



# The Vision Thing

BY TOM BAGSARIAN

Some people are comfortable working at a cluttered desk. I'm not one of them. I need to know fairly quickly where something is when I desire to find it. For me, it's all about organization.

Now, there's a new software tool available for producers who require organization in running a precast operation. Concrete Vision project man-

agements, and found it would be a pretty easy fit to take up to the next level, to take a software program and package it and offer it to the precast industry, versus working just one-on-one with Kerkstra."

Concrete Vision resulted. Van Wieren rewrote the program and made it totally Web-based, making it easy to run at multi-plant operations. "All they need is an Internet connection from

employees. "It doesn't replace anybody," he says. "It makes you more efficient. People can get more done, instead of pushing paper all around."

Henry Hofman, vice president and chief financial officer at Kerkstra Concrete, doesn't know how his company would get along without Concrete Vision. "It allows all areas of the company—whether it's accounting, project management, a salesman, or supervisor—to find out what's going on with a project," he says. "If anybody wants to know what's going on with a project, he can put it into the computer, call it up, and find out at a glance where it stands."

Hofman adds that employees at Kerkstra, a two-yard precast producer, have welcomed Concrete Vision. "Employees have offered a lot of advice on how to improve it," he says.

Van Wieren says he received positive feedback when he exhibited at the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute convention in October. "I'm finding quite a few places don't really have much in technology to help them," he says. "Nobody has anything that ties it all together into one system."

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## ▶ A software tool helps precasters manage their projects.

agement software assists precasters with many tasks that often require reams of paper, including sales, job tracking, engineering, production, inventory, accounting, and reports.

Concrete Vision was started in 1997 when Dan Van Wieren assisted Kerkstra Precast in Grandville, Mich., in managing their projects and tracking their bidding and quotes. The result was a project management module for tracking all of Kerkstra's job information, key dates, and engineering design milestones.

Two years later, Van Wieren added a production module to help the pre-caster forecast production, as well as schedule day-to-day production right within the software. The evolution continued to 2001, when an inventory-tracking system was added to allow Kerkstra to track inventory down to pieces in the yard.

Converting from paper to computer in planning these tasks is something many producers have yet to try. "A year and a half ago, I met people in the industry and found there isn't much available out there for enterprise-wide-type applications," says Van Wieren. "I researched the software's compatibility with typical precast op-

their remote plants," he explains. "It all runs off one central database server. All the data is in one location, and it is always up-to-date in real-time."

### Production forecasts

Managers can sort a producer's jobs based on when they are due at the jobsite, by job, and when they want to produce it. The program also shows how many days it will take for production if they just want product for one job.

The sales team then can use this production information to forecast. "If the plant is running at capacity three months from now, they know they can't promise delivery dates until past that time," says Van Wieren.

Van Wieren stresses Concrete Vision does not take the place of em-



Concrete Vision allows precast producers to track many facets of their operations, including production, sales, inventory, and accounting.