

Connecting Projects, Payroll, and Performance at Axia Consulting Group



“What’s most attractive to me is having everything in one place. Payroll flowing through the same system as projects and accounting means fewer clicks, fewer manual tasks, and less time moving data around. That gives me more time to focus on the work that actually moves the business forward.”

Steven Bunker, PE
Co-Founder and Principal



Electrical engineering for water, wastewater, and public infrastructure, built on precision, responsibility, and trust

Built on a Leap of Faith, Tested by Reality

Axia Consulting Group began at a moment of real uncertainty. A move back to Georgia to be closer to family forced a difficult choice. There were no nearby firms to join, long commutes were not sustainable, and leaving engineering was never an option. The only path forward was to start something new.

The firm was ready to launch at the end of February 2020. Fate had other plans. Within weeks, the world shut down. Projects stalled, relationships were harder to build, and momentum was fragile. With no established local network, every decision carried weight.

Progress came through adaptability. Axia leaned on specialized Revit consulting work to stay afloat while continuing to market, build visibility,

and establish credibility in a new region. Growth was slow at first, but it was deliberate.

From the beginning, the firm was defined by ownership of the work itself. How drawings were produced. How standards were applied. How finished work was presented. Quality was not an abstract value. It was personal.

As projects stabilized and the firm grew, that sense of responsibility expanded. For Steven Bunker, PE, running Axia meant balancing two demands at once: delivering high-quality engineering while building a business strong enough to support it. Every proposal, every fee, every hire, and every paycheck landed on his desk. Steven was no longer just delivering projects. He was carrying the full weight of a firm.

Engineering Expertise Where Precision Matters Most

That sense of ownership shaped not only how Axia works, but the kind of work the firm takes on.

Axia Consulting Group focuses on electrical engineering for projects where accuracy, coordination, and reliability are essential. Much of the firm's work supports water and wastewater facilities, along with municipal and public infrastructure, where electrical systems directly impact safety, operations, and long-term performance.

The firm delivers a broad range of services across both new construction and complex upgrades, including power distribution design, generators and emergency systems, switchgear, motor control centers, grounding, and interior and site lighting. Axia also supports clients with evaluations of existing systems, renovation designs, and detailed power system studies such as short-circuit analysis, protective device coordination, and arc-flash hazard assessments.

Clear coordination is central to the firm's approach. Axia uses Autodesk Revit to develop well-integrated electrical models that align closely with architectural and engineering teams, helping reduce conflicts and support smoother project delivery. This came from their focus on reducing risk for their customers. With licensure across eight states, the firm is able to support trusted clients across a wide range of project types and locations.

This commitment to precision and accountability is what clients rely on. It also shapes how Axia thinks about consistency and visibility inside the firm, setting the expectations for the systems and processes that support the work behind the scenes.



Growth Exposed the Limits of Fragmented Systems

As work increased, the challenges shifted. Not on the technical side, but on the operational one.

Projects were coming in and clients trusted the work, but the business behind each project grew more complex. Proposals had to be written. Fees had to be set without perfect information. Contracts had to be scoped carefully. Time and expenses had to be tracked. Payroll had to run accurately, every pay period, without exception.

None of these tasks were broken on their own. Together, they created constant pressure.

Like many firm leaders, Steven had not been trained for this side of the business. In prior roles, those responsibilities lived elsewhere. Now they were part of Steven's role as engineer and business owner. As employees were hired and projects grew larger, the risk increased. Firm sustainability became the priority, not rapid expansion.

Early warning signs appeared as small inefficiencies. Information lived in different places. Data had to be reentered. Numbers had to be double checked. Context was lost moving between systems and spreadsheets. Nothing failed outright, but everything required attention.

Axia needed a system that understood how engineering and consulting firms actually operate. Fees were structured by phase. Work was delivered by phase. Financial performance depended on understanding phase-level outcomes, not just end results. General accounting tools could be made to work, but only through workarounds that added risk over time.

That search led Axia to BQE CORE. What stood out was how project management and accounting were already connected. Phasing was built in. Time, billing, project management, and financials worked together by design, creating a single operational backbone for the firm.

The decision was not about fixing an immediate problem. It was about avoiding a future one. CORE gave Axia a consistent foundation, reduced manual handoffs, and created confidence that the firm could grow without rebuilding its systems.

But one critical workflow still sat outside that foundation. A process that touched every employee, every project, and every pay period.

