

BQE CORE CUSTOMER CASE STUDY



Acorn Engineering

Portland and Kingfield, Maine

40+ Employees

Civil & Environmental Engineering

acorn-engineering.com



A Stronger Foundation, Built With the Right Partner



"Having a dedicated Customer Success Manager has been like night and day. They really have our back and makes sure we're using CORE the right way. The relationship we've built adds so much value—it's made all the difference.."

Nancy O'Sullivan
Director of Finance and Operations



Laying the Groundwork for Growth

In Maine, where the landscape itself demands precision and care, Acorn Engineering has earned a reputation for thoughtful, community-minded design. What began as a small civil engineering practice has grown into a multidisciplinary firm providing civil, environmental, and water resource engineering, landscape architecture, construction administration, and third-party inspection services.

Today, Acorn is a 100 % employee-owned company with offices in Portland and Kingfield—proof of a shared belief that lasting impact starts with shared ownership. As the firm expanded its expertise and staff, it became clear that the same engineering rigor it brought to roads, bridges, and public spaces needed to be applied to its own operations.

The challenge wasn't a lack of dedication or talent—it was structure. Time tracking, billing, and reporting systems hadn't evolved as quickly as the firm itself, leaving project managers without

visibility and operations teams buried in manual work. For Nancy O'Sullivan, Acorn's Director of Finance and Operations, it was time to rebuild the business side of the firm with the same clarity and purpose they brought to every project.

What followed was more than a software implementation. It was a journey toward alignment, efficiency, and trust that would transform how Acorn works, collaborates, and grows.

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When I started, we didn't have a project management system—just a basic time-entry tool. Project managers didn't have a lot of insight into their budgets, and we needed something more structured to grow..

Nancy O'Sullivan
Director of Finance and Operations

From Growth to Greater Efficiency

When Acorn Engineering adopted BQE CORE, the firm was entering a new stage of growth. Their team had expanded, projects had multiplied, and disciplines were broadening but their internal systems hadn't yet caught up. For years, Acorn relied on simple time-tracking software called eBillity, paired with QuickBooks for accounting. The process worked, but it offered little visibility into budgets or project performance.

As the firm grew, leaders recognized that managing time and billing in isolation wasn't enough. Project managers needed real insight into budgets and profitability, and the operations team needed a more connected way to handle invoicing, reporting, and approvals. Acorn set out to find a solution that could bring structure and integration to every part of their business.

Implementing CORE was a learning experience—one that required persistence, adaptability, and teamwork. Early on, the firm continued to create invoices in QuickBooks, syncing time data back and forth. The longer that dual process continued, the more complex it became. Recognizing the need to simplify, Acorn made the pivotal decision to move invoicing entirely into CORE. That shift, while initially challenging, marked the beginning of a more streamlined and transparent workflow.



Adoption took time, but steady improvements followed. What started as a transition in software became a transformation in mindset. Teams who once printed and manually reviewed every invoice began embracing automated workflows. Project managers gained access to clearer data. And leadership built the operational foundation to support continued growth.

The process wasn't only about fixing problems, but also about refining success. By building new systems around collaboration and efficiency, Acorn created the stability to keep growing without losing the personal, hands-on culture that defines the firm.

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Getting everyone comfortable with new workflows took time, but it was worth it. Once the team started to see how much easier it made invoicing and reporting, everything became more organized and easier to manage.

Nancy O'Sullivan

Director of Finance and Operations

The Turning Point: A True Partner in Progress

For Acorn Engineering, implementing BQE CORE was the first step. The real transformation came when they realized they weren't doing it alone.

In the early days of adoption, the firm's team faced the kind of growing pains that come with any major system change. Engineers were cautious about new processes, and training a busy team while managing live projects was no small feat. At times, it felt like progress was slow and the team was stretched thin.

Then, BQE's dedicated Customer Success support stepped up and everything changed. Having a single point of contact who understood Acorn's business, workflow, and goals made all the difference. Instead of troubleshooting issues alone, the firm now had a partner invested in their success.

With personalized guidance, hands-on help, and proactive check-ins, Acorn's team started using CORE more confidently. Processes that once felt cumbersome became routine. Questions about project setup, invoicing, and reporting were met with quick, actionable answers. The relationship turned what could have been a frustrating transition into a collaborative evolution.

This new level of partnership helped CORE take root across the firm. Adoption increased. Workflows became consistent. Leadership gained visibility into the data they needed, and project managers began engaging more deeply with budgets and reports.

The impact was felt beyond the system itself—it changed how the firm worked together. Acorn built trust not just in the technology, but in the people behind it. And that partnership laid the groundwork for everything that came next.

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Having someone dedicated to make sure we were using CORE properly made a huge difference. It gave us confidence that we were supported every step of the way. That relationship turned CORE from a piece of software into a real partnership—and that's what helps us keep moving forward.

