All Purpose Time Card

by Charles Minkler

Over the last few years, my company has evolved from a one-man show (me) to a crew of six or eight, and a full-time office person. During that time, I introduced a number of systems to simplify our lives and improve accuracy, but my employees were still overwhelmed with seemingly endless paperwork.

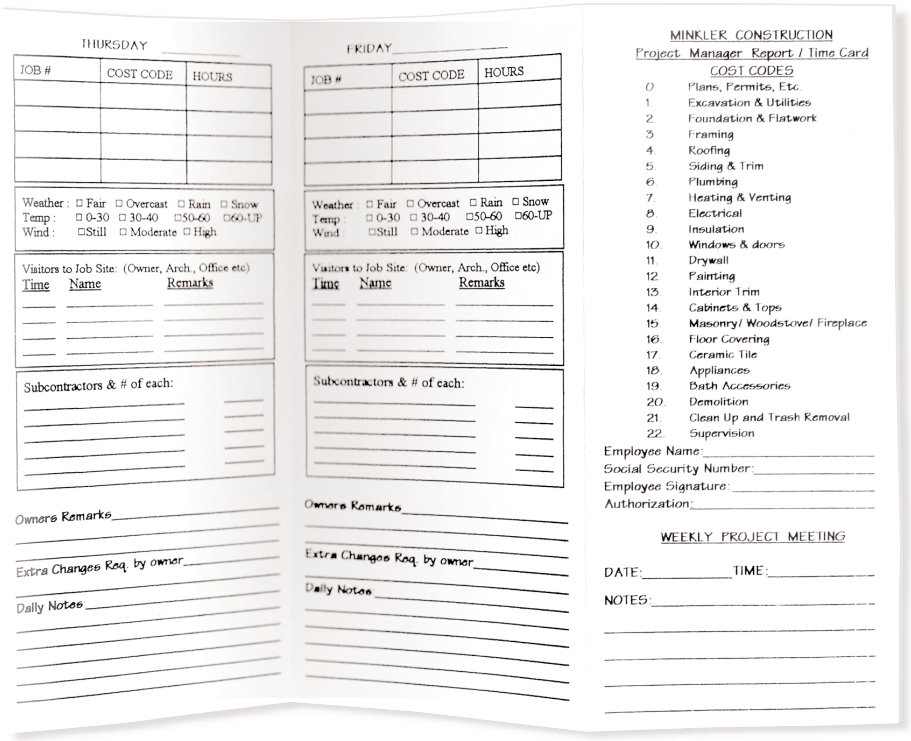
After some thought about how to streamline the process, I concluded that less information, accurately and regularly received, was far better than late information or, worse, none at all. I realized that the one piece of paper that was turned in absolutely on time, every time, was the lead carpenter's time card. No time card, no paycheck! All I had to do was find a way to fit the most important job-related information on the time cards, along with my employees' records of hours worked.

Keep It Simple

The information I wanted to collect included actual labor costs for each job, a summary of weekly client meetings, and a report on daily events at the job site. I refined this idea until I had isolated the most important information needed, and sat down to design my new, combined time card and report form.

Three-Part Foldout

Each 8 1/2 x 11-inch card is divided into six panels, three on each side. Five of these panels correspond to the days of the week, and the sixth holds checklists, employee information, and weekly meeting notes. The card is designed to fold into thirds so it can be stuck into a shirt pocket or unfolded and used on a clipboard (see Figure 1). After some initial feedback, I was able to fine tune the card using a simple three-column layout on a word processor, but it can be drawn up just as easily by hand. Whenever possible, the information needed from the lead carpenters is presented in a checklist format to keep it simple to use and easy to tabulate. From top to bottom, here's how the time card is organized.


