



Estimating Universe Expands For User's Conference Attendees

McCormick Newsletter

Construction / Technology Links

[Animated video on BIM](#) – from *Engineering News-Record*

[Counterfeiting Webinar](#) – from *Electrical Contractor* & *TED* magazines

[Green Video](#) – Ed Mazria of *Architecture2030.com* & John Podesta of the Obama Transition Team.

[New Electric TV edition](#) – smart grid, building automation, T5HO lighting, blended learning [from NECA-IBEW]

[OLED-based interactive lighting concepts](#) (OLED = organic LED)

Lighting

[Age-friendly lighting](#) – from *Electrical Contractor*

[Daylighting & building environmental impacts](#)

New lighting fixture – from *National Geographic!*

[Negative piece on HPS lighting](#) – from *The New Yorker*

[Photoluminescent egress lighting](#)

Electrical

[Adopting Power over Ethernet](#)

[Common Installation Deficiencies](#) – a list from a provincial government (Canada).

[E-Verify mandate put on hold](#)

[Investors pay more for energy-efficient buildings](#)

[Wind vs. Coal](#)

Training Dates



Upcoming Standard Training Classes in ARIZONA are set for June 10-12, June 24-26.

The next Standard class set for



Main Conference Session

With hotel rooms reserved for the McCormick User's conference sold out, attendees last month got a preview of V9.1 and V9.2, look in detail at on-screen estimating, and heard from key vendors and an estimating expert.

More-automated estimating was a key conference highlight. In addition to offering its CAD Estimating product, McCormick last year became a VAR for On-Screen Takeoff. Now, McCormick users have a wide range of options:

- IF the contractor can obtain a project's CAD information electronically, or scan in paper drawings to produce CAD documents, CAD estimating is the way to go.
- IF the contractor instead can only obtain drawings in PDF (or some other standard computer format like a GIF or JPG), On-Screen Takeoff is the way to go.

"Many of our customers have armed themselves with both of these options," said President Todd McCormick. "We had several who own the CAD program buy On-Screen Takeoff during the conference."

Attendees demonstrated enthusiasm for the program for several reasons. Why? First, it last fall won a "ShowStopper" award as one of the best new products at The NECA Show; so it was on the agenda for many attendees before they came to Arizona.

Second, contractors are routinely getting project information in PDF format these days. The concept of doing estimating on-screen and having the information translate seamlessly into the estimating program already in use at their companies was most appealing to attendees.

Additionally, each of 20 computers in the on-site Computer Lab at the conference was equipped with the program. For the conference's two full days, the Lab was in full operation (most or all of the computers in use) 100% of the time. And attendees spent much of that time giving On-Screen Takeoff a full try-out.

While McCormick Systems provided some sample PDFs of actual project drawings, many attending contractors and estimators went one step further. Having brought their laptops, they got their home offices to e-mail to them an actual project PDF on which they had been working.

Columbia, MD will be held June 10-12. The next **Advanced** class in MD will be held Aug. 12-14.

We've added **2009 training dates** [training dates](#)

Training can be "suit-cased" to your facility. We can tailor our training to your needs. Ask us about customized training at your site!

Call to register for any of the above classes, including those in Maryland: 1-800-444-4890.

We've posted training dates, directions to our training facilities, and registration forms on our Web page. Click the "Education" button on our home page, or go directly to this link: [Education](#)

So On-Screen Takeoff got a full-bore hands-on test – and passed with flying colors!

Versions 9.0, 9.1 & 9.2

Version 9.0 is the in-use "standard" for McCormick customers these days (which means, that's the version you should already have running on your computer). While it's been around for a while, capabilities already provided were reviewed. Many contractors and estimators admitted they did not know all that they had on their systems, and expressed gratitude for the review.

But electrical construction doesn't stand still. V9.1 was discussed; it's coming soon. It offers the same McCormick estimating capabilities in a 64-bit edition. Attendees got to hear a comparison of 32-bit and 64-bit operating systems, and what the faster V9.1 will be able to do for them.

[Note: McCormick is looking for additional beta testers for V9.1 Interested? Call us at 800-444-4890 and ask for Todd.]

V.9.2 was also discussed in prospect. Software developers are working on it, adding a number of enhancements to the program. A main gain will be how easy working with Trade Service's Supplier Exchange and Tra-Ser SX offerings will be.

