



ROB WILD
CEO - Reed Construction Data

Reed Construction Data, formerly known as Cordell Building Information Services, is part of one of the world's largest information groups: the UK based Reed Elsevier. CEO Rob Wild gives us an overview on the role they play in the Australian construction industry, as well as some of his own career background and an insight into the united team of 150 hard-working and committed professionals located in offices around Australia - Sydney (headquarters), Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

JM: Can you give me a brief description of Reed Construction Data's business?

RW: At the core of our business is providing information to people in the construction industry, that they can then use to benefit their own business. This can then be broken down into smaller units, the first one being where we collect information on projects under construction across Australia. We track these right through the construction cycle, so that we can inform our clients when anything changes or is new, and then they use that information as a means of selling their own service or product, or they may use it for monitoring what's going on in the construction industry, so that they can see what their competitors are doing, spot trends, and carry out strategic planning.

The second part is then where we collect information on construction costs, so that when a builder for example is pricing a job, they can refer to our database, and very quickly get an estimate. The final part is that we also collect information on tenders, in general, and this aspect of the business covers everything, or as I like to put it, 'from gumboots to gunboats'. These tenders would normally be government tenders for the supply of services and goods. We collect this information and then we let people who are in those particular know what going on, who to contact and when to contact. So that is essentially what we do.

The business goes back around 40 years to when a lady by the name of Joan Cordell got the bright idea to start an Australian construction information business. This then developed into a really good business that then got acquired by the Thomson Corp. and then finally Reed Elsevier bought us out around 10 years ago. There does not seem to be

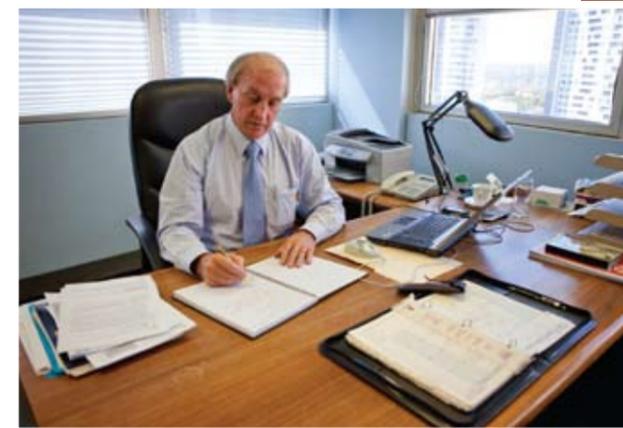
a lot of room for too many of our types of businesses, so the market is dominated by the big players with the smaller players being acquired by those bigger companies. So normally it just comes down to one or two market leaders. Reed Elsevier are very keen on this type of business, so I don't see there being a change of ownership in the near future.

JM: Rob, can you tell us about your background, prior to joining RCD?

RW: Basically, after I finished a commerce degree at university, I joined CSR, in their building materials division, selling their products for a number of years, moving from Sydney to Canberra to Wollongong. I eventually became their Sales Manager, and then left to go into to quarry industry with lime and limestone up in Newcastle. Then left this industry after a couple of years and joined a building material company that got taken over by Boral. Here I managed their roof truss and wall frame business, and then I joined Cordell 25 years ago as CEO.

JM: What would say would be the core strengths of Reed Construction Data (RCD)?

RW: I think without a doubt, the people. It is an unusual company, as it is a very labour oriented, task specific company, and for whatever reason it generates a passion of its own. The people, the passion, the attention to detail and their dedication to the task is unequalled in any company that I have worked for. If you break that down a little further, the people's knowledge of the construction industry and the tender market is fantastic. Around that you can do anything. You can build good systems, good sales teams, but unless you have the basics right it is not going to work effectively. At the very heart



of our business is the research, and unless that is done well, and the customer will soon tell you. We know our research is good, so the customer keeps coming back.

JM: In your opinion Rob, what would you say differentiates RCD and the rest of the market?

RW: That would definitely be our information, which we would regard as better than anything else on offer. The quality, the quantity, and the depth of this information means that is very rare that a customer will criticise us and say that you didn't tell us about this or that. Additionally, the tools that we use to deliver the information are second to none, as well as the utility of the tools. Because there is oversupply of information in today's digital age, there is a tendency to get swamped by information, but unless you've got good tools to manipulate that information and use it in a way that is really effective for your business, then it is just information rather than intelligence. So, I think that this aspect is a huge differentiator, and then I would also again mention the people. They are the ones that drive the business, with everyone having a vital role to play. We are a very egalitarian company, with everyone sharing the load, and working together as a happy and productive team. Which make it successful, and I always think that happiness comes as a result of success, but success is also built on happiness.

JM: Rob, can you give us some examples where RCD operates to work with and assist your customers?

RW: We have a big team of customer support people. So we will go into a client's business where they are struggling, to find out what is going wrong and how we assist in basically providing opportunities for them. We will work with them, by going through their departments, and through our services and information we can show them how they can get the best out of their business.

We offer free training to our customers. These are offered right through the year, so that our customers can get the best out of our services and products. This assists them, as sometimes they have the right information, but just not managing it effectively. We can give them tools that we already have that can help the whole management process. It is a very dynamic service that we provide. In addition to this we can help them fine tune their sales and marketing efforts, so that they can present their business in the best possible way to potential clients.

One of our key objectives is to work with our clients throughout their subscription, to form a partnership with them and give them these additional skills and training, so that they can really take our information, use it and be able to demonstrate a positive return on their investment. What we are aiming for is to have every one of our clients across our three business divisions being successful, which means that we are doing our job. From this we can build long term mutually beneficial relationship with them that will last for years, and we have some customers that have been with us for a couple of decades.

JM: Following on from this Rob, can you give us a bit of an insight into some RCD's add-value products and how they assist your customer's?

RW: Well we are partnered with Dale Carnegie, the world renowned training organisation, and we run a day course for our subscribers, which is mostly a free service that comes with their subscription. This is very effective in helping them get off to a good start or if they are dealing with some sort of problem, it can help them through it. We also offer a tender preparation course through a company called Aspen Consulting, which can help companies understand the protocol in preparing a sizable tender document. Then on top of this we also run training courses on the actual products, which basically covers how to get the best out of them. These courses are a very important part of our business.

JM: What are some of the reasons for the high regard that RCD (formerly Cordell) has in the construction industry?

RW: Basically, the Cordell name has become synonymous with construction information, and we have done market studies that tell us that our name is extremely strong. Most people in the construction industry would immediately recognise the Cordell name, and therefore the Reed Construction Data's connection. This has basically come from being 40 years in the game. We were one of the first in the game, and then we got a reputation for being reliable. To this day, the Cordell name is attached to all our products.

We have also built up a lot of relationships over the years with key bodies in the construction industry, such as the Housing Industry Association and Master Builders Associations all over the country. So we are also giving back to the industry, as well as being a commercial information company. Basically, if you are thinking construction information, you immediately think Cordell. We work with businesses right across the board, from large commercial entities down to smaller owner operated businesses from all areas of the construction industry.

JM: Where do you see the business going looking into the future?

RW: The electronic medium has become huge, most of our revenue is now electronic. With this type of business you can do a whole range of different things. We are working on developments now that will give the company another life cycle. It is all about electronic information and how to better utilise it.

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