



Tri-City Electric Company On The Move— Now, Into VDV & CAD Estimating

Second of a two-part feature

Your electrical contracting company won't get to be 108 years old if it does not adapt. As noted in the June issue of this newsletter, Tri-City Electric Company (Davenport, IA) is not standing still.

That goes for new ideas and new markets. For example, the company is moving into voice-data-video and integrated building systems in a big way. In doing so, Tri-City is bringing advances into the telecommunications market.

"Most of the estimators in the data market have never before been involved in the construction indus-

try," explains President Dan Palmer. "Many, if not most, come from big nationwide cabling companies or the telecom industry. From what we've seen, many of them use spreadsheets to do their estimates—and that gives us an advantage." Our data estimators were first involved in the construction industry and later in the data industry, so they have years of experience in both areas.

According to Palmer, spreadsheet estimating is missing something. "Computerized estimating is so simple and we use it every day," he notes. "Instead of a unit price, McCormick gives you a cost for the material and gives you a labor cost. Heck, we're electrical contractors—we do modern estimating day-in and day-out.

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Pre-Show Training Class Set For NECA-Orlando

Perhaps you're coming to Orlando for the NECA Convention and Show (Oct. 1-4). Or maybe your company is located in the Southeast—and you'd send some of your estimators to a McCormick training session if we had one in the Southeast.

In any case, you and/or the people you send do not have to be NECA show attendees...to take advantage of our special pre-NECA Standard Estimating training class, scheduled for Sept. 29-30 in Orlando. Please note that the event will have a maximum of 12 students, to be held at the New Horizons Computer Center in Orlando.

For more information on this two-day event, call us at 800-444-4890. ✕

Highlights

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Adds Tom Lanum, senior estimator: "Basically, for us, a unit priced estimate does not offer us labor and materials tracking like McCormick estimating software. When we talk with a VDV estimator who has joined the Tri-City Electric Co. team from another contractor, we introduce them to McCormick system software and explain the benefits and its user-friendly ability to estimate.

"You can actually watch them, as they appreciate what can be done. A little light comes on. At some point, they realize—or even say out loud—"this is going to make my life a lot easier!"

As noted in the June newsletter's story, Tri-City Electric Company has as many as 550 field employees. Of its 18 estimators (in four offices), three work full-time on datacom...keeping 10% to 15% of the company's field people busy.

Toward CAD Estimating

Lanum left Iowa for Arizona to attend April's McCormick User's Conference with a special assignment: To investigate the real-world applications of CAD Estimating software. He liked what he heard.



Tri-City Electric Co.
Since 1895

"We have six AutoCAD seats at our company, and we use it for electrical work, for design-build, for data communications and also, of course, to produce as-built drawings for our customers," Lanum says.

That assignment came from Palmer, of course. "We've heard a lot about CAD Estimating and, from everything Tom had told me, it seemed very favorable," Palmer notes. "Our use of CAD is, more and more, becoming standard for us—on big and small jobs.

"If CAD Estimating can help us move faster, which is what we're hearing, we thought it was time to try it—and see if we like it."

One key, according to Lanum and Palmer, is that more customers are requesting electronic as-built drawings. "Sometimes, it's part of the spec," says Palmer. Lanum adds that the key in the company's experimentation with McCormick's CAD Estimating software will reduce estimating time.

But there's one additional factor, according to Palmer: "A company is only as good as the people



who work there. We want the best people and we try to make sure to hire them. All of our employees are aggressive. The message we try to convey internally is, 'get on the train—or get out of the way of the train.'

"What we have, as a result, is a positive team. When we try something new—like CAD Estimating or anything else—no one comes out with negative comments, something like 'that won't ever work.'

"With everyone so positive, if CAD Estimating does what we've heard, we'll make it work for us at Tri-City Electric Company."



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ADD YOUR PEOPLE: We'll ADD other people at your company to our electronic list. If you'd like us to send this newsletter to several people at your company who do not now receive it (other estimators, project managers, and so forth) just give us their names and e-mail addresses. Thanks! ✖

East Coast Training— Another Option For You

Our watchword is Productivity. We want to be the company that makes electrical estimators the most productive. Training is a part of that.

But, some contractors have told us, what if we can't arrange for our people to come to Arizona and be trained at McCormick's Chandler HQ?

No problem. Your options (besides Chandler) include:

1. A special training event in Orlando, FL, to be held in late September just before the NECA Show. See short item in this newsletter.

2. On-site training. You call us, we provide customized training to your people at your HQ!

3. Training in the Mid-Atlantic region. Our East Coast training, handled by veteran estimator Erle Howard, is strategically located near Baltimore, MD. Why is that location strategic?

- Southwest Air serves Baltimore-Washington International airport, making flights to/from that destination more affordable.
- If you or your people can't get flights into BWI, there are airports nearby (about 55 to 75 minutes by car) in the Washington, D.C., area—Dulles and National.
- Baltimore is within a short drive of New York City, Richmond, and of course New Jersey and Philadelphia.
- Baltimore is accessible via Amtrak as well.

Most importantly, Erle provides great service. He's been certified by the American Society of Professional Estimators (www.aspenational.com). Also of interest: Erle is the leading "Desert Dog," having attended McCormick Systems' User's Conferences 18 times.

Upcoming scheduled Baltimore training dates: July 24-25; Aug. 21-22; and Sept. 25-26, all for Standard Estimating. An Advanced Estimating class is planned for the fall—as are additional classes for October-December. To register or get more information, call Jody Dougherty or Loriel McCormick at 800-444-4890. ✖



Estimator's Corner

Unit Pricing

In Item unit pricing, the following standard specifications may be modified by the user:

- "Lbr Rate W/B" would be the User's Basic Hourly rate with Labor Burden (Insurance & Benefits) in a dollar-per-hour figure. This rate may be modified to match your company's costs.
- "Matl Tax Mult" would be the local use (sales) tax rate and may be modified as needed. This is a multiplier with the existing default value of 1.065—equaling 6.5%.
- "U/P Markup" would normally be the multiplier for Overhead and Profit. This is a multiplier with the existing default value of 1.155—equaling 15.5%.
- "Labor \$'s" equals "Bid Lbr" ("Labor Book" in 3000 systems) times "Lbr Rate W/B" .
- "Totl Matl W/Tx" equals "Price 1" ("Price Bid" in 3000 systems) times "Matl Tax Mult".
- "Raw Cost" equals "Totl Matl W/Tx" plus "Labor \$'s"
- "U/Price" equals "Raw Cost" times "U/P Markup" ✕

Next month: Assembly unit pricing.

All About McCormick In Just 80 Words!

Here's what we sent to a magazine recently for a short listing on McCormick's booth at a trade show:

Do you do VDV and integrated systems work in existing buildings? If so, McCormick Systems has the state-of-the-art answer for special systems estimating—for renovations, upgrades, and modernization.

The old way: An estimator doing a walk-through of an existing building made notes on pieces of paper. Later, he prepared the estimate from notes...and memory.

Today's estimator does the take-off on-site, with a handheld PDA and McCormick's software. Winner of a ShowStopper award at NECA's 2002 Show! ✕

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. ✕

Chandler, AZ

Standard Estimating
July 16-18 & July 23-25
Aug. 6-8 & 20-22
Sept. 17-19 & 24-26

Advanced Estimating
Aug. 13-15

Baltimore, MD

Standard Estimating
July 24-25, Aug. 21-22 & Sept. 25-26

**We'll bring training to YOUR site.
Ask us about this!!**