

Optimized and agile: Top national electrical contractor achieves massive field engagement

Customer Spotlight

Cupertino Electric, Inc.

CEI.com / @CEI



San Jose, CA headquarters;
licensed in 27 states

\$1.46 billion annual revenue
with 3,200 employees

ENR 2020 #5 ranked
electrical contractor

Safety System Challenge

Unwieldy and disconnected safety processes garner little field engagement and static metrics.

Response

Streamline processes in one mobile app to save money and build trust to achieve breakthrough participation.

“We don’t like complacency,” is a mantra at Cupertino Electric, Inc. (CEI), and frankly, it’s true. As the fastest growing of the 10 largest electrical contractors in the nation, CEI has delivered some of the most complex projects in the country for commercial, energy and data center customers.

Success in these core markets demands excellence, agility, and innovation. CEI is dedicated to refining and finding new methods to speed up installation, improve quality, and increase safety: they launched a Standardization Lab to find and test the best installation methods; they led the industry in manufacturing custom-designed modular data center solutions; and, in 2017, they embarked on an initiative to transform how their crews engage with safety reporting in the field.

TOTALLY CUSTOM AND COMPLETELY STANDARD

“Field engagement isn’t a checklist, it’s a culture,” says Brent Bowers, CEI’s corporate safety manager, and this is why his company made the decision to streamline and optimize how its teams complete daily personal risk assessments and other safety planning tasks. But to achieve this, they needed the right partner that could meet its particular requirements.

CEI runs projects across the country. In addition to the challenges posed by a widely distributed workforce, the company’s different business lines have unique safety requirements and customers often use proprietary safety reporting systems. CEI’s national safety team had, over time, instituted a number of different safety processes—some on paper, some with one app, some with another.

While these processes were working individually, they were unwieldy and disconnected as a whole. One metric didn’t easily inform the understanding of another. At the same time, Brent and his colleagues knew that the most effective way to improve on CEI’s competitive safety performance was to harness the insights of its highly skilled and experienced workforce. But how?

Business Impact



Customer since 2017

30,000+
per month

Number personal risk assessments and observations made every month

20%
reduction

Cumulative decrease in recordable incidents since 2017

0

Number of recordable injuries on CEI data center projects after half a million manhours.

Determine the information you want to see and work backwards.

Together with SmartTagIt's customer success team, CEI decided what metrics they wanted to track-taking their larger safety system into account. "We spent time deciding what questions we cared about and what we wanted to see," says Brent.

This review helped the safety leadership team decide which processes were yielding useful data and which were redundant. They were able to reduce the number of distinct process from 52 to 8. From there, SmartTagIt integrated all the processes into its mobile application. Certain features could be turned on or off depending on a user's role, division, or project site.

Inviting people to engage with the system. When CEI started this project, engagement by field crews was low—perhaps a few hundred observations were gathered a month, leaving Brent with static metrics that were always "behind" the events in the field. SmartTagIt's

simplified reporting, together with optimized UX design, saved time and yielded immediate upticks in engagement.

But Brent and his team weren't finished. Focusing on building trust and a team mentality, they leaned into the platform's transparency. Every user had access to the data on their project. Safety leadership encouraged teams to recognize each other for positive behaviors and activated automated rewards for participation. Finally, leaders adopted a fix-it and learn-it approach. "No one is reprimanded for doing things incorrectly or identifying at-risk observations. Once the field understood this, their guard came down," said Brent.

A PEOPLE POWERED SAFETY SYSTEM

Three years after adopting SmartTagIt, CEI's safety system is humming. Crews are logging more than 30,000 safe and at-risk observations and personal risk assessments a month, giving

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Brent information he didn't have previously to identify vulnerabilities before they became real problems. CEI has seen a 20 percent reduction in incidents. Perhaps most important, 1,000 of CEI's field crew members are actively using SmartTagIt to further improve safety culture.

"Great ideas start with great people," is another CEI mantra. By having its skilled employees drive its safety system, CEI has empowered its workforce to look out for one another and take ownership of safety on job sites.