Other Highlights

Also included in the information transmitted by McCormick speakers at the event:

- A 35-minute session on support (tips and frequently asked questions).
- A review of the varying security levels embedded in the software system. Many contractors aren't aware of how security can be customized (relatively easily).
- How to use the software to improve project management (using the embedded scheduling, proposals, and graphics modules, among other things).
- A session on "Hardware & Technology Trends." McCormick doesn't sell any of this, but as we are "your right arm" on computer stuff, we offer our perspective. This year's session included a great deal of discussion on monitors, a spin-off (we think) of the popularity at this event of On-Screen Takeoff.
- Of course, our "What's Next" session. It extended 90 minutes, consisting of some of what we're planning. But most of it was about ideas from attendees. We introduced the ideas, one at a time, and opened the floor for discussion.
- Social events were included, of course; notes on the golf tournament can be found below. We honored our "Desert Dogs" (also found below). And we took attendees to a Friday night Arizona Diamondbacks' baseball game; it drew the best attendance for a post-conference dinner that we've ever had!

Also of note: For the first time ever, McCormick honored an attendee for "Furthest Distance Traveled to Attend a McCormick Systems User's Conference." It went to Dan Short of Hanscomb Consultants.

We may have to retire the award (or perhaps the entity that tops him will come from another planet). Hanscomb works in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Total travel distance: 8,300 miles!



You can hide all windows, revealing only what's on the computer desktop, with one keystroke: hit the Windows key and "D" simultaneously in Windows,

That's great when you want examine or delete something you've just downloaded to the desktop, for example.

Press the keystroke again to return to what you were doing.

[Visit the McCormick Website](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)



Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Guest Presentations

Speaking of Trade Service, the company was one of several providing a guest presentation during the conference. John Henry of TS offered a view of the direction in which the company is going; most attendees were impressed. Additionally, Sal Huerta of Electric Smarts offered information on Net Pricer and on the ElectricSmarts.com. And Jeff Burmeister of Autodesk Subcontractor reviewed how that software offering can help with project management documentation.

All those presenters were returnees, having made their McCormick UC debut in 2008.

Stan Shook was a first-timer in more ways than one. Not only had he not presented to a McCormick Systems User's Conference, he'd never previously attended. In addition to running a company (TakeOff16) that allows contractors to "outsource" electrical estimating work, Shook writes the estimating column in Electrical Contractor magazine (the column that appears opposite each issue's McCormick Systems advertisement).

Some notes on Shook:

1. He made two presentations at the conference, not on his company's services, but on some of the basic challenges that face every electrical contractor: One on how to review an estimate, the other on how to set up an estimating department. Feedback from attendees told us that his presentations provided a great deal of food for thought.
2. While Shook's company uses McCormick's program to do those outsourced estimates, this was his first-ever User's Conference. He told us he was most amazed by the fact that Todd McCormick appeared on-stage and asked the assembled contractors for input on how the program should be improved from here.
3. Finally, Shook has a blog, and he uploaded two posts on his user's conference experiences:

4/23 – A post on the [conference's first day](#)

4/28 – an after-the-conference [overview](#).

Other Comments

Not everyone has a blog. As we do each year, we asked attendees for feedback on the event. Here are some of the written comments:

"After [attending] seven conferences, I still find tremendous value in attending. It makes you feel like you are a part of where McCormick is going." – *Matt Firestone, Commonwealth Electric Co. of the Midwest.*

"It's a great opportunity to network. I always learn from others, as well as [about] the existing

tools in McCormick that can be more effectively utilized.” – *Jodi DeGraffenreid, Shelley Electric.*

“I really enjoyed this conference. This was my first one. The value of the conference is not realized until you come to one.” – *Clark Tyler, TG Electric LLC.*

“After skipping last year’s conference, I learned that I missed changes. I realized that attending every year is helpful in staying up-to-date on the systems programs and options.” – *Jeff Ihler, Tri-Nar Inc.*

“It was wonderful to meet the McCormick staff. I realized that McCormick is why I am successful.” – *Rod Wohl, Younger-Holmes Electrical Contractors.*

Golf Tournament Winners



McCormick Systems User’s Conference is an intense two-day event (Thursday and Friday are full days of sessions). Beforehand, we had training classes. But before we get started, we host the McCormick Master’s Golf Tournament (on Wednesday). This year’s notables:

Closest to the pin: **Daryl Kinslow**

Longest putt: **Dave Peterson**

Longest drive: **Heath Headley**

Lowest gross score: **Rod Wohl**

Highest gross score: **Seth Peterson**

McCormick Honors The ‘Desert Dogs’



Founder Jack McCormick (who missed this year's conference himself due to a case of strep throat) invented the term "Desert Dogs" for those who are regular attendees of the McCormick User's Conference.

