



## McCormick Is An IEC 'Platinum Partner'!

### How Merit Electric Outpaces 'The Joneses' In Serving High-End Retail Customers

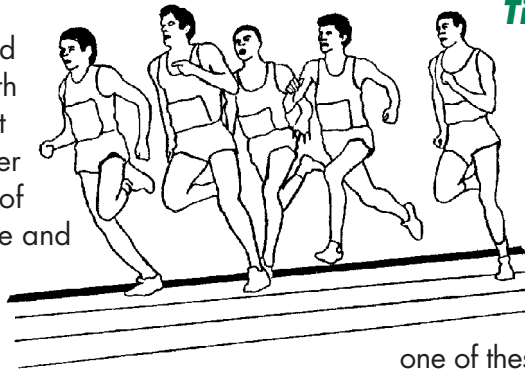
Merit Electric (Largo, Fla.) has roughly 180 field electricians and foremen at work these days—with only two estimators, three project managers, and a project engineer as its management support (two of the PMs are vice presidents Jamie and Tim Wooten).

How does Merit run so many field personnel with so few devoted to overhead?

"We're unique," says Jamie Wooten. Brothers Jamie, Tim, and Bud Wooten (the president) run the company. Merit works throughout Florida and, recently, obtained a license to work in Georgia.

"The forerunner of our company, Flournoy Electric, was founded in 1949 and just did residential work," Jamie Wooten says. "Our father, R.C. Wooten, was the second employee, and he ended up buying the business.

"How can we have so many in the field with so few estimators? For one thing, we only bid work that we think we have a pretty good shot at winning. We don't need a lot of estimators because we're not just throwing in a number on a lot of jobs." Merit usually restricts itself to retail stores, shopping centers, shopping malls, and high-end, high-rise condominiums.



#### Time Crunch

Certain retail chains limit the companies allowed to bid on their work. Merit is generally included on the "short list" of permitted bidders.

Why?

"We've adapted to the needs of the retailers," Jamie Wooten explains. "As recently as 10 years ago, building out

one of these retail locations could take as much as a year. Now, they expect to be up and operating in six months. Time is money.

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"It's fast-paced by the very nature of their business. Construction can't start until the first day of the retailer's lease. From that day until the day the store is open, the retailer is losing money.

"So on the one hand, a lot of our work is somewhat repetitive. On the other hand, it's always challenging. We have fantastic foremen, or we could not do what we do. The average tenure of the foremen in our company these days is between 10 and 15 years."

### Good Software Helps

The Wootens rely on McCormick Systems to get the work done quickly, Jamie Wooten notes. "In the middle of the 1980s, we were one of the first users of McCormick's software," he recalls, "and we took out someone else's system to do it.

"When we started investigating what was on the market, we were impressed with how the McCormick system was set up. It seemed to me back then that we, the user, had the ability to set it up however we wanted it. To tell you the truth, it's been many years now, and the system has been changed and updated—and it's on Windows, not DOS—but, to me, that's still the best thing about the software."

A variety of McCormick ideas are at work at Merit. One estimator is still using DOS, something Jamie Wooten thought (in an interview for this feature) would make his estimator seem like a dinosaur. "We have an senior estimator who is on the verge of retiring, and he's comfortable with DOS," he explains. "It hasn't seemed worthwhile to force him to use Windows.

"But every future estimator we hire will work with Windows only. If he's a dinosaur, he's the last one!"

The rest of the office uses the Win 8000 version of McCormick, which is networked. Merit has put a great deal of time and money into building custom databases for the special work niches where it stars. "For example, we do a good deal of work for Publix, a high-

end customer and a very good supermarket chain," Jamie Wooten says.

"Next to a hospital job, it's probably one of the most intense things you can wire. There are the cash registers, scales, the fire alarm system, energy management to run all of the coolers, the lighting, and, of course, the refrigeration itself."

### A Use for PC Scale

As a project manager, Jamie Wooten himself uses the pared-down PC Scale version of McCormick's software to compute change orders.

"Retail is an industry that changes very fast, and with the high-end retailers we work for, the very nature of the business is that they have to 'keep up with the Joneses.' On lighting, for example, there are changes all of the time.

"It seems to us," Jamie Wooten relates, "that there

are major layout changes on every one of our retail jobs. As a project manager, I can work quickly to make these changes using

**"I don't think the others can hold a candle to McCormick. It's still the Cadillac of the industry," says Jamie**

the PC Scale software."

### Within a short time, Merit Electric will become a 20-year user of McCormick Software.

It's obvious from this article that the company itself is anything but a dinosaur—moving faster and faster to keep ahead of the "joneses" in electrical contracting for retail customers.

*Why McCormick?* "That first reason, the reason we made the change many years ago, is still a biggie for me—the ability to do it the way we would like," Jamie Wooten answers. "And the McCormick people seem dedicated to staying with the state-of-the-art.

"A second reason would be the company's support. I've never had an issue with their support department, in all of these years. We were heavy users of support for a while, when we went to the networked set-up.

