

The McCormick Letter

The Nation's Leader in Estimating Software

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July 2001

Koontz-Wagner PM Uses Estimates To Detail How Job Will Be Run

When AM General decided to build a plant in Mishawaka, Ind., to make a consumer-oriented version of the Hummer automobile, there were a host of electrical contractors certain they needed to submit the low bid on the job.

First, of course, there were Indiana contractors—this was in their backyard. And then there were the auto specialists from Michigan—this was their ballpark. Plus, a preview showed a likely work slowdown. The result: Not one member of these two groups of contractors wanted to be left out!

In short, everyone knew that the only way to submit the winning bid was to run the pencil through the sharpener a few dozen times.

“What made it more demanding was that we had to be able to do the estimate in a short amount of time,”

says Tom Cioch (pronounced the same way as “chuck”), a project manager for Koontz-Wagner Electric of Indiana.

“Basically, they gave us three weeks to submit the bid on the original package of work, which was about \$2.4 million. That meant three weeks of guys taking the work home, doing estimates on laptops.”

Koontz-Wagner uses McCormick Systems software to do its estimating. Efficiency is of primary importance, because the company does not have estimators on staff. Project managers estimate, submit bids, and then run the work when the company is selected.

“Essentially, the job was broken into four parts, with four project managers each taking a piece,” explains

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Where did my labels and toolbar go?

A. From time to time these may disappear. Simply click on the ‘takeoff’ menu, ‘toolbars’ and then ‘both’, this will bring them back. ✕



Did You Know... Unit pricing is automatically generated for every assembly in the database.

Did You Know... The Length Probe Autoscale feature can automatically determine the scale of any drawing.

Highlights

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McCormick Systems

1255 W. Baseline #138

Mesa, AZ 85202

800/444-4890

480/831-8914

Fax 480/820-2422

www.mccormicksys.com

Cioch. “So it was estimated on four laptops. The way McCormick has the software set up, it’s an advantage—especially compared to our old DOS-based system. McCormick has cut our estimating time substantially.”

Background

South Bend-based Koontz-Wagner Electric has been around for 80 years. The company specializes in industrial, institutional, custom controls, maintenance work, and more. It may be old-school, but the company doesn’t have hardened arteries: a technical service group does routers, bridges, cabling, and other voice-data-video work.

Koontz-Wagner’s experience and identification with the area, Cioch indicates, might be among the reasons it was awarded the work.

“I’m not sure that the mindset of the contractors that typically bid automotive work is to work in a margin that is a bit higher than we typically get here in South Bend,” he notes. “Margins are a lot tighter here, we think. Plus, you might guess that AM General wanted to work with a local contractor.”

Koontz-Wagner’s work assignments have since expanded to encompass two additional contracts at the plant, now totaling \$4.5 million combined with the initial contract win. The plant—called the H2—will produce modified, scaled-down vehicles on the basic Hummer design. AM General will sell the output to General Motors, which will market the vehicles to consumers at prices somewhat below the \$100,000-plus that a fully geared-up H1 would run. The overall construction project is being managed by Albert Kahn Associates from Detroit, a firm that specializes in the automotive industry.

On the Job: Change Order, Too

Cioch claims that McCormick Software really helps him, as a project manager who estimates, to run jobs.

“The way it’s set up, we can get as detailed as we want to, which gives us the opportunity to take off a job in minute detail,” he says. “Instead of throwing a bunch of take-offs into a blob of numbers, McCormick gives you the ability to get down to the nuts and bolts.

“What this means for me is that I can do it area-by-area and system-by-system. I know that the more detailed I can get in the initial estimate, the better I will be able to run the job later.

“This translates into being able to immediately implement cost control measures as soon as you get

on the job. I know that the more detail I put in the estimate, the better my cost-tracking will be.”

Another McCormick product used by Koontz-Wagner is Change Order. “We bought it specifically because of the size of the H2 job,” says Cioch, “and it really has helped out in regards to how we manage the job out there.

“Typically, you might have some type of spreadsheet set up for change orders. But, frankly, it’s just too easy for somebody to make a math or formula error—unless you do things like protecting individual cells. We’ve had problems with such things in the past.

“Now, with Change Order, someone would have to go out of his way to mess it up. It has pre-set and custom reports. As far as we’re concerned—it’s simpler and more accurate, and the reports create a more professional-looking document.”

