



A 56-Year-Old Company Goes from DOS to Windows

Colombo Electric (Herrin, IL) is one of those companies with which you want to do business. Almost everyone who works at the place, including the 15 people the company has in the field, has been with the company for at least 10 years. There are secretaries who have been with the company for more than 20!

Frank Colombo, the owner, runs a business started in 1945 by his father, Tommy. The company does mostly commercial and industrial work, although it has helped build schools and hospitals as well. There's a fair amount of service work from existing customers.

Obviously, Frank Colombo's philosophy is to find good people—and keep them forever! That's why, when it comes to estimating, you'll find Tommy Johnson at work; he's been with the company for 20 years, and he handles all of the computer estimating.

Interestingly, Johnson and his boss have progressed up the ladder of McCormick Systems' estimating software products. Starting out with PC Scale more than 10 years ago, the company gradually upgraded over time—to the 3000 program (in DOS), and in 1997 to the Windows 3000 program. Now, the company uses the Windows 6000. The company also added the T-Bill program (in DOS), which it started using in 1998.

You might say, then, that thanks to all of this, Colombo Electric is the kind of place that offers stability, experience, and perspective. That's what we at McCormick thought—which is why, in the summer of 2001, we asked Frank Colombo and Tommy Johnson to beta-test our Windows T-Bill program.

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Tommy Johnson of Colombo Electric, says one of the main reasons he bought the 6000 was that it is possible to have many estimating windows open on the screen at the same time. After he bought a 21-inch monitor, he could open even more windows!

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Conversion to Windows Systems

Now that Tommy Johnson has twice converted from DOS to Windows, including the beta testing experience, he's pretty much an expert on comparing the two systems. Here's what he says about that:

"What I have found is that Windows gives me a lot more versatility in estimating. I'm not going to say that Windows is a quicker process to use, time-wise—and, in fact, it might take even a little bit longer than DOS. But it's worth it.

"There's a lot more you can do with the Windows systems than we could not do in DOS. I'm talking about entering information and getting information out of the programs. It's much easier to change a job around in the Windows estimating. And you can have a lot more information and detail in them.

"For instance, one key thing I've been able to do in Windows that I could not do in DOS is work with assemblies. I'm able to put those together a lot easier and quicker. In fact, to tell you the truth, when we had the DOS version, it wasn't really possible—I didn't even attempt it."

Johnson has become an avid fan of the possibilities in Windows. In fact, it was realization of what could be done that prompted him to suggest to Colombo that the company convert from the 3000 system to the 6000—and also to obtain a 21-inch monitor.

"Basically, 3000 and 6000 are about the same, except that the Windows 6000 has a bigger database," Johnson says. "Frankly, the main reason we switched was the capability, in the 6000, to have as many estimating windows open on the screen as you'd like. That's why we bought the 21-inch monitor, too.

"Sometimes, I will have 11 take-off windows open on my monitor (see photo on page 1). The nice thing is that, if I'm in a lighting or power take-off, or a fire-alarm or HVAC, I can bring all of this stuff on the screen. You don't have to go searching in the database."

Beta-Testing T-Bill

From one perspective, it was Tommy Johnson's "job" as a beta-tester to use the T-Bill program this past summer—and find all of the bugs and problems

before McCormick Systems rolled it out to the market. And that's what he did.

Of course, there are problems in any brand-new, never-before-used software. Johnson found them! Did he ever feel like throwing up his hands and going back to the DOS version of T-Bill?

"I never did, because I felt confident in working with McCormick, that whatever the problems were, they would be resolved," Johnson says.

"At this point, they have. I like the Windows T-Bill because, in the DOS-based version, I couldn't correctly mark up my labor cost to what we normally charge on labor. Normally, Frank tries to round the numbers up or down. But, if you put a percentage on the labor—whatever it might be—you usually do not come up with a round, ordinary number that customers might understand.

"Now, in Windows, I can go in and use separate mark-ups for labor and materials. I can actually show my cost and my charge-out rate for labor now. Plus, the Windows system makes it easier to separate out material and labor, and even the tax stuff. For the secretary, this has made her job a little easier.

"And there's a nice little plus in Windows for T-Bill—the customer database is always on the left-hand side of the screen. Once I'm done with an invoice, I can find the customer, click on the name, and either review an existing invoice or start a new one."

Support Expectations Met

Says Tommy Johnson: "As we've gradually upgraded our estimating systems over the years, I've done most of my learning over the phone with the McCormick people. We have had really great support from them.

"If I've had any problems, they have been really responsive to me. They actually listen to me! If I call someone there, and have a specific question or problem, the person I called gets back to me personally—I don't get shoved off to someone else.

