
Ex-Quarterback Seeks To Change How The Bidding Game Is Played

Way back during the 1968 - 1971 football seasons, Bob Morgan spent numerous early mornings in the office of University of Minnesota football coach Murray Warmath. All the Gopher quarterbacks were in attendance as Warmath spread 22 red and black checker pieces on his desk representing various offensive and defensive football formations. He asked the quarterbacks to identify the various setups and what play should be called. The quaint 20th-century question-and-answer format represented Morgan's introduction into the art of problem solving.

Three decades later, the fellow who became starting quarterback and captain of the 1972 Gopher team under new coach Cal Stoll, would find himself in engineering offices trying to convince management that he had an innovative solution to the communication problems faced in the bidding of public construction projects.

"Football was good training for many things," Morgan explained recently as he talked about a "new and valuable functionality" he was adding to his Quest Construction Data Network (QuestCDN.com) bid management software platform, the company he started 18 years ago. "We have added an online bidding functionality where bidders can upload their bids securely from the comfort and efficiency of their own office," he said.

Morgan was in familiar territory connecting with engineers especially in the water and wastewater market. Following college graduation, he was the first salesman for Eden Prairie-based Water Products Company, where he eventually became a partner and president. After selling Water Products Company in 1988, Morgan started Techniflow Corporation, a wastewater services company marketing lift station pumps/controls and wastewater system rehabilitation services. He merged Techniflow with Northern Waterworks Supply in the mid-nineties and then sold out of this partnership after Northern acquired the Davies Water Equipment Company. Morgan pursued creation and development of the Quest Construction Data Network.

A major challenge of running his distribution companies involved the bid process, specifically locating project bid opportunities, securing specification and plan documents and other bid information, identifying bidding participants and finding out bid results. His solution was a software platform for project solicitors to manage and administrate the bid process by digitizing information and automating information delivery to bidding participants. Morgan's goal was to combine internet effectiveness while eliminating paper reproduction, handling and delivery costs.

"Our company is proud to have been the foundation that enabled all Minnesota state agencies as well as many cities and counties to go almost completely paperless except for one small process," Morgan said. The formal acceptance of bids remains a manual, paper-based submission and collection of data process commonly

called "bid letting." Morgan and QuestCDN hope to change that aspect as well.

He observes the bid-letting culture over the years has evolved from an industry "social event" into a complex and challenging process of delivering competitive bids by bid runners. He said bid runners typically sit in vehicles communicating with their office-based estimators receiving last-minute price revision instructions. After the complete the paper bid package is assembled, it is rushed to the bid-receiving office. Morgan maintains risk of error, omission and tardiness "is enormous" and adds the daunting logistical costs of delivering bids many miles from a bidder's office creates a problem in need of a solution.

Morgan said Quest has been working on a solution for many years and was reluctant to place it into the market until, "We were sure we could lock down the critical security and the website uptime that this process demanded." He said that moment happened a few years ago with the launch of VirtuBid™ or vBid™ for short. Morgan maintains, "this functionality alone is much more valuable than the all the other components of Quest in combined cost savings to all the bidding participants including the owner, solicitor, and participating bidders."

He adds, "a growing number of Quest partners, engineers, cities, counties, governmental agencies, universities and school districts have adopted and implemented vBid™ and enjoyed achieving the very best economic bids with no bid rejections, secure, automated, accurate data collection and results posting."

Morgan observes, "We have created and developed what we believe is the very best solution to a challenging problem." And problem solving is something the one-time University of Minnesota quarterback has been doing for almost a half-century. "The only advantage from those Gopher football sessions in the office of coach Murray Warmath," Morgan reflects, "is I don't have to start working quite as early in the morning these days."

Bob Morgan

