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More than two years since it struck, Hurricane Katrina continues to wreak havoc on the people and businesses in the Gulf Coast area. For New Orleans-based engineering services firm Wink Companies, LLC, the disaster served as an expensive wake-up call.

Like many other companies whose facilities were destroyed by the storm, Wink initially had no record of what was in their buildings. Fortunately, they were insured, but was it an appropriate amount of insurance? And without immediate access to records, they had little to substantiate their insurance claim. Wink would spend the next three months evaluating and recovering destroyed materials, estimating replacement costs and processing paperwork to eventually obtain a \$2.6 million insurance claim. This delay also prevented rebuilding their offices and getting their 630 employees back to work.

Wink came close to avoiding much of these problems, however. Only a year before Katrina, the company had considered moving their asset management and tracking to an automated system, Series4000 from Real Asset Management International (RAMI). Following the disaster, and having gone through the headaches of reconstructing and estimating asset values without such a system, the company's management knew what it had to do.

"About six weeks after the hurricane we decided that we must implement an asset tracking and inventory management system, no matter what the cost – it wasn't an option," said Russell Carter, Wink's Purchasing Manager. "We truly experienced the failure of not having a system in place beforehand." After evaluating ten separate software solutions, Wink selected RAMI.

“Series4000 was the most complete solution for our need,” said Angie Ogden, Asset

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“In one hour, I can run a report that says the first floor of building X has X amount of dollars worth of assets. If we'd had these systems in place before Katrina, we would have saved three months in our recovery process. It's too bad that it took a real disaster for us to realize the value of a company like RAMI,” Ogden explained. In addition to these benefits, the company is now enjoying much lower insurance premiums. Every month they provide their insurance company with updated coverage values for each floor of every location.

“We can also track items by employee. For example, if a staff member leaves the company, their manager has a list of all items assigned to them, such as a cell phone or BlackBerry, even keys to the office or remote login access,” Angie concluded. “It's an added security feature.”

Since rebuilding, Wink has experienced phenomenal expansion. The company, started in 1970, estimates 25 percent growth per year for the next three years, with a similar increase in its asset base over this time. The intend to add RAMI's Lease4000 to their infrastructure, which provides complete control over finance and operating leases. Implementation of Asset4000 and Document4000 will come further down the road.

“We have the entire Series4000 suite at our fingertips. It's just a matter of implementing the modules one-by-one,” Russell remarked.

About Wink Companies, LLC

Wink Companies (www.winkinc.com) is a closely-held private company which was founded in 1970 by Joseph C. Wink, Jr., P.E. The company is owned fully by two generations of the Wink family, and is under the management of the second generation owners

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