

Valuing New Ideas

With A Great History, Stansell Looks to Future

Stansell Electric (Nashville, Tenn.) is an old-line electrical contractor that welcomes, embraces, and implements new ideas.

Go to the company's Web site (www.stansellelectric.com), and you'll find a place to click through to live traffic feeds, from cameras installed by its Traffic Control Division. That division also does design/build traffic work. There's also an Electrical Division and a Data/Comm division.

Think back to 1994: That's when this company purposefully created its Data/Comm division. Data/Comm sales now top \$1.5 million, and Stansell has become an Avaya contractor. Avaya is a line that's not all that easy to pick up.

But Stansell Electric hasn't thrown out the baby with the bathwater. In fact, the 62-year-old company counts among its regular staff Jimmy Stansell Sr., the company founder...now 91 years old! Known as "Jake," he's in the office at least four days a week, and he was enshrined long ago in The Academy of Electrical Contracting.

On a given day, you might also find four other family members (see picture and caption) in the office. These include Jimmy Stansell Jr., who runs the place.

"We've found McCormick's software to be very useful, although my father seems to think that all we do is spend money on computers!," he jokes. "We use the software to set up assemblies and unit prices and modify them for each job's condition. In fact, my son Jake has developed a spreadsheet for Department of Transportation (DOT) work.

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Stansell Electric has five family members on its staff. Top row, from left: Jake and David. Bottom row: Company founder Jake; his daughter, Melissa; and his son, Jimmy Stansell Jr., president. At the office most days, 91-year-old Jake founded the company in 1940; his son has worked there for 36 years.

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"We download the McCormick material and labor numbers into a unit price spreadsheet and give that to the DOT."

Cutting Edge, With History

Company founder Jake has been with the company for 62 years; his son Jimmy for 36 years; and Floyd Dunnivant, vice president of estimating, for 25 years. Annual sales are approaching \$12 million. Perhaps in similar situations other companies get set in their ways . . . comfortable.

That's not the case with Stansell Electric. They work to stay "on the cutting edge." According to Jimmy Stansell, the company recently went through a strategic planning process that involves setting future goals. "Our plan is to grow 15 percent a year," he explains. "That means we would double our volume in about five years. Right now, we're trying to get the infrastructure in place to do that."

Dunnivant is excited about McCormick's new Version 7.0 system, which fits into the company's vision of becoming a fast-moving entity. "We want that in here as fast as we can get it," he said. "I liked the features I saw at the User's Conference.

"I really like the scheduling component. And the new ability to do online editing of extensions is going to make a dramatic difference. These features are exactly what we need."

Scheduling Fits

Dunnivant learned about the scheduling component of McCormick's software at the April 2002 conference. It solved a problem for him.

"You've got to have scheduling," he explains. "It's as important as the cost. You've got to be able to know when you can do it, and how you can do it, in a fast-track schedule.

"When we complete an estimate, the first things I look at now are 'How many hours are we talking about?' and 'Do we have the manpower available to do it?' These days, we're asked to do a lot of things

in a hurry. You've got to have the information ready to be able to respond intelligently.

"Right now, we're evaluating Microsoft Project. It might fit when we do more complex individual job scheduling. But the McCormick scheduling feature provides the breakdown and detail that we'll need to schedule most of our projects."

Data/Comm

"We use McCormick almost daily in preparing our bids and change orders. Until the voice/data/video database was released, we had a hodgepodge of data/comm items and assemblies that we used—but organization of the information within the database did not allow us to use it effectively."

That's the word from Bobby Brumit, RCDD-project manager for Stansell Electric Co., Inc.'s Data/Comm Division. McCormick's software is used for all three of the company's divisions.

"While attending the 2001 User's Conference, I got an opportunity to experiment with the database and the menu buttons that led me to the well-organized communications items and assemblies. It provided a nice starting point that we have since tweaked and molded to better fit our day-to-day needs. It allows me to bid projects in less time with an accurate bill of material that our installation teams can then use to gather the necessary materials.

"I came to Stansell from a communications-only contractor that is still using spreadsheets and pen/paper to prepare large estimates," Brumit notes, "so I would have to say that my efficiency and accuracy as an estimator has vastly improved. When I complete an estimate that was prepared with McCormick, I feel confident that it is the best possible number that our company can give.

"That brings peace of mind that we have done the best we could to win the job."

A History with McCormick

Stansell Electric has used McCormick software almost from the first days of electronic estimating.

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Did You Know... The DATABASE MAINTENANCE should be used to BACKUP the entire program on a regular basis, at least once a week. If using on a network, both the WORKSTATION and the SERVER should be backed up.

