



Contractors, Estimators—And Our Staff— Say '03 User's Conference 'Maybe Best Ever'

Contractors and estimators from around the country gathered in Chandler, AZ, in early April for the annual McCormick Systems User's Conference. But the key isn't that they came...it's what they took home with them.

This year, according to many of the attendees, the format and content presented by the company made the event the most useful they can remember. Upon arriving home, these customers have told us, they had "take-aways" that they could put right to work.

"This was the best conference in the past five years," said Rod Wohl of Younger Electrical Contractors (Ponca City, OK), a 20-man shop, contacted by phone several weeks later. "I especially appreciated the information on editing extensions"—a new capability in Version 7.0.

"We spent some time on the bid summary. All of this was valuable to us. And we could see the wave of the future—I appreciated the information on the software that works with PDAs."

What You Don't Know...

A key session, according to attendees and company staff, was a four-hour-long event centered on "What you already have that you don't know about." President Todd McCormick and chief developer Ed Bundy hosted the session.

"I think we probably could have gone another four hours on this," Todd noted. "In one area, we talked about specs. We must have covered 75 separate



Many electrical contractors and estimators from around the country went home from the annual McCormick Systems User's Conference with "take-aways" they could put right to work.

Highlights

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items. Many of the people in the audience didn't know about all of them. Between the two of us, Ed and I knew of about 60 or so!"

McCormick prides itself on dedication to improving its customers' estimating productivity. The software has within it numerous shortcuts and ways to speed estimating. One question from the audience during the "what you don't know" session, for example, concerned how to find a specific job if one has many projects on the system. The questioner had roughly 750 jobs.

"We may forget, while we're adding sophisticated new capabilities, things like this that help estimators and contractors," Bundy said. "In this case, it's as simple as clicking on the column heading—our software automatically sorts the jobs, so you can find what you want in any way you want to look for it. Sure, it's simple, but the estimator who asked that question did not know that—and maybe others didn't as well. That one answer will probably save a lot of time for some of the people in the room."

Other Comments

Andy DeMartin, estimating manager for former Encompass unit Sequoyah Electric (Seattle, WA), listed three helpful things he learned at the conference in short order, when asked in late April:

1. Easier ways to import one database to another.
2. How to make better use of editing extensions – added to the software in Version 7.0.

3. Using multiple supplier prices from local distributors.

He noted that beyond "it's good to talk with other users" at the event. In fact, on the handwritten comments received by McCormick, a number of attendees listed "networking" as a prime benefit of the event—and they weren't talking about hardwired or wireless computer networks!

"For us, the highlight was the information on CAD



"Networking" was a benefit of the event—talking with contractors. Indiana's Steve Shrader (right), of Indiana, spoke to his fellow contractors about CAD Estimating.



Estimating," said Tom Lanum of Tri City Electric (Davenport, IA), which has 400+ electricians in the field. "We have CAD in place at our company, but we haven't used the McCormick CAD Estimating software—yet.

"Now, after this conference, we've learned what we needed to know. We'll be using it."

Lanum, the company's senior estimator, has attended 11 McCormick User's Conferences. This year, two other estimators from the company were also in attendance. Why? "Our company has found it extremely advantageous to attend, over the years. The reason we bring other estimators is

that we've found that one person doesn't necessarily take in everything that is said and done at this event.

"When we compare notes afterward, we'll find that someone especially focused in on one aspect, someone else on another," Lanum summarized. "We get the most out of the information presented this way."



Did You Know ... You can SAVE PASSWORD in the Win3000/Win6000 on the System Login screen by choosing the User Name, typing the Password correctly once, and then putting a check in the Save Password box.

For David Spotanski, an estimator/project manager with Benson Electric in St. Louis, a key was that "they didn't spend much time on sales, and they did a great job of explaining things, and the 'how-tos'. This was one of the better conferences."

One example of a "take-away" for Benson Electric, Spotanski said, was a suggestion, which took only seconds, from contractor Steve Shrader—who spoke on CAD Estimating. "There were so many things said that could help you, good suggestions. Steve Shrader said something about putting all of your submittals together in a PDF [Portable Document Format]," Spotanski noted. "I hadn't thought of that."

