Conference News & Events Create Excitement, Estimating Gains

If expectations are a major element in business (and life), then exceeding them certainly is one key to success For the people of McCormick Systems and contractors and estimators in attendance at the company's 33rd annual User's Conference, there were surprises, above-expectation developments, and a great deal of gain via education.

Held April 29-May 2 in Tempe AZ, the event featured pre-conference educational events, the first hands-on preview of Version 12 of McCormick's software, information on enhancements to On-Screen Estimating Pro (OSE Pro) – and much more.

[**Note:** *While this written report can provide only the highlights, you'll find interspersed below several comments from those who attended the users conference. These are actual hand-written comments, not remembered hearsay.*]

Click to see our Award Winning Software:

Electrical

Plumbing & Mechanical

Transmission and Distribution

Automated Building Systems (ABS)

facebook

You Tube

Forward to a Friend

Training Dates

See all Education offerings – updated frequently – at the online Education page.

STANDARD CLASSES

July 8-10	(Maryland)
July 8-10	(Arizona)
August 5-7	(Arizona)
Sept. 16-18	(Arizona)
Sept. 16-18	(Maryland)
October 21-23	(Arizona)

ADVANCED CLASSES

July 23-24	(Arizona)
October 29-30	(Arizona)

ESTIMATING BY HAND CLASSES

Big Start, Big Finish

Education sessions were set for the Monday and Tuesday before the event's official Wednesday start. They also were the source of surprise for Todd McCormick and his company's people.

"We always have a standard and an advanced training class on the agenda – each year, as pre-conference events. This year we thought we'd add a one-day class for our users to help them learn more about how to use On Screen Estimating Pro.

"So we did. And we got a great response, so we added a second one-day section . . . and then it turned out we needed another," McCormick noted.

Adding the Standard, Advanced, and the three OSE Pro classes, there were more than 50 people in Tempe for pre-conference education before the event officially began. This is a company record.

On the back end, the User's Conference typically features a Saturday "lab" session. The "lab" consists of computers set up on-site (in a hotel ballroom) for contractors and estimators to "try out" things they've learned during the sessions. Those with questions are able to ask a McCormick staff to sit in and provide assistance.

Each year, there are no Saturday meetings or conference events. Customers can come in early on Saturday to work in the "lab," and leave when they wish (some waiting until it's time to head for the airport).

"We had more than 30 computers, which is a record for us, in the on-site lab," explained Loriel McCormick. "We needed them for all of the pre-conference education, and we kept them there.

"I guess we thought many of them might not be busy on Saturday. That was wrong! The place was buzzing that day."

No records are kept on Saturday lab use, but it appears this, too, was significantly above what's occurred in previous years.

"THIS WAS THE BEST CONFERENCE I'VE ATTENDED SO FAR, BECAUSE OF THE CONTENT. OSE PRO AND VERSION 12 EXTENSION WERE BOTH A MUST FOR ME —TO REALLY GRASP THE ENHANCEMENTS."

Dramatic surprise for attendees

Rumors can help set expectations, as everyone knows . . . even if we all know that rumors generally are totally worthless. Specifically, there had been whispers abroad in the industry that there was to be a change in company ownership . . . in plain English, "word" in the construction business was that McCormick Systems was up for sale, and sooner or later someone would bite.

These, it turned out, were true . . . but . . .

At the start of Thursday morning's first session, the rumor-driven fears of some attendees were confirmed. As the first official morning session began, it was announced that User's Conference attendees would now meet the company's new owners.

Jaws dropped; faces of some attendees froze. *So those rumors were true!* OK, let's get the bad news out of the way . . .

Who were these new owners? Attendees were introduced to Todd & Loriel McCormick. The piece of the company they did not already own had been sold to them, the attendees learned, by founder Jack McCormick (Todd's father). Todd and Loriel are now the sole owners of the company. They have actually been running the company for the past 10 years. User's can anticipate more great changes to the program coming down the pike.

"Everyone seemed a bit relieved," Todd remembered. "And the fact is, Loriel and I plan to keep this company an independent, thriving enterprise."

Version 12 Enhancements
Create A New Ballgame

Essentially, the McCormick Systems team has been working on this new version of the standard estimating software to make a key component – Extension – easier to use and (of course) faster. While the company internally thought it had "knocked it out of the park," the reaction from users was that the new capabilities exceeded what they thought they'd find when they came to Arizona

In the words of one attendee (written by hand on an end-of-conference evaluation form) – "Version 12 is going to be a game-changer!" These accurately reflect the feelings of many user's conference attendees.

What's new? Many things. But the prime creator of excitement is the fact that once a specific job estimate has been completed, making a change to the base effort (for a change order, let's say, or to add an alternate) will be made in seconds, not minutes.

"In our existing software, to add a change order to the estimate, an estimator has to go through all of the same steps he or she did in Edit Extension," explained Todd McCormick. "Let's say, for the sake of discussion, that the effort can take as many as 1 or 2 minutes.

"With Version 12, that's something you can do in seconds."

Some of the V12 changes

Essentially, V12 is a destination towards which McCormick's programmers have been heading for a long time. Many of the upgrades and enhancements in the software were suggested by estimators and contractors at previous User's Conferences.