What We're Telling The Media

East Coast Training Sessions Score for McCormick



Based in Arizona, McCormick Systems has—for its entire 23-year history—held training classes at its headquarters. Electrical contractor customers can also request “custom” on-site training be brought to their locations.

But 2002 has brought a new option: East Coast training. Working with veteran trainer Erle Howard, the company has made available training sessions in the Baltimore, MD, area—and is getting a great response! Erle has been working with the company's software for 18 years.

“Our first few classes have filled up quickly,” said President Todd McCormick. “We’re lucky to have access to Erle—and so are our customers!”

Training is vital to getting the most out of electrical estimating software. McCormick's focus is on making electrical estimators more productive. There are two classes—one “basic” and one “advanced.” The first bring new users up to speed quickly; the second helps those with some experience to greatly improve their use of all system components. ✕

Privately owned McCormick Systems (www.mccormicksys.com), 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.

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“We’ve invested a lot of money in it over the years,” Dunnavant claims. “I went to a User’s Conference early on, and became convinced that this was the most flexible system.”

The company now has a multi-user Win 8000 system in place, and growth may well push it in the future beyond the existing four “keys.” A helpful feature for Stansell has been the ability to “block-transfer” items from an existing database into a newer database. “We’ve created a lot of custom items here,” Dunnavant says. “Now, I can block-transfer them—it’s extremely handy. It will save us a tremendous amount of time.”

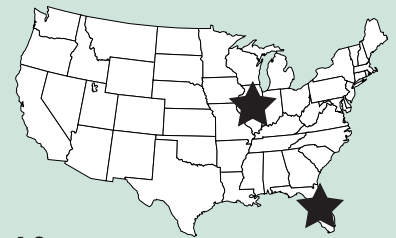
But the really big deal for estimating chief Dunnavant is the new ability (in Version 7.0) to perform online editing of extensions.

“This is exactly what you need to do, in studying your extensions,” he says. “With this new version, you can pull up your extensions, examine them, and start tweaking them. And it keeps track of what you change, with different colors.

“I was excited to see that. All of the features in the McCormick software now seem to have been put in there to minimize the amount of time it takes for you to get where you actually need to be to win a job.” ✕

Where to Find Us in Tampa & Chicago

You’ll be able to find McCormick Systems in Tampa, FL, in September, and in Chicago in October.



On Sept. 12 and 13, we’ll be exhibiting at the Independent Electrical Contractors’ annual Convention & Electric Expo. We’ll be in Booth #126 at the Tampa Convention Center. Show hours are 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Thurs., Sept. 12, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fri., Sept. 13.

From Oct. 6 through 8, we’ll occupy Booth #709 at The NECA Show. The convention will be held at McCormick place—11:30 to 5 on Sun., Oct. 6, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Mon., Oct. 7, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tues., Oct. 8. ✕

Jobs & Labels



Jobs

Jobs may be created and tracked within the jobs list. When a new job is created, it is given a number by the computer. That number stays with that job until the job is deleted.

Jobs may be stored in the jobs list or archived in a backup file. When your jobs list becomes cumbersome, back it up in an archive file or delete the jobs. Note: If you have plans to modify the database, backup the total system, along with the jobs, so it can be restored at a later date.

When should you delete a job? When that job file is of no further use. If there is a possibility that a job may proceed in the future, either save it in the jobs list or archive it.

If job items or assemblies have been created that may be of further use, either retain the job in the job list, archive the job, or have the system administrator copy the items and create the assemblies in the permanent database.

Defining Labels

Users are faced with Labels three times during the estimate.

1. When creating the Labels using the either the "(2) Labels" tool bar button or the Labels pull-down.
2. When using the Label Bar to select Labels during the take off (counting) part of the estimate.
3. When selecting Labels to extend by, the first column (column 1) should be reserved for the Bid Package. This is where the Base Bid, the Additive and Deductive Alternates, and the Additive and Deductive Change Orders should be put.

Labels Used In Bidding

For the Base Bid, the Base Bid and all the Deductive alternates would be checked in column 1.

Everything in columns 2-5 would also be checked for the Base Bid extension. Then the Additive and Deductive Alternates should be extended separately. After you are awarded the job, check the Base Bid, all the accepted Additive Alternates, the Deductive Alternates that were not accepted, and everything in columns 2-5 to obtain a total job price.

Next month: "Using Labels for Job Costing."

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. ✕

August 14-16

Standard Estimating

August 21-23

Standard Estimating

September 18-20

Standard Estimating

September 19-20 - **Baltimore**

Standard Estimating

October 3-4

Standard Estimating

(before NECA Show in **Chicago**)

October 23-25

Standard Estimating