

Beta Tester at Prime Electric Gives Version 7.0 a Workout

When George Silbersdorff came to Prime Electric (Bellevue, WA) in 1999, after 16 years with another employer, he was happy to learn Prime used



McCormick Systems. But they were still using DOS. So Silbersdorff captained a company conversion from DOS to Windows—the second one, for him.

These days, however, things have moved along quite nicely for the company, as they now grab a jumpstart on new software. In recent months, Silbersdorff has been a “beta tester” of the new Version 7.0 software from McCormick.

Prime Electric, founded by Wayne and Nancy Tyrrell in 1987, specializes in design/build, tenant improvement, and industrial work. The company typically has 75 or more employees in the field. In the office, Silbersdorff says, “We have a mix of people. There are some who have estimated for quite a while. And there are new estimators/project managers.” That’s one reason he jumped on the opportunity for Prime to be an early user of Version 7.0.

Tightening Pricing

Silbersdorff explains that Prime does not teach those who are relatively new to electrical estimating to “discount everything out of the material” right away. The experienced estimators at Prime realize that the newer estimators need a little “wiggle room,” and the company provides it.

But when bid time comes, an experienced estimator will tweak the numbers. Silbersdorff says that with McCormick’s Version 7.0, he has the ability to edit the take-off

in the extension mode. “What’s really nice is that you can do this without having an impact on the permanent database.”

In other words, the company’s more experienced estimators sharpen the work of the others, “so we can put in really close net pricing,” he says. Version 7.0 makes it a lot easier to do this.

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McCormick Systems: The Short Story



ConstructTech (www.constructech.com), a national construction technology magazine, recently asked us to put 80 words together on McCormick Systems' software products. It's a lot easier to write 500 words than it is 80! Here's what we told them:

Electrical contractors—

- ✓ estimate with state-of-the-art systems;
- ✓ use a CAD Estimating interface with AutoCAD;
- ✓ give handhelds to field people for remote T&M billing; and
- ✓ have estimators use estimating software—on PDAs—for building walk-throughs.

Is this the future? **Absolutely not—it's happening now.** Innovations from McCormick Systems (Chandler, AZ) have won "ShowStopper" awards from The NECA Show (picked by contractors) in seven of the past 21 years. Plus: Our customers rave about our tech support! ✕



Did You Know ... Choosing the **RESTORE** button in the Jobs screen allows you to restore an individual job to your system from another source, using the dialog box. The User can overwrite whatever job is currently highlighted in the Jobs screen, or create a brand new job.

Boost Your Bottom Line In Chandler

McCormick Systems prides itself on producing software designed to raise the productivity of estimators working for electrical contractors. We also have spent the recent past focusing on technical support—making it a comprehensive resource for our customers.

In truth, however, there is no single move we can make that is as potent for your company's estimating future as to lure you to Chandler, AZ, this April for the annual User's Conference.

Events begin March 31-April 1 with a pre-conference standard training class. There's a golf tournament early on April 2, and an evening reception. Official conference meetings take place all day April 3-4, and include access to our on-site "lab" each day. The "lab" is also opened Saturday. All events take place at the San Marcos Golf Resort in Chandler. What's the big deal? We'll focus this year on the recent release of Version 7.0 of our software. We'll also talk about modifications we're making right now (see separate note on the next page) to produce a Version 7.1.

As an attendee, you'll get to interact with other McCormick users and ask questions (either in sessions, in the lab, or in less-formal settings) of President Todd McCormick and key company staff members. You'll get hands-on demos of system tricks and get one-on-one help in resolving any knotty problems.

Another valuable User's Conference component is input—from you, the contractor, to our developers. You'll be able to request specific changes in the program that you'd like to see...upgrades, modifications, or even subtractions that will help you do what you do faster, more efficiently, and more accurately.

We can't make you come to Chandler in early April. But we're certain that a trip there will have a major positive impact on your bottom line. For details, contact Jody Dougherty or Loriel McCormick at 800-444-4890. ✕



Version 7.1 Now In Preparation

There's no typo in the headline. Sure, you just received the official release of Version 7.0. But if McCormick wants to stay ahead of your needs, we'll never be "satisfied" with our most recent version. That's why Version 7.1 is now being prepared. Attendees at our April User's Conference (Chandler, AZ—see separate item) will hear all about it. Check this newsletter each month for more information. Here's a preview of key modifications that are coming:

Audit trail—you'll be able to select several items and/or assemblies before cutting, copying, or moving them from one label set to

another. You'll also be able to select multiple items/assemblies to delete from the audit trail.

Edit extension—the capability to edit the extension in Version 7.0 will be expanded. With V7.1, you'll be able to send data from the extension to both the graph feature and the schedule.

Schedule—your V7.1 software from McCormick will enable you to send your completed schedule directly to Microsoft Project, something you've been requesting.