THURSDAY

JOB #	COST CODE	HOURS

Weather : ☐ Fair ☐ Overcast ☐ Rain ☐ Snow
Temp : ☐ 0-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 50-60 ☐ 60-UP
Wind : ☐ Still ☐ Moderate ☐ High

Visitors to Job Site: (Owner, Arch., Office etc)

Time	Name	Remarks

Subcontractors & # of each:

Owners Remarks

Extra Changes Req. by owner

Daily Notes

FRIDAY

JOB #	COST CODE	HOURS

Weather : ☐ Fair ☐ Overcast ☐ Rain ☐ Snow
Temp : ☐ 0-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 50-60 ☐ 60-UP
Wind : ☐ Still ☐ Moderate ☐ High

Visitors to Job Site: (Owner, Arch., Office etc)

Time	Name	Remarks

Subcontractors & # of each:

Owners Remarks

Extra Changes Req. by owner

Daily Notes

MINKLER CONSTRUCTION
Project Manager Report / Time Card
COST CODES

0. Plans, Permits, Etc.
1. Excavation & Utilities
2. Foundation & Flatwork
3. Framing
4. Roofing
5. Siding & Trim
6. Plumbing
7. Heating & Venting
8. Electrical
9. Insulation
10. Windows & doors
11. Drywall
12. Painting
13. Interior Trim
14. Cabinets & Tops
15. Masonry/ Woodstove/ Fireplace
16. Floor Covering
17. Ceramic Tile
18. Appliances
19. Bath Accessories
20. Demolition
21. Clean Up and Trash Removal
22. Supervision

Employee Name:
Social Security Number:
Employee Signature:
Authorization:

WEEKLY PROJECT MEETING

DATE: TIME:

NOTES:

Figure 1. All five week days fit on a single 8 1/2x11-inch piece of paper, three on one side and two on the other; employee information, meetings notes, and cost codes fill the sixth panel. The card can be folded into thirds for easy storage.

Job number and job costing. The job number and cost code are entered at the top of the panel each day, along with the hours devoted to that particular task. Each job number corresponds to a customer list in QuickBooks Pro (QBP). There is also a simplified system of 22 cost codes that we developed and set up as classes in the same program. Consequently, QBP's customized reports give us all of the job costing information we need.

By listing the cost codes right on the card, we made sure the cards were consistent with each other — and didn't require us to decipher anyone's handwriting.

Weather. A historical record of job-site weather conditions is indispensable if I ever need to document downtime and lost work days due to inclement weather. Again, the multiple-choice format makes it easy to fill out and tabulate.

Visitors to the job site. Here the lead carpenter can list the arrival time and names of any visitors, such as building inspectors, architects, owners — even me. Having a record of who was on site, and when, is invaluable when a dispute arises.

Subcontractor information. This section of the card provides space to record how many subcontractors were at the site on any given day. I didn't know just how valuable this information could be until I found myself in Small Claims

Court over a dispute with a subcontractor. It proved invaluable to be able to document when he was and wasn't on the job using time card information.

Owner's remarks. This space, small as it is, gives me a way to review anything the owner has said to the lead carpenter. A simple note — "Mr. Brown loves the way the siding looks," or "Mrs. Brown does not like the bathroom paint color" — can help me head off disputes and miscommunications.

Changes. Even though we use a standard change order form in the field, the time card gives us another way to document requests for changes. A change request on the time card ensures that we follow up later with a formal change order from the office.

Daily notes. This space is for a brief summary of activities on the job. Simple notations, such as "Set trusses today," "Rough electrical passed inspection," and "Excavator didn't show up," helps to fill in between the lines of the cost codes, and explains what did and didn't happen that day.

Weekly project meeting. I meet weekly with clients, and it is part of the lead carpenter's job to schedule and attend this meeting. Even though the full agenda of the meeting can't be included on the time card, there is enough room to jot down the meeting time and date and a brief summary of the most important decisions. Primarily, it serves as a reminder that the meeting needs to take place.

It Works for Everyone

Other job site employees use a simplified version of the card. The single-panel time card captures basic information and serves as a weekly time record. The front is divided into columns for entering the date, job number, cost code and hours. An updated list of current jobs and corresponding job numbers is distributed weekly to all employees as a reference for filling out the cards. Spaces are provided at the top and bottom for employee identification and signature lines. The back of the card lists the cost codes for easy reference.

With this time card system, I now have happy employees, and all of my information in one neat little package. If I get an incomplete time card on Monday morning, it gets handed right back. You'd be surprised how fast the card gets completed and resubmitted, because everyone knows: No time card equals no pay check.

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