

Come to Our User's Conference in April— And Learn About More Than Software

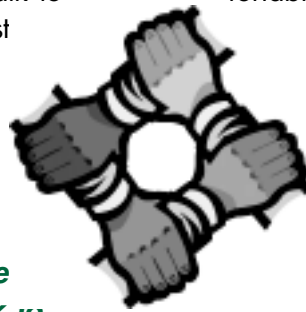
McCormick Systems is fortunate to have many valuable traditions. This spring sees a key event: the annual User's Conference, where our customers talk to us—and each other—about our software, our systems and how these items can be improved to help electrical contractors make more money in their businesses.

There's a lot more that goes on in these conferences. Regular attendees (including "The Desert Dogs," who have come for a number of years) tell us they come for the information. No doubt, much of the info comes from McCormick staff members. But a great deal of the value is provided by other contractors, who share information—either in the formal meetings, or in conversations at meals or in hallways.

Some contractors learn from other contractors about neat ways to use our software. And still other conversations leave the realm of computers, and get into tips and hints about how another contractor—in another local market—runs the business. It's possible that these conversations have the most value of all!

Many contractors form relationships at this event. It's not really legal—nor is it at all easy—to talk with an electrical contractor in your home market about what you are doing, and how you do it—to share information and gain perspective from someone with whom you might, in the future, be competing. But if you work

The annual User's Conference is where our customers talk to us—and to each other—about our software, our systems, and how these items can be improved to help electrical contractors make more money in their businesses...and there's more!



in Market A in State Y, and you meet a contractor from Market D in State Z, there's nothing illegal (or uncomfortable) about talking openly...and listening!

Our 2002 User's Conference is preceded by a Monday-Tuesday (April 8-9) training class. That's optional, but many appreciate the chance to come to Arizona, get the training, and continue on to spend the rest of the week with us.

Official Conference events begin Wednesday, April 10, with a golf tournament in the morning and the opening reception in the evening. Thursday and Friday feature full-day conference sessions. Additionally, we have the McCormick User's Lab running a half-day each of Thursday, Friday, and

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What Is 'Training'?

You've heard about McCormick Systems training, and you see course listings in every issue of this newsletter. What's it all about?

The idea is to gain a better understanding of the McCormick Windows Estimating programs. There are two options available to customers, usually depending on the number of estimators they have. The first is to attend the class in our Arizona offices. The second is to have one of our instructors scheduled to teach at your site. Call our office for more information (800-444-4890).

Generally, the curriculum is basically the same. We start by going into the program (usually taught using the Windows 6000), and covering all the basic tools:

◆ **Starting a Job**—How to log in properly and the different features of the job screen. Also, how to set up the job details to a custom checklist, effectively use the notes, and assign users to the job.

◆ **Paste from Job**—What it means and how to most benefit from the advantages of pasting existing data, rather than doing things from "scratch".

◆ **Labels**—This is the structure or breakdown of the job. Discussion on what is necessary and how a little forethought can save you confusion when putting a bid package together. Also covered is how to use the labels to control the actual takeoff and ensure its proper placement.

◆ **Database**—Considerable time is spent on the database. This includes a brief introduction to the specifications and formulas, moving around using Find/Sort, the Menu and Workspaces. Also covered is how to create/edit your own Items and Assemblies to customize individual jobs and/or the permanent database. We also show how to print the database report to review and edit on paper.

◆ **Takeoff**—How to input the actual counts and lengths, whether directly from a set of plans or from a "tear sheet" provided by someone else who has done the counting and measuring for you. We cover the different methods for input built into the

program, such as "direct" entry and the power probes, with all the features available.

◆ **Extension**—This step is for totaling up all the input. This can be done using "Unit Pricing" or a "Price/Labor" combination of your choosing. We also have numerous optional reports available for such things as an Item Material list or an Item Pull Sheet. Also covered is how to export the extension information to other programs, such as accounting.

◆ **Bid Summary**—This is where everything is pulled together to create the final bid package. We cover Quotes, Subtractor, Direct Job Expenses, Rental, Bond, Taxes, Overhead, and Profit. Also covered are topics such as shortcuts in setting up Sample Job to paste into the current job, easy negotiating using the Top Sheet, etc.

McCormick's class also covers the "background" such as Database Management, Hot Link for importing from Trade Service, and setting up custom Users. We also look at how to apply the additional tools, such as Graphs, Schedules, and Photos/Documents.

In addition to learning these basics, we also have exercises that help apply what we learn, culminating in doing an actual set of plans in friendly competition to see how close everyone can get to each other. ✕



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Saturday. That Saturday Lab is actually the final "official" event of the Conference.

We can't promise you'll come home with information on how to make better use of our software, or that you'll pick up some information on how to better run your contracting company. However, based on the experience of our regular attendees, it certainly seems likely!

To participate in this year's User's Conference, register—and obtain all the vital information—by calling Jody Dougherty or Loriel McCormick at 800-444-4890. ✕

NECA's VDV Conference: Come & See Our Database!

