility, a coal-fired power plant located in Delta, Utah. The plant is comprised of two units, each with a generation capacity of 950 MW. The Intermountain Power Facility provides electricity to customers in Utah and Los Angeles, California.

Construction of the Intermountain Power Facility began in 1981, with commercial operation of the first unit initiated in 1986. Unit 2 came online in May 1987. Both units were updated to increase generation capacity in 2004. Plans are underway to replace the coal-fired units with a natural gas plant by 2025. The new plant is intended to burn a mix of natural gas and hydrogen, with the percentage of hydrogen increasing to 100 percent by 2045.

CHALLENGES

IPSC currently employs a total staff of 368 on its two coal-fired units, as well as a number of independent contractors. Prior to the implementation of Prometheus Contractor Management, IPSC depended on a manual system to determine worker availability for holdovers and callouts. The system in use at the time would provide the hours already worked, and IPSC had a good overview of the skills possessed by each crew member, but the manual processes for booking overtime were causing delays and errors.



Kiley Chase is a Systems Administrator at IPSC. He has worked in a number of positions with the company since 2005. He recalls the system that was in use when he started:

“When I first hired on as a laborer, at the end of the day, we’d all gather into our supervisor’s office. He’d hand us a little card, and we had to write down the work order number and the number of hours, and then write the next work order number and how many hours,” he says. “It cost us productivity because we’d go into the office 20 minutes before the end of the day, every day, just to fill out our time. Then we had to trust that the supervisor would put our times into the software that we were using back then.”

As Kiley notes, this sort of system causes a loss in productivity. This loss of productive time impacts not just the technicians, but their supervisor as well. In addition to handing out and collecting the cards, the supervisor is also responsible for entering those times into the system. There are better uses of both craft and supervisor time.

The system Kiley describes is inherently prone to errors in data entry at several stages. First, technicians must record their times accurately for each work order as the work is performed, probably on the work order itself. This alone can introduce errors, as people may forget to do so immediately and later on make an educated guess based on how the rest of the day rolled out. Second, they may make errors when transferring the numbers from their notes to the cards provided by their supervisor. Third, the supervisor must now interpret the handwriting for every person working on their crew!

Handwriting styles tend to be highly individual. It’s very easy to mistake a four for a nine, especially if you’re trying to get the numbers entered fast so you can get back to productive work.

Valerie Alley is one of IPSC’s Technical Analysts. She describes the challenges IPSC experienced with the manual system of booking overtime.

“The supervisor filled out an availability sheet for each worker, where they said yes or no for overtime,” she says. “This wasn’t automatic. The supervisor had to ask, then we entered the information manually. The biggest problems with this system were the time used and miscommunications. We had a lot of issues where either the wrong worker was entered to begin with, or they would change their mind, and there was no way to change their availability again.”

IPSC was using a system of “red hours” for overtime equalization. Essentially, workers who refused overtime shifts were given “red hours.” In theory, this allowed the organization to track which workers had worked the least amount of overtime and assign shifts in a fair and even-handed manner. In practice, the system ran into a lot of problems. As Valerie noted above, there was no way to change availability if workers changed their minds. It also required a lot of manual work on the part of the supervisor.

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- Valerie Alley, Technical Analyst, IPSC



SOLUTIONS

It was apparent that IPSC urgently needed a solution that would allow them to reduce the errors from data entry, keep track of availability, and assign overtime in a fair and even-handed manner.

IPSC chose Prometheus Contractor Management to alleviate these issues, specifically the modules for Time and Attendance, Overtime Management, and Contractor Cost Tracking. IPSC consulted extensively with the developers behind the Contractor Management solution to ensure it would help them overcome the issues they were experiencing with overtime assignments and contractors.

Contractor Management Time and Attendance enables IPSC to capture labor data in real time, eliminating the errors and delays of manual entry. Naturally, it also eliminates the need to take time at the end of the shift to update these records. Twenty minutes per day may not seem like much, but the total time savings per day are astronomical when applied across an entire workforce.

IPSC now uses Contractor Management Overtime Management to allocate and assign overtime hours. The solution provides an intuitive interface that allows users to compare overtime needs against staff availability, while ensuring compliance with all relevant regulations, including union, governmental, and organizational rules.

Many organizations rely on contractors, but outsourcing work has complex requirements. To meet these needs, IPSC now uses Contractor Cost Tracking System (CCTS) to capture, validate, and manage contractor time and cost data in a single system.

Like all Prometheus Group solutions, Contractor Management integrates seamlessly with Maximo, IPSC's system of record, ensuring that data only needs to be entered once to be available to all relevant stakeholders.

RESULTS

IPSC has realized a number of benefits from its use of the Contractor Management solution, including greater visibility, more accurate overtime allocation, and heightened transparency for contractors and staff.

"We seem to have much fewer errors and fewer things we have to fix behind the scenes," says Valerie. She also notes that the Contractor Management solution has resulted in an increase in employee morale.

"Giving this power back to the employees has definitely improved morale," she says. "Now, when it comes to entering times and availability, we all know that it's our responsibility. We're able to simply log in and enter a transaction. It doesn't have to go from paper to the supervisor to the computer. Each of us can say 'it's all me!'"

Employees can even access the Contractor Management solution from the company's website. Kiley notes that this was put in place in the days before the organization went mobile, and they knew they wanted a way for staff to access the system while they were off-site.

"It's so much easier than the way it used to be. We used to have a problem where someone would go on vacation and forget to put their time in. Say they took two weeks off, and the pay period rolled over after the first week, and they hadn't put in that week's worth of time," he says. "Back then, it was a very involved process to get that time entered. The supervisor would have to arrange a lot of approvals. They'd try to call the employee and a lot of times wouldn't be able to reach them. With Contractor Management, we just send the employee a simple text message letting them know they need to get their time in, and they can do it themselves through the website."

Kiley and Valerie both say that Contractor Management is very simple to use, as well as being easy to understand and administer. While those are undeniable advantages, they also note that the single greatest benefit may be how the Contractor Management solution makes the process transparent for all involved stakeholders.

"The transparency is great," says Kiley. "Employees can see their time and see supervisors making any needed changes. It really helps to put their minds at ease."

Valerie notes that the transparency is appreciated not just by staff, but the company's contractors as well. "Overtime Management and the Contractor Cost Tracking have made it much easier for everyone involved," she says. "It's been very helpful for contractors. Once they get used to it, they love it. Materials and rentals are life savers. Everything is visible for them, right away."



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