Spotanski especially noted the information presented on using the McCormick software's capability to take in prices from multiple electrical distributors for a given job. He added: "And that 'did you know' session—the program is so big, there are so many things that the program does. That was just fantastic!"

Additions & Plans

One key element that made the conference more successful, Todd McCormick felt, was the presence of more computers in the "learning lab." McCormick doubled the number of computers, to nearly 20; attendance was up by about 35% from 2002.

"It turned out to be a good decision by us, because, during the breaks and other lab sessions, there were people at every single one of them," Todd noted. "We did it primarily to help our attendees get demos of how to make the best use of Version 7.0, which has been

released now.

"But they put the computers to use in asking all kinds of questions. On the first day of the conference, our planned sessions ended 30 minutes early. When I got to the lab after talking with some people at the final session's end, the lab was full!

"We appreciate the efforts these attendees make to come to Arizona. Truthfully, the companies that send people to this meeting are the ones that get the most out of our system. There were four people who came up to me after that 'what you have that you don't know about' session who told me what they learned in that session alone paid for the



Higher estimating productivity brings other users to McCormick's User's Conference -- plan on making the trip to AZ in 2004!



conference!

"That's what we want for everyone. That's why we encourage all of our users to come. Getting that higher estimating productivity is the real reason more of them should think about next year's conference."

Of course, Todd McCormick has an ulterior motive for wanting to attract more attendees—and it isn't conference attendee income (there is none). This annual event also serves as a 5-day "input" session, where McCormick staffers listen to users and plan for future tinkering (adding functions users request)—and major and minor upgrades to the software.

Next year's conference will again be scheduled for early Spring. Look for notices in this newsletter, starting in the November or December 2003 issue. 6



Did You Know ... The Paste From Job is also a great tool within the program to save time. If you create an Extension Report or Labor Category in one job for example, use Paste From Job to copy it back to your template job(s) for future pasting.

Our Desert Dogs

McCormick's "Desert Dogs" are contractors, estimators, and others who have attended eight or more User's Conferences over the years. We had 10 in attendance in 2003:



- Erle Howard, Electrical Estimating Services (18 years)
- Fred Bauer, Bauer Electrotech (17)
- Dave DeFelice, Davison Electric Co. (14)
- Joe Dolan, Del Power, Inc. (14)
- Bill Andrews, All-Phase Consultants (13)
- Tom Lanum, Tri-City Electric Co. (11)
- Brent Loney, BCL Electric, Inc. (11)
- Louis Lee, LL Electric (9)
- And our newest "dog"—Tom White of Towler Electric (8 years). ✖

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. ✖

Standard Estimating - Chandler AZ

June 18-20 & 25-27

July 16-18 & 23-25

August 6-8 & 13-15

Standard Estimating - Baltimore MD

May 22-23

June 26-27

July 24-25

August 21-22

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

See McCormick's Booth At Electric 2003

Are you coming to Electric 2003, the eastern regional trade show—to be held June 10-12 at the new convention center in Washington, D.C.? You'll find McCormick Systems in booth #1003. For more info check out east.electricshow.com. ✖

Save On Cabling Standards Newsletter

McCormick's newsletter editor, Joe Salimando, is also co-owner of *Cabling Standards Update*. Published since 1995, this VDV publication consists entirely of straight reporting—it carries no advertising.

Recently, the newsletter changed from four 40-page printed-and-mailed issues each year, to 24 nine-page issues sent via e-mail (in PDF format). It now delivers more information in a timely manner.

To obtain a free sample, send an e-mail to jsali@cris.com with the subject line "McCormick" and your name, title, and company name in the body. That's all you need do. You'll receive in return a recent issue and a subscription form offering you a discount of \$40 off the \$249 annual subscription price! ✖



Did You Know ... Users with Administrative security can open any job and are automatically added to Job Information Users under Active Users on Job.