Nancy O'Sullivan
Director of Finance and Operations



Streamlined Billing and Smarter Decisions

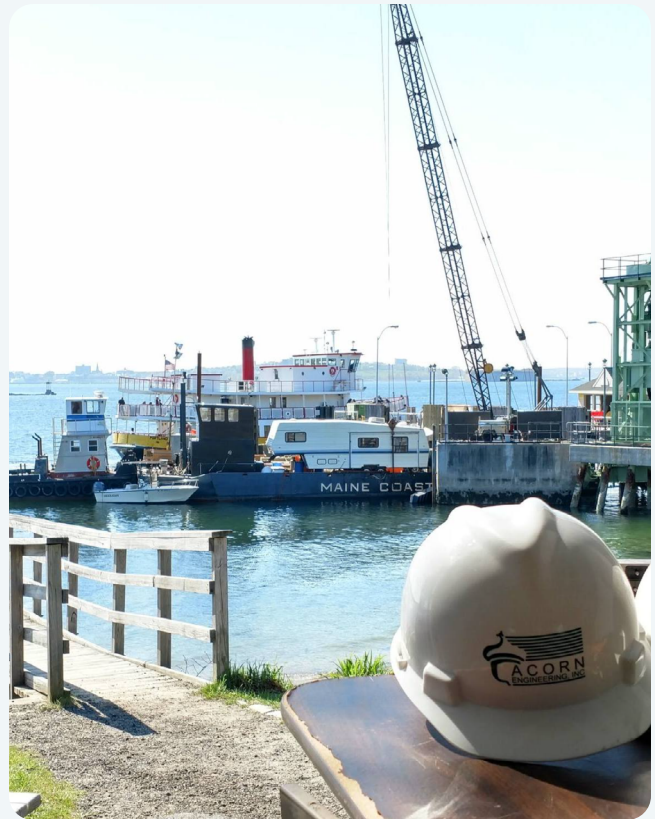
Once Acorn Engineering fully transitioned its invoicing into BQE CORE, day-to-day operations began to change noticeably. The firm moved away from its former patchwork of time entries in eBillity and billing in QuickBooks to a unified process that tied every project, hour, and invoice together.

Batch invoicing became one of the biggest breakthroughs. Rather than creating, printing, and marking up hundreds of individual invoices by hand, Acorn's operations team could now process them together, track their status digitally, and route them through automated approval workflows. This reduced confusion, eliminated duplicate work, and ensured greater consistency across all departments.

The efficiencies extended far beyond billing. Project managers gained clearer insight into project budgets and could review progress without relying on spreadsheets or manual reports. Leadership could see firmwide performance in one place, and the finance team could trust that the data in CORE reflected reality.

Even small improvements made a big difference. The ability to finalize and forward invoices electronically replaced hours of manual coordination and physical sign-offs. Engineers who once spent valuable time tracking down information could focus more on the work itself.

Although Acorn continues to use QuickBooks for general accounting, the firm now manages all project-level financials in CORE—creating a single source of truth for budgets, time, and profitability.



For the operations team, the difference is tangible:

- **Over 100 active projects** managed each month through CORE
- **Automated invoicing workflows** replacing manual reviews and paper-based approvals
- **E-payment options** accelerating cash flow and improving visibility into payment status
- **Centralized reporting** allowing leadership to track profitability by project manager and compare performance month over month

These changes didn't just make billing faster—they built confidence. Acorn's staff could see the direct connection between accurate time tracking, timely invoicing, and project profitability. For a firm built on precision, that clarity became one of its most valuable assets.

Building Capacity for What Comes Next

Acorn Engineering's progress with CORE has given the firm a stronger operational backbone—one that's now supporting its expansion into new disciplines. Over the past year, Acorn has added landscape architecture to its portfolio and is launching a land surveying division led by a newly hired director.

These additions mark an important milestone for the firm's evolution and for how CORE will continue to grow with them. While Acorn hasn't yet deployed every project management feature within the platform, the team sees new opportunities ahead. The surveying group, in particular, is poised to use CORE's resource scheduling and project tracking capabilities to coordinate fieldwork and manage projects across locations.

That expansion also brings new challenges. With more projects spanning multiple departments, Acorn is exploring ways to give senior project managers visibility across teams. The ability to group projects and manage permissions within

CORE has already helped, but the firm continues to refine its approach to balance oversight with data security.

For Acorn, these are signs of healthy growth—not growing pains. Each new service line strengthens their ability to deliver integrated, community-focused solutions, and CORE provides the framework to manage that complexity with confidence.

As Nancy put it, these improvements are about “meeting people where they are” and helping every team member use the system effectively. That philosophy—steady, patient, and people-centered—has become the hallmark of Acorn's success.

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CORE gives us a framework to grow into. It's adaptable—it will evolve with us as our services expand. As we add new disciplines like surveying, it will help us manage that growth and keep everything connected.

Nancy O'Sullivan
Director of Finance and Operations





Guided by Partnership, Built for Growth

Acorn Engineering's story is one of perseverance, collaboration, and steady improvement. The firm set out to modernize its operations, strengthen visibility, and create consistency as it grew, and BQE CORE became the guide that helped make it possible.

Through every phase of adoption, BQE's Customer Success team provided the structure and confidence Acorn needed to keep moving forward. Rather than offering one-time support, they built an ongoing relationship, answering questions, refining workflows, and helping the firm get the most from every feature. That partnership turned CORE from software into a strategic ally.

It's this level of service that sets BQE apart. Where other platforms stop at implementation, BQE stays

engaged, helping firms evolve their systems as they evolve their business.

Today, Acorn operates with clarity and control, supported by tools and a team that understand the realities of running an engineering firm. As they continue to expand and invest in their employee-owned future, BQE CORE remains the trusted partner helping them build a stronger, smarter, and more connected foundation for what comes next.

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I've been really impressed with how much CORE has improved. The partnership and support have made all the difference—and given us confidence that we're building on the right foundation.

Nancy O'Sullivan
Director of Finance and Operations

Your ambition scales, clarity grows, and creativity thrives with BQE CORE.

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