"That's the nice thing about McCormick, what I like—you get a one-on-one. It's more like a family-type situation...something like what I have here at work every day. And, for me, it seems that they've been very receptive to the contractor, which is what we need to have in these programs." X

Did You Know... You can save time by clicking the X in the upper-right-hand corner of the program to automatically log out of the job and out of the program.

Get Windows Training in 2002

Standard Estimating

This class has been expanded to twice a month (from once). Structured to take you from "Job Startup" clear through " Bid Summary," the class is held over a three-day period. In-depth instruction is provided to bring a person with good manual experience up on line, as well as to provide "brush-up" exposure for those that are using the product but would like to get more out of it.

Advanced Management

Designed for the database manager or chief estimator, this three-day class drills down into the bottom of the program. You will learn how to build specification formulas, write reports and reports formulas, perform keyboard mapping, set up security, and more. Before taking the class, you should be proficient in all takeoff phases of the McCormick product and have an understanding as to what your company requires at this level.

Upcoming Schedule

Unless specified, all classes are at the training center in our office in Chandler, AZ. Classes start at 8 a.m. and wind up about 5 p.m. daily,

for a full three days of training. 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. ✕

Jan. 9-11

Standard Estimating

Jan. 16-18

Advanced Management

Jan. 23-25

Standard Estimating

Feb. 6-8

Standard Estimating

Feb. 20-22

Standard Estimating

March 6-8

Standard Estimating

April 8-9 (Tempe, AZ)

Pre-User's Conference

Standard Estimating

Advanced Management

You'll Profit from a Visit to Arizona for Our User's Conference

April 10-13 are the dates for McCormick Systems' annual User's Conference. Perhaps you've never been to one of these. What will you get out of it?

One prime benefit that a lot of our regulars tell us about is the ability to listen to and learn from other contractors (and key contractors' employees) who use McCormick's software. You might have a problem—even a problem that's not estimating software-related—that someone else in attendance has already confronted...and solved.

Of course, our people will be at the conference to help you with your questions, problems, and concerns, and to listen to your ideas. But the in-person, "peer-to-peer" sharing that takes place during our conference (both during official sessions and outside of them) is certainly a major element that brings successful contractors back, year after year.

To register for the conference, which will be held in Tempe, AZ, contact Loriel McCormick via phone at 800-444-4890 or via e-mail at lmccormick@mccormicksys.com. ✕



A Year-End Word From Todd McCormick



As you know, we went to monthly publication of this newsletter in April. It's mailed to owners, managers, and employees of companies that use McCormick Systems software. Non-users ("prospects" for our software) do not receive this publication. That's why I am taking this chance to say Thank You for your business.

Our company's operating philosophy has not changed: We're not a "sales-driven" organization. We're not here to sell software...and disappear. We're going to be here after

the sale—to help you make sure that our systems are helping you make additional profit.

As I look back at 2001, I'm happy with the new products we've managed to roll-out—including our 7.0 update, the T-bill work order for handhelds, and the WIN 12000. We've got even more exciting stuff in development for next year. On the other hand, given the attack on our country and all that resulted from it, I will personally be happy to put the year 2001 behind me.

Finally, I want to make sure you feel comfortable contacting me, or any of us here at McCormick, should you have a question, a problem, an idea...even if you hear a crazy rumor about our company that doesn't make sense. We're available! Call us at 800-444-4890 anytime. You can e-mail me directly at tmccormick@mccormicksys.com.

Thanks again for your business. I look forward to an even better year in 2002, for your company, our company, and our country.

—Todd McCormick

NOTE: Our offices will be closed all day for the holidays on December 24, 25, 31 and January 1.



McCormick Systems joins all of our fellow citizens of the United States in our determination to continue business as usual after the attack on our country.

We're proud that our software is 100% Made In The U.S.A.!

Our BICSI Debut in Jan.

We're looking forward to our first trade show of 2002 as a learning experience—McCormick Systems' first-ever appearance at a BICSI show, Jan. 20-24 in Orlando.

While we've previously exhibited at the VDV Expo (both years), those events were primarily attended by electrical contractors who were already in, or looking to get into, the VDV market. The



BICSI organization's members include datacom-only contractors. We're excited to meet these possible new customers (for our estimating systems and VDV database) and learn more about them in person.

If you're not familiar with BICSI (www.bicsi.org), it has changed over the years from an organization devoted to telephone industry consultants to a worldwide, 20,000-member telecommunications association. Its "winter" conference—one of three held during the year—is always held in Orlando, not far from BICSI's Tampa HQ. According to what we've heard, it's usually the biggest BICSI event.

We hope to see you there. ✕