"From my perspective, I don't think the others can hold a candle to McCormick. It's still the Cadillac of the industry." ✕



**Did You Know ... You can SORT any column in the Jobs screen by clicking on the column heading. For example, Job Name will sort the jobs alphabetically, either A-Z or Z-A each time you click on it.**

# Construction Data At Mid-Year

Data released in August by the U.S. Commerce Department and McGraw-Hill Construction/Dodge paint a better picture of construction's present and future, compared with when we last presented this information (which included first-quarter numbers).

Construction "put in place" data from the government, commonly referenced as "construction spending," still showed an overall decline—but the private nonresidential sector showed a substantial decrease in the magnitude of its decline.

In looking at the actual spending numbers, keep in mind that most observers in much of the country assessed weather in this year's first half as a significant negative factor (as compared with 2002).

Looking ahead, the McGraw-Hill monthly tracking of new construction contracting had a major difference from the put-in-place numbers—public construction. Reduced tax revenues and budget deficits in many of the states have led to cutbacks in many types of public spending. So where public construction spending was actually ahead in this year's first half, new contracts were down significantly.

Yet, overall construction contracts through half of 2003 were down only 2% in dollar volume, according to McGraw-Hill. Why? At this point, residential construction is king—with 51.3% of actual spending through June 30 and 52.5% of the contract dollars awarded. ✖

## Construction Spending, First Half 2003

(millions of dollars, NOT adjusted for inflation)

Market Niche	6/2003 Total	% Total 6/03	6/2002 Total	% Change
Private Residential	\$210,721	51.3	\$194,344	8.4
All Other Private	\$104,864	25.5	\$114,884	- 8.7
Office	\$14,542	*13.8	\$18,038	- 19.4
Hotel/Motel	\$5,007	*4.8	\$5,583	-10.3
Commercial	\$26,512	*25.3	\$28,834	- 8.1
Manufacturing	\$6,618	*6.3	\$8,827	- 25.9
Public Construction	\$95,457	23.2	\$94,173	+ 1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$411,042</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>\$403,401</b>	<b>+ 1.9</b>

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce.

\*Note: Percentages for four building types are of "all other private," not total. Not all "all other private" segments are presented.

## Year-to-Date Construction Contract Value

(Unadjusted Totals, in millions)

Construction Type	6 Mos. 2003	6 Mos. 2002	%
<b>Change</b>			
Nonresidential Building	\$73,628	\$79,786	-8
Residential Building	132,672	123,425	+7
Nonbuilding Construction	46,452	55,808	-17
<b>Total Construction</b>	<b>252,752</b>	<b>259,019</b>	<b>-2</b>



**Did You Know ...** The **BID DATE** field in Job Information Details has a specific format. It has to have **MONTH/DAY/YEAR**, with the year as a four (4) digit number; i.e., 2002. Single digit month/day do not require zeroes.

# A Look at Tool Bar Buttons



Tool Bar buttons are one of the most powerful tools in your Estimating system. Users may have personalized takeoff setups.

- ✓ Located below the command pull down bar and above the Label Bar, the Tool Bar buttons are: (1) Jobs, (2) Labels, (3) Takeoff, (4) Extend, 5) BidSum. 3w Takeoff, Workspc, Hot Link, and Audit. These Tool Bar Buttons are furnished under user "Admin" in the standard McCormick Estimating system.
- ✓ Notice that the buttons numbered 1-5 are all you need to estimate a job. They are in the order of the actual estimating procedure and simplify the estimating process.
- ✓ Tool Bar buttons may be created as either a snapshot or a macro. All of the Tool Bar buttons listed above were created as a snapshot except the "Workspc" button, which is created as a macro. A snapshot is just like taking a picture of your screen setup and a macro is a list of computer commands.
- ✓ Users may have their own tool bar buttons or they may be copied from user to user by someone having Tool Bar Administration Security rights.

To set up a new Tool Bar button snapshot:

1. Right click on a blank Tool Bar button.
2. The "Define new toolbar button" screen will appear.
3. Replace the name "Button" with your new Tool Bar button name and click "OK."
4. Create the screen the way you want it (Takeoff windows, Audit Trail, etc.).
5. Right click on the new Tool Bar button.
6. Left click on snapshot, and your new Tool Bar button is set to bring up the saved screen whenever needed.
7. If you want to use the keyboard macros (highly recommended) right click on your new Tool Bar button, left click on "Keyboard," and double left click on the Keyboard Macro needed (usually "3 Window Takeoff").

To set up a Tool Bar button Macro:

- A. Right click on a Tool Bar button.
- B. Left click on "Macro."
- C. The "Please enter keyboard macro" screen will appear.
- D. Type the keyboard macro in the blank space and click "OK." The keyboard macro for the "Workspc" Tool Bar button is \*{F10}TW\*. {F10} is the macro command, "T" is for the Takeoff pull down, and "W" is for Workspace. ✖

Next month: Workspaces (also known as F-keys to former DOS users)

## 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  
September 17-19 and 24-26

#### Orlando, FL

Standard Estimating  
Pre-NECA Special, Sept. 29-30

#### Baltimore, MD

Standard Estimating  
**SCHEDULE FOR REST OF 2003**  
September 25-26 (two-day class)  
October 29-31  
November 19-21  
December 3-5