Included among these changes (there are more, but here's a short list) are:

- An estimator can change reports on the fly. Time/effort eliminated!
- Labels (all of them) can be accessed from Extension
- Print Preview is fully customizable.
- The estimator can access assemblies and unit prices – instantly.

There is a lot more; the session introducing the new version to users in attendance took roughly two hours. "Playing" with capabilities of the new V12's Extension and Labels was a major focus of attendees working in the on-site "lab" (with many of them working with McCormick staffers alongside).

Version 12 is coming to your computer in the next few months. Estimators and contractors who were not at the User's Conference will want to sit down and "play with it"– the dramatic gains in estimating productivity are not promises, but sure things.

"What the Conference session enabled us to do," said Todd McCormick, "was to explain not only the 'here's how you use' these new V12 enhancements, but the 'why' behind our addition of each new capability.

"Of course the estimators and contractors want to use these new capabilities. But we were able to tell them why each item was added – what estimators told us they needed, why we made the change, how it fits in with the system's overall functioning."

On Screen Estimating Pro Upgrade
Raises The Roof

On-Screen Estimating Pro is one McCormick Systems product that has probably created the most appreciation by estimators and contractors in the past 25 years. Users reference the speed of estimating on-screen, the ease with which this addition to their systems handles all kinds of incoming electronic drawings, and the almost-intuitive nature of its workings.

Can a reader believe all of that? Evidence of the excitement and expectations already created by OSE Pro can be seen in the response to the one-day pre-conference classes (noted above).

At the User's Conference itself, attendees learned that there was still more. An upgrade to the relatively new product further raises expectations. Included among these changes:

1. OSE Pro now has an auto-count feature.
2. Estimators can now customize controls for the mouse and the keyboard.
3. There are now numerous user options in the Legend.
4. Select a given product/part and replace it throughout with a few keystrokes.

There's more here, too. Upon learning all about it, one user's conference attendee wrote: OSE Pro is a huge improvement that increases estimating and provides field specific drawings."

Coming soon: A McCormick announcement of OSE Pro classes, enabling those who are new to the software to learn more about it – and providing a chance for contractors and estimators who already have used the software to upgrade their use of it (to learn about the new capabilities).

mark your calendar:

2016 Conference Begins in

Fewer Than 9 Months

Dates for the 2016 Users Conference are now set. Responding to the expressed feelings of many contractors and estimators – that earlier would be better than later – the event is set for March 9-12, 2016, in Chandler AZ.

"THE CONFERENCE WAS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO NETWORK, DISCUSS JOB TRENDS, LEARN NEW TRICKS, ENJOY GOLF — AND EAT GOOD FOOD — WHILE STEPPING UP MY ESTIMATING GAME (WHICH IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL!)."

Golf Winners

McCormick's Users Conference officially started with a Wednesday night reception. For those who wished to arrive earlier, there was the annual "McCormick Masters" golf tournament, which began Wednesday morning.

Notable achievers included:

Brooks Innes – closest to the pin.

Carl Roose – longest putt

David Bowlin – longest drive

Charles Wilson – lowest gross score

Ben Dolan – highest gross score.

"WE ALWAYS LEARN SOMETHING NEW AT THE CONFERENCE. I LIKE THE FACT THAT WE CAN TALK SHOP WITH LIKE-MINDED GUYS — WHO ARE NOT OUR COMPETITORS."

'Desert Dogs' Honorees Include 6 Additions

Recognition of Users Conference attendees who have come to Arizona for more than three such events is noted – in a long-standing company tradition – by naming and honoring these "Desert Dogs." Here's the 2015 class:

30 years – Erle Howard

24 years – Jack Beatson; David DeFelice

19 years – Louis Lee

17 years – Steve Arnold

16 years – Mark Jackson

13 years – Matt Firestone; Brian Warnemunde

12 years – Jodi DeGraffenreid, Dan Alexander

11 years – Gary Charlesworth

10 years – Mike Kilian

9 years – Jeff Ihler; Bret Smith

8 years – Roy Meinhardt; Kent Nunamaker; Nick Page; George Silbersdorf; David Walsh, Sr.

7 years – Gordon Tinnin

6 years – Tom Coble; Lael Fulford; Gary Gladson

5 years – Jacob Cabaug; Mitch DeBlois; Brooks Innes; Don Rawlins; Carl Roose; Tim Vaughan

4 years – John Amicucci; Brian Jacoway; Walter Lambert; Rick Lowe; Scott Shafer; Michael Wallis

"WHY I USE McCORMICK: TODD PERSONALLY PRESENTED THE COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF EXTENSION AND THE PREVIEW AND EDIT EXTENSION BUTTONS GOING AWAY. HE PERSONALLY EXPLAINED THE ADVANTAGES - AS IF WE WERE ALL FAMILY!"

We Come To You, You Come To Us
-- Where To Find McCormick in '15

Of course, you can always find us in our hometown of Chandler AZ. We have regular training classes – Standard, Advanced, Estimating-By-Hand, and Plumbing & Mechanical. See the Education page of our website for the latest info on training course offerings and dates – in Chandler and in Maryland as well!

Here are the cities, dates, and show titles in our plans:

Las Vegas NV, Sept. 20-24 – BICSI Fall Conference
San Francisco, Oct. 4-6 – for the NECA Show.
Tampa FL, Oct. 21-24 – for the IECI Electric Expo