NECA's third annual Voice-Data-Video Expo—open to members of NECA and non-members alike—will be held March 11-13 at the Las Vegas Hilton. The event has moved up in the year (it was formerly held in May) and up in class (the Hilton is a more promising locale than the previous location).

McCormick Systems will be there again this year. But this time we've got something new for you to see—a magnificent new VDV database. As of press time, here's what we have in this database:



- ✓ 18,375 specific VDV items from the following manufacturers: Amp (Tyco Electronics), Avaya, Belden, Caddy (Erico), Carlon, Corning, Krone, Leviton, Nordx, Panduit, and more;
- ✓ 1,411 generic items; and
- ✓ hundreds of items from NECA's Manual of Labor Units

As you no doubt know, most VDV jobs do not consist of 15,000 items! In fact, we noted at the recent BICSI show that Rexel—a national electrical distributor—is going national with its "datacom" program...by putting just 100 VDV items in each of its distribution branches across the country.

So McCormick's got your VDV database, and we're ready to roll. If you come to Las Vegas for the VDV Expo, be sure to stop by our booth and take a look! If you've not received a VDV Expo brochure, go to www.vdvexpo.org; or call Le Guzman at 301-657-3110 and ask her to send you one. ✕

Did You Know... You can have an unlimited number of price specifications, each updated individually? This is an excellent way to compare prices from different vendors.

Technical Corner

What's in That 'Ugly Box' We Love/Hate?



CPU—Brain of the system, it translates millions of binary numbers into intelligible data.

Motherboard—Think of this as the backbone and central nervous system. It is responsible for marshalling all the input data as well as the output—keyboard, mouse, drives and monitors. Often overlooked in the face of chip manufacturers' hype, if you have a poor quality motherboard, your whole system will suffer.

Ram—Random Access Memory. Think of it as the short-term memory for your system. Whenever you open a file your operating system will place the file in RAM for speed and ease of access.

Hard Drive—Like long-term memory, the hard-drive is a vital part of your system. Capable of storing vast quantities of information—this is where you will store the bulk of your data. Should be backed-up regularly.

CD/DVD-ROM Drive—Compact disc or Digital Video Disk readers. These drives correspond to one of the senses—they gather and disperse data to your system.

Floppy Drive—Similar to the CD drive, but with much more limited data capabilities.

CD-R/CD-RW Drive—Manufacturers are increasingly including these drives in their specifications—they have the read ability of the CD drive, with the following enhancements. CD-R (CD "recordable") is a one-time-only recording medium that writes data to "burnable" CDs. CD-RW (CD "Re-Writable") is capable of multiple writes to the same disk. ✕

Writing Plans And Specifications



When preparing an estimate, consider these key factors:

- ✓ Are the plans and specifications readily available? Can we obtain at least one copy for our use, or do we need to do our takeoff in the General Contractor or Owner's office?
- ✓ Is there a plan deposit, and is it refundable? If the deposit is not refundable, is the project still worth estimating, or are there other projects that would suit us better?
- ✓ May we mark the plans, and if not should we make copies for our own use?
- ✓ Are the plans and specifications in a paper or digital format? If they are in a digital format, do we have the capability to either print them or read the digital format? (See note below.)
- ✓ Make sure paper plans are rolled with the printing out (so they will lay flat when laid out).
- ✓ Check the plans in noting the number of copies of plans and specifications, the bid due date, plan deposit amount, any addenda's including the addenda number and date, and the contacts (architect, engineer, owner, general contractor, etc.). This should be done on a sheet or chart that is available to all involved.
- ✓ Distribute the plans and specifications to the estimators involved, keeping a list of who has which plans and specifications, etc.

NOTE: At McCormick Systems we believe that—in the near future—most plans and specifications will be in a digital format. The days of picking up paper plans will have ended, and drawings will be sent over the Internet or on a CD. This transition will happen almost overnight; some of us will remember how the fax machine took over the industry—this will be about the same. Users of McCormick's CAD Estimating are on the leading edge of the industry. Next month: "The Specifications, Division 1-15". ✕

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.

Get Windows Training Now!

Standard Estimating

The class is structured to take you from "Job Startup" through " Bid Summary". It provides in-depth instruction, including good manual experience and "brush-up" exposure for those who want to get more out of the product.

Advanced Management

Designed for the database manager or chief estimator, this class drills down into the bottom of the program. You will learn how to build specification formulas, write reports and reports formulas, and more. Before taking the class, you should be proficient in all takeoff phases of the product and understand your company's needs.

Upcoming Schedule

Unless specified, all classes are at the training center in our office in Chandler, AZ. Classes start at 7 a.m. and wind up about 4 p.m. daily. We make hotel reservations using information from the registration forms sent in from participants. We must receive your registration form in order to reserve a space in our class. To obtain a registration form, call 800-444-4890. ✕

Feb. 20-22
Standard Estimating

March 6-8
Standard Estimating

April 8-9 (Tempe, AZ)
Pre-User's Conference
Standard Estimating and
Advanced Management

April 24-26
Standard Estimating

May 1-3
Standard Estimating

May 15-17
Advanced Management