Lot of label sets?—if your estimators make extensive use of labels, V7.1 will make you happy—it will speed up the extension process. ✕



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A Prime Asset

McCormick's software is a major asset for Prime, and the company treats it like one. The company has 15 Win 8000 "keys" for internal use and three Win 12000 server licenses for remote users who access the system from Job-sites using Citrix Metaframe.

But that's only the beginning. "We have a separate, dedicated McCormick server," Silbersdorff proudly notes, "that is fully redundant, including a hot-swappable hard drive system, dual power supplies and a line conditioning 3000VA Smart UPS system. We do this to keep our systems from affecting each other. If the accounting computer goes down for some reason, it doesn't take down estimating. In the four years I've been here, we've had only one time where the McCormick server went down."

"And even that time, it was only because the server ran out of space. McCormick's got the software set up so that if there's not enough space to initialize an estimate, it won't allow you to start one. That's the only crash we've had!" Silbersdorff says. "We set up the WIN12000 system with Citrix software to allow out of the office estimating capabilities."

With Version 7.0 in place, he thinks McCormick will be even more valuable. "With this, we can edit labor units to fine-tune a project estimate—and, again, we don't affect the database," he says. "For example, perhaps an estimator ended up with a job at 350 hours. One of our more-experienced people might be able to cut that down to 280 hours.

"He can edit the labor units, edit the cost codes or

adjust quantities. He can also substitute materials with Version 7.0. For example, on a check, one of us might find that the take-off included set-screw couplings when it should have been compression fittings. We can make the change right there, and it doesn't affect the database."

What about converting from DOS to Windows? "There's so much more you can do with the Windows version," Silbersdorff says. "There's so much more flexibility in the bid summary."

Further, Prime also puts a McCormick exclusive, **real-time networking**, to regular use. "When using the Advanced Audit Trail and working with other estimators on a project," the senior estimator says, "I'm able to see the entering of Items/Assemblies, with quantities – on my screen – as it happens. This makes it pretty easy to track a take-off."

What Beta Testers Do

For Silbersdorff, the key for any new software is stability. That is a McCormick goal with all of its beta testers, too. "We love to work with people like George, because he is willing to put in the time," says President Todd McCormick.

Silbersdorff might be the ultimate in beta testers, as he recently had *three* McCormick installations on his laptop—one to interface with the office network, another that is a standalone, and the 7.0 beta software. He has *three databases* as well: One is Prime's converted database, another that he calls "McCormick right out of the can," and a third specialized database that he uses to estimate industrial work. ✕

Modifying the Database — Part 2



Count/Length Input

✓ The Count/Length input may be set (use the pull-down arrow) to Count, Length, Both, or None. For Items and Assemblies, set the Count/Length Input to Count, Length, or Both. For Headers or Blank Spaces, set the Count/Length Input to None. Note how the Count/Length Buttons in the Takeoff List turn gray as they are turned off.

Header

✓ The Header should be set to Yes, if the entry is a Header, and set to No, if the entry is an Item, Assembly, or a Blank Line.

Cost Codes

✓ The Cost Codes may be modified in the McCormick database by clicking on the pull-down arrow and selecting the Cost Code needed. Cost Codes may be added or modified. **NOTE:** Before adding or modifying Cost Codes, backup your system! McCormick's Tech Support Department can help you modify your cost codes. Additionally, Modifying Cost Codes is covered in McCormick's Advanced Windows Estimating class.

Schedule Codes

✓ Schedule Codes were introduced with McCormick's Version 5 Win products. They may be used in McCormick's Schedule feature for Job Scheduling. (See the July 2002 issue. If you didn't save it, you'll find it downloadable in PDF format at www.mccormicksys.com.) If Schedule Codes are not a part of your specifications, the cost codes may be used instead. Note that DOS users that converted to Windows may not have Schedule Codes in their specifications. The same rules for adding or changing Cost Codes apply to Modifying Schedule Codes. ✕

Next month: Using "Hot Link" to modify your Database.



Did You Know ... The **MAINTENANCE UTILITY** is a sub-program of the McCormick Systems Estimating program. It is used for a number of purposes, including **BACKING UP** the entire program. It is accessed by going to **<START>** **<PROGRAMS>** **<MCCORMICK SYSTEMS>** and, depending on the install, either **<MAINTENANCE UTILITY>** or **<MCCORMICK SYSTEMS WIN PRODUCTS>** **<MAINTENANCE UTILITY>**.

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. ✕

February 26-28
Standard Estimating

February 27-28 (Baltimore, MD)
Standard Estimating

March 19-21
Standard Estimating

March 20-21 (Baltimore, MD)
Standard Estimating

March 31-April 1
**TWO Pre-Conference Training
Classes**
Standard Estimating and
Advanced Estimating