Koontz-Wagner started work on the H2 site in October, and the company expects the job to peak at around 80 field electricians. Based on contracts now in hand, the work should extend to the end of 2001. According to Tom Cioch, McCormick Systems software had a vital role in helping the company successfully win the job, run the job, and cope with changes in the process. ✕



What We're Telling The Media

McCormick's Version 6.5 Speeds Contractor Estimates



Responding to requests from their customers, McCormick Systems has rolled out its Version 6.5 upgrade—incorporating ideas generated by its customers and in-house programmers. Included here are:

- (a) Power Probes Plus, the estimating take-off device, is now fully compliant with Windows NT, Windows 2000, and Windows 95/98/ME.
- (b) Estimators can now resize the bid summary screen, and the label screen, increasing estimating productivity—enabling them to quickly get a clear view of larger jobs.
- (c) “Audit trail” settings are more flexible. Estimators who settled on fixed settings for this function can now “set it once and forget it”—the settings stay in place from day to day.

McCormick's Version 6.5 upgrade applies to its three major software products—Win 3000, Win 6000, and Win 8000. For details, call McCormick at 800-444-4890. ✕

No More Musical Chairs!— Thanks To McCormick's Networked Estimating



With its new Win 12000, McCormick Systems has made life easier for estimators and project managers. Contractors who networked their estimating software previously purchased fixed-in-place licenses. A contractor with five network licenses would have each of those assigned to a given computer. In such an office, with perhaps eight potential users, estimators and project managers would, on occasion, have to play musical chairs. That day is over!

The Win 12000 system enables a contractor with 20 or more estimators and project managers likely to use the McCormick system to purchase perhaps only 10 licenses. Now, the server will keep track of user status—allowing up to 10 users access to the McCormick system at any given time, no matter which machine they are using at the time. For details, call McCormick at 800-444-4890. ✕

Privately owned, McCormick Systems (www.mccormicksys.com), of Mesa, Ariz., provides high-productivity software for contractors to use in producing consistent, profitable estimates for electrical and voice-data-video work.

Did You Know... Have you taken advantage of the customizing features of the new PowerProbes? Remember that you can change the sound file for your count and length probe. Select the “Options menu from your open PowerProbes—and then click on the PowerProbes setup. One of our users has the sound of cash registers ringing each time he counts off an item or assembly. Remember that you can use any .wav file. ✕

**McCormick Is Where You Are...
at Industry Trade Shows**

IEC Expo

Las Vegas, Nevada—October 1–4

NECA Show 2001

Washington, D.C.—October 21–23

What We're Hearing—From Customers Like You

From DOS to Windows—No Sweat!

Dear Todd:

We were a McCormick Systems DOS program user from 1986-2000. The usefulness and overall convenience your software afforded our business is unmatched by other estimating products.

We continued reading and hearing great things about your Windows product. Features and ease-of-use were critical items we wished to implement here. Although all other programs at our company were Windows-based, we hesitated to convert the electrical contracting system due to a perceived hassle and big deal.

To our surprise and delight, the conversion from DOS to Windows could not have been easier or faster. The conversion was simple, we regret waiting so long to upgrade.

*Henry E. Bajer, CEO
Avis Electric Co., Mechanicsville, VA*

A 'True' Multi-User Environment

Dear Todd:

We currently have 16-plus people using McCormick Estimating and have found it to be the best estimating solution currently available for today's estimators. We are currently planning on having 30 users in the near future.

We had previously used ***** because we had been led to believe that it was a true multi-user system. Much to our dismay, we discovered that was far from true. McCormick is a true multi-user environment with the power and flexibility that we were looking for.

Your support staff is extremely responsive, well-trained and attentive to our needs. **One of the greatest strengths of your company is that you listen to users.** I know that when I speak to you as a user, my wants and needs are addressed and implemented, and that you truly are concerned.

Thank you for making such a great product and making our jobs much easier on a daily basis.

*Bruce A. Melson, Vice President, Engineering Services
Pollock Summit/Integrated Electrical Services*

Write To Todd

Have a beef? Some praise? An idea on how we can improve McCormick Systems software, or our services? Don't hesitate to write to Todd McCormick, our company president, at McCormick Systems, 1255 W. Baseline, #138, Mesa, AZ 85202. You can also e-mail him at tmccormick@mccormicksys.com. Fax: 480-820-2422. ✕

Get Ahead With Training

Standard Estimating

It is structured to take you from "Job Startup" clear through "Bid Summary." In-depth instruction helps students with good manual experience get up on line.

Advanced Management

This class is designed for the database manager or chief estimator. Students attending this three-day class will drill down into the bottom of the program and learn how to build specification formulas, reports and reports formulas, keyboard mapping, setting up security, and more. You should be proficient in all takeoff phases of the McCormick product.

Upcoming Schedule

All classes are held at McCormick's training center (generally from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) in Mesa, Ariz. Class sizes are limited! Contact Jody Dougherty or Loriel McCormick at 800-444-4890.

July 11 – 13

Standard Estimating Class

July 18 – 20

Advanced Management Class

July 25 – 27

Standard Estimating Class

Aug. 8 – 10

Standard Estimating Class

Aug. 22 – 24

Standard Estimating Class

Sept. 12 – 14

Standard Estimating Class