

How Rosendin Speedily Estimates Project Work: Start with Software That's Truly Networkable

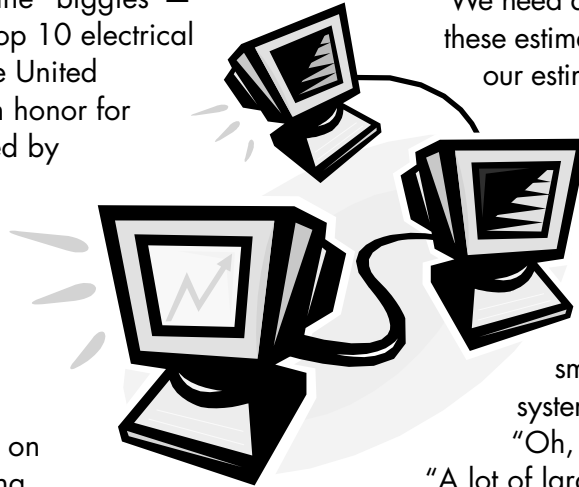
Rosendin Electric is one of the "biggies" — perennially on the list of the Top 10 electrical contractors (by revenue) in the United States. Obviously, it's quite an honor for McCormick Systems to be used by the company's estimating team in San Jose, Calif., where projects are handled for that office and others in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Fact is, however, that the company hasn't standardized on one type of electrical estimating software; another system is in use at another office. Why does San Jose go its own way?

"Our company has offices in Oregon, Arizona, and New Mexico [along with the California operations]," says John Brown, vice president of estimating in San Jose. "Here, most of the jobs we estimate are for \$1 million or more.

"Elsewhere, someone else decided to go another way. But that other system would not work for us—it's a file-merge system, not a true networked system. It's not appropriate for what we do everyday."

Brown notes that "everyday" activity involves bidding on jobs that can run up into the range of \$25 million in electrical work. With seven estimators in San Jose, Brown can throw resources at a big project that comes in the door...and needs to be estimated quickly.



"We need a system here that allows us to network these estimators," he says. "Of course, we have our estimating database on a server. But on a big project or a rush job, we can put two or three—or more—estimators on at the same time."

Big Jobs Every Day

How often does the need for a smoothly networked electrical estimating system come up at Rosendin, anyway?

"Oh, it's on a daily basis," Brown replies.

"A lot of large jobs come through here. We'll get design-build work, high-rise condos, hospitals—and we'll have one to two weeks to bid it. We'll split the job up.

Continued on page 2.

Highlights

<i>Rosendin Estimators Need True Networking</i>	1
<i>Estimator's Corner</i>	3
<i>What We're Telling the Media</i>	4
<i>Training Schedule</i>	4

Continued from page 1.

"One estimator will do lighting, another will get the distribution system, and perhaps someone else will work on, for example, the fire alarm system. We try to switch it off, so the same person is not doing lighting for weeks at a time. So an estimator might do the fire alarm system on one project, and the lighting on the next.

"You've got to remember that people can get a bit tired of doing the same thing every day."

On these large projects, estimators enter data in real time, and McCormick's software treats their work as a single estimate. After everyone is done, the senior Rosendin estimator who has led the project gathers the others together, and they review the project as a group.

"There are a lot of decisions to be made and we have to work fast," Brown says. "This is particularly true on design-build work. Not only do we have to do the estimates, but we have to track the scope we're quoting. We have to make sure we record what we told people."

Keeping Up with the System

One recent modification to the estimating database came about as a result of a change in the big-project market. While the company hasn't previously been "big" in residential construction, Rosendin of late has taken on multi-tenant work—mostly, Brown says, high-rise condominiums.

"We've had to set up specific items and assemblies for use in this residential work," Brown says. "Our database previously was set up for commercial buildings and most offices are built with steel frames. These condo buildings are cast-in-place concrete. It's been a new challenge."

Helping a bit with new challenges is Version 7 of McCormick's software. Brown notes that "it's an improvement, operationally—it gives us editing tools that are useful." One key to helping a staff of seven estimators be more pro-

ductive, obviously, is to keep up with the latest changes to the software.

"We have people coming into the estimating department at times, as we add business," he reports. "There are new hires, and we also have people from the project management department who need to learn the software. The system manager shows them how to use the software—how to open screens and build assemblies. A senior estimator supervises their training.

"For all of us, we try to hold a class on the estimating software here—a refresher for some of us, new information for others—every three to six months."

If it sounds as if Brown's life is never dull, that is the truth. "At Rosendin, we have a diverse customer base. There are private development jobs—commercial and, now, residential too. We have a good-sized highway and traffic signal division, and we do airport work—airport lighting and terminal work. And we do industrial work—everything from substations to wind farms, from chip jobs to data centers.

"To succeed, we need an estimating system that has the capacity to allow us to network, and to create items and assemblies that will work in our estimating of different kinds of electrical jobs. McCormick does the job for us." ✕

First '04 Forecast

Slight Gain in Nonresidential

FMI Corp., the construction industry management consulting firm, included forecast information in its third-quarter report. Below you'll find a "flat" outlook for next year—with just a bit more optimism salted into the 2005 outlook.