Payroll Was the Last System Standing Apart

With projects and accounting unified, one critical process still sat outside the system.

Payroll had long been handled by an external provider. It worked well enough at first. Employees were paid accurately and on time, and the process felt dependable. But as the firm grew

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I don't earn money doing bookkeeping. I understand it's necessary to support the business, but it's still overhead. Every hour I spend on that is an hour I'm not doing the engineering work.

Steven Bunker, PE
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that separation introduced friction. Each pay period required moving data between systems, double checking entries, and making sure everything stayed aligned.

Payroll is not a background task. It is a recurring, high-stakes process that touches every employee, every project, and the firm's financial records. When payroll lives outside the core system, leadership becomes the point where information must be reconciled. For a lean leadership team already balancing proposals, staffing, project delivery, and financial oversight, that burden adds up.

When Axia adopted BQE CORE Payroll, it completed the platform it had already committed to. Onboarding was straightforward, and running payroll quickly became part of a familiar workflow. Each period, time flows directly from projects into payroll, preserving accuracy while eliminating manual handoffs.

Payroll no longer feels like a separate task to manage. It runs smoothly, saves time each cycle, and keeps labor data fully connected to projects and financials, turning what once required coordination across systems into a natural extension of work already happening inside CORE. Payroll becomes a confirmation step instead of a reconciliation exercise, improving accuracy, reducing effort, and giving leadership more time to focus on running the business rather than managing the mechanics behind it.

From Manual Checks to Confident Approval

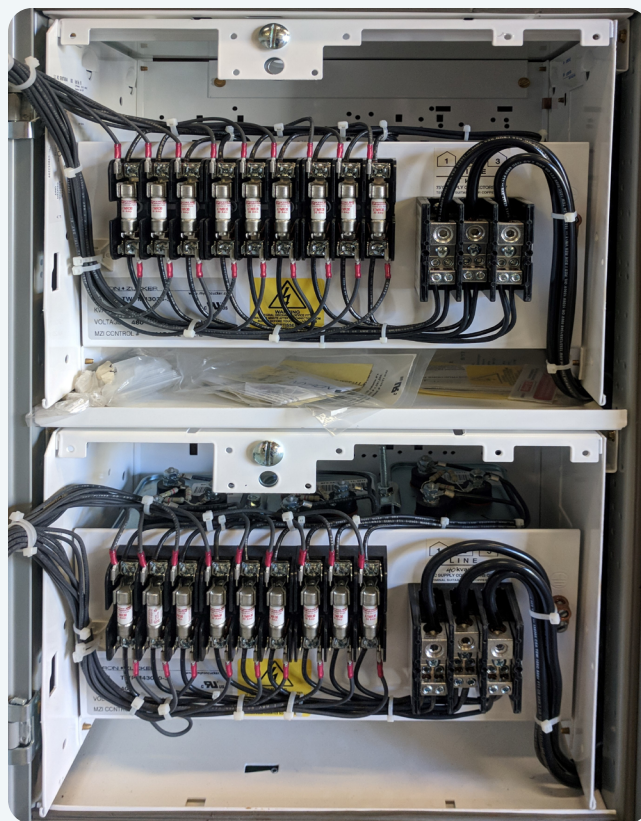
Bringing payroll into the same system as projects and accounting changed how the work flowed.

Time was already being tracked against the right projects. Project structures were already defined. Accounting classifications were already in place.

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Payroll was one of the last things for us that wasn't in CORE. When my payroll provider changed and the experience wasn't what it used to be, moving payroll into the same system as projects and accounting felt like a logical step.

Steven Bunker, PE
Co-Founder and Principal



Payroll no longer required pulling information from multiple systems. Instead of a separate task, it became the final step in a connected process.

That shift matters as firms grow. Each new employee adds complexity. Each new project increases the importance of accurate labor costs. When payroll sits outside the core system, every pay period introduces friction. When it is integrated, that friction fades.

Axia has already seen the benefit of fewer clicks and fewer manual steps. Payroll runs reliably, and the process feels lighter, even as the firm stays busy and looks to expand staff count. Time, payroll, and financials now move together instead of being stitched together.

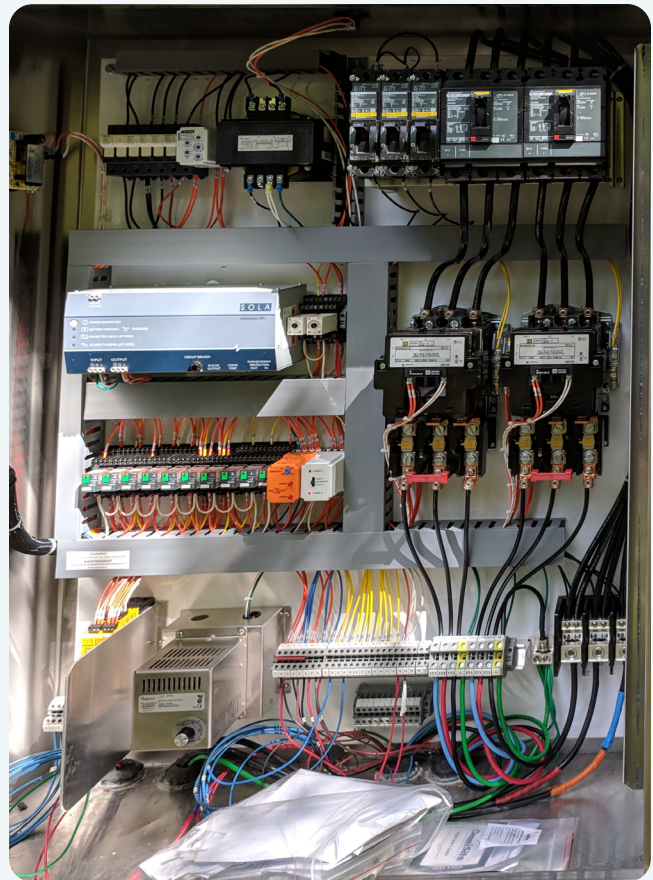
Integrated payroll leads to stronger oversight with a more accurate view of firm financials. Leadership spends less time managing transactions and more time reviewing information and making strategic decisions.

Proof of progress in the numbers Axia watches most

For Axia, financial clarity has always mattered more than flashy metrics. The firm relies most on its Profit and Loss statement. It is the clearest signal of how the business is performing. Where revenue is coming from. Where it is being spent. What remains at the end of the month. When time is limited, the P&L provides fast, honest answers.

Integrated payroll strengthens that view. Labor is one of the most significant drivers of cost in AEC firms. When payroll lives outside the core system, those costs often arrive late or require reconciliation. When payroll lives inside the same platform as time, projects, and accounting, the numbers become more accurate and timely.

Payroll now reflects the same structures used



to run the business day to day. Time flows from projects into payroll and into financials without manual data entry. This connection reduces uncertainty, improves accuracy, and builds trust in what the firm is seeing.

As projects have grown in size and complexity, that trust matters more. Axia increasingly looks back at prior work when developing proposals and fees for new projects. Having cleaner labor data makes it easier to understand how past projects actually performed, and what fees are appropriate to ensure profitable project delivery.

The system does not remove the need to think critically about the numbers. It removes the need to question whether the numbers are complete.

That distinction is meaningful. It is proof that the foundation is working and that the business can continue to scale without adding unnecessary operational weight.

A Stronger Foundation for What Comes Next

From the beginning, Axia Consulting Group focused on building for the long term.

That perspective guided key decisions along the way. Adopting a platform designed for specifically for engineering. Unifying projects and accounting. And most recently, bringing payroll into the same operational system.

With payroll fully integrated, one more recurring process no longer sits apart from the rest of the business. Time, projects, payroll, and financials now move together, reducing handoffs and manual effort. Payroll becomes a confirmation step instead of a task to manage.

That shift creates space. Less time spent reconciling systems means more time for clients, design, teams, and planning. For a firm balancing delivery and leadership, that matters.

Axia continues to grow into the platform's capabilities, but the foundation is already doing its job. Payroll is no longer a point of friction. It is part of a connected system that supports stability today and growth tomorrow.

For firms navigating the next stage of growth, Axia's experience shows how integrating payroll can quietly strengthen the business behind the work.

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What I want is everything in one place. CORE gives me that, and now with payroll in CORE as well, I spend less time moving data around and more time focused on the work and the business. That makes a real difference as you're trying to build something that can actually succeed.

Steven Bunker, PE
Co-Founder and Principal

See how integrated payroll and project financials work together in BQE CORE.

Request A Demo →