Table One. FMI's Construction Estimate & Forecast (in thousands of dollars)

	2000	2001	2002	2003P	2004F	2005F
Total Residential	373.4	397.0	424.6	421.4	408.3	432.2
Total Nonresidential	291.4	297.3	266.0	264.9	271.8	284.2
Non-Building Structures	151.7	167.5	169.6	166.2	174.5	184.9
Total Put In Place	816.5	861.8	860.2	852.5	854.6	901.3

Source: Source: FMI Corp. data for 2003 estimates and 2004-05 forecasts.

On Screen Extension Tips—First of a Series



On screen Extension allows the modification of job items. Contractors and estimators who like to play “What if?” games and make job modifications will find them to be simple and easy. Pricing may be saved in a file format for future use. NOTE: The most likely modifications that would be made while Editing Extensions will be marked with a ✓.

Security

✓ User security needs to be set up before using the WIN 3/6/8/12000 on Screen Extension. Out-of-the-box “Admin” security varies between the 3000 System and the 6/8/12000 Systems. Security for estimators could be set up as follows—and then modified for each company. The items with a ? may or may not be allowed for the estimator, depending on the company.

Under “Edit/Security”:

Area: <i>Edit Extension</i>	Admin Group	Estimator Group
Add Material	Allow	?
Adjust	Allow	?
Create/Save New Extension	Allow	Allow
Delete Material	Allow	Not Allow
Edit Formulas	Not Allow	Not Allow
Open Additional Price Columns	Allow	Allow
Open Columns	Allow	Allow
Open Edit Extension	Allow	Allow
Range Edit	Allow	?
Re-Extend Labor	Allow	Allow
Re-Extend Quantities	Allow	Allow
Save Extension	Allow	Allow
Swap Material	Allow	?
Update Bid Summary	Allow	Allow

Area: *Item Specs Edit Extension*

The following could be allowed for both Admin and Estimator Groups:

- Edit Bid Lbr
- Edit Book_Price
- Edit P_Adj_1
- Edit P_Adj_2
- Edit P_Adj_3

IMPORTANT NOTE: Allowing a user to modify formulas or change units in the edit extension report should be done with care. **Once the formula is overwritten it cannot be recovered in that report.** Yes—*re-extending will recover the formula*—but the work done in edit extension on that extension screen will be lost. A mistake in changing a unit, per each to per 100, etc., could cause a large mistake in the estimate. ✖

Next month: *Making modifications.*



Did You Know ... *The DATABASE MAINTENANCE has several elements. The APPLICATION database which drives the program, the SYSTEM database that supports the program, the PARTS database that contains all the parts and associated components such as menus, and the JOBS databases that have all the Takeoff quantities and reports.*



Did You Know ... *Users in “Job Information Users” can be moved anytime during the job by the Lead Estimator. If a User has no takeoff, they will return to Available Users. If the User has done takeoff and is removed, they will show up under Inactive Users on Job. This will “flag” you that there is takeoff in the job for that User.*

What We're Telling The Media Software Delivers Productive, Accurate Estimating



Electrical estimating systems that fit in your hand. CAD Estimating that's integral to system operation. And a new updated version that draws raves from long-time customers. That's what new from McCormick Systems this fall.

Service Call Billing

McCormick's time-and-material billing system, T-Bill, loads onto a handheld computer. Your service tech can prepare a service work order on-site, obtain the client's signature—and send it to your office, wirelessly...immediately! *This product took home the ShowStopper Award from Electrical Contractor magazine as one of the top new products at the 2001 NECA Show.*

CAD Estimating

The CAD Estimating interface from McCormick Systems is popular with contactors—it delivers accuracy, speed, and enhanced productivity. The estimator "tells" the software about each symbol on a digital drawing. The computer counts and lists any omitted symbols. Result—faster and more accurate counts and no omissions! *This product took home the 1999 ShowStopper Award.*

2003 update: *Now compatible with AutoCAD 2004, a new feature allows for counting of only a section of a building (or floor)—providing job costing assistance.*

Version 7.1

McCormick recently released Version 7.1 of its Windows software. It's a regular update, but contractors and estimates love it:

"It saves us a lot of time. Let's say you have a \$1 million bid, which might have 20 quotations. It probably saves you a half-hour per bid on a job like that," according to an Ohio contractor.

"Sometimes, minutes before you have to submit the bid, you see something that looks a little out-of-whack. If changes need to be made, we can make them by editing [quickly]. It lets us change prices on the fly," says an Idaho estimator/project manager. ✖

Privately owned McCormick Systems of Chandler, AZ, provides high-productivity software for contractors to use in producing consistent, profitable estimates for electrical and voice-data-video work. For more information, call 800-444-4890 or go to www.mccormicksys.com.

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
October 15-17
October 22-24
November 5-7

Advanced Estimating
Nov 12-14

Baltimore, MD

Standard Estimating
October 29-31
November 19-21
December 3-5

Advanced Estimating
Nov 17-18