Here are those we honored in 2009 as Desert Dogs. Per Jack's initial creation, it takes four years of UC attendance to make the list:

Erle Howard (**24 years!**)

Jack Beatson (**21 years**)

David DeFelice (**20 years**)

Louise Lee (**13 years**)

10 years: Mark Jackson, Skip Stewart, Rod Wohl

9 years: George Kreykes, Tim Meiners.

8 years: Benjamin Ward

7 years: Matt Firestone, Randy Ward, Brian Warnemunde.

6 years: Rodney Brase, Albert Brown, Jodi DeGraffenreid, David Walsh, Sr.

5 years: Barney Cabuag, Jeff Ihler, Jay Linden, Dave Peterson, Seth Peterson, George Silbersdorff, Craig Welburn.

4 years (*new Desert Dogs!*): Mike Cabuag, Mike Kilian, Steve McGuire, Roy Meinhardt, Arthur Nelson, Brian Polson.

See Us May 10-12 -- In Baltimore



For more info, see www.bicsi.org.

PERSPECTIVE

April items from www.eleblog.com

How Is 'The Industry' Doing?

(posted 4/28/09) Distributors, who sell to contractors and their customers, can give a reasonable reading on how the industry is doing these days. Herewith, "the story" from three different angles:

Today, ANIXTER came out with its Q1 results. Sales down 14%. The company sells a lot of datacom stuff, wire & cable, and fasteners. But the Q1 decline was really only 7%, according to the boss (Robert Eck, president/CEO):

As we expected, our first quarter results were negatively impacted by strengthening of the U.S. dollar and the decline in the spot market price of copper that occurred in late 2008. After excluding these effects and those associated with acquisitions completed in the second half of 2008, we saw an overall organic sales decline of 7 percent.

Last week, WESCO offered its Q1 results. Sales were down 19.5% vs. one year ago, but the company noted that, on a comparable basis, the decline was 15.7%.

From John Engel, SVP/COO: ". . . we get better information as we talk with our supplier partners and who have a sort of broad range of customers and we compare with sort of in broad terms how we are doing and how their other customers are doing sort of in the aggregate. And with the wide range of our largest suppliers I can tell you the data that we're getting the feedback that we're getting is that our performance is outpacing, the market meaning that others are bearing more poorly.

Grainger's sales were down 12% vs. Q1 2008, which the company adjusted to "down 10% on a daily basis." Grainger apparently will act like a greedy capitalist (that is NOT criticism), with these words from Jim Ryan, the boss:

"We do not believe that we've seen the bottom to the sales decline and expect increased pricing pressure throughout the remainder of the year. Given our financial strength, we see an opportunity to gain more share. We expect to incur some reductions to our margins by expanding our sales force and implementing additional customer incentives in the second quarter.

Now, these three companies are NOT necessarily competitors. WESCO is a huge national supplier of electrical products; Anixter and WESCO's CSC unit compete on datacom; Grainger gets some walk-in service contractors business that, no doubt, WESCO would like.

EleBlog take: The results above provide us with the following picture:

- Anixter's diversified business was down **7%** in Q1.
- Grainger's differently diversified business was down **10%** in Q1.
- WESCO's more-concentrated business was down **15.7%** in Q1

WESCO claims that the feedback it's getting is that an almost-16% decline over a three-month period is GOOD for the electrical distribution biz right now. I believe John Engel (for various reasons) -- let's say he's not ignorant of Regulation FD and isn't going to lie or mislead in a recorded webcast! If the suppliers he's quoting are telling WESCO the truth, then perhaps the balance of the electrical distribution business is down more like 20% (or more) in Q1.

Want more? Symbols are AXE for Anixter, GWW for Grainger, and WCC for WESCO. Go to [Yahoo! Finance](#) to grab the earnings press releases, [Seeking Alpha](#) to take a look at the transcripts of each company's conference call. Anixter's earnings call is being held now (4/28, morning), so it might not be posted for a while.

Final note: We'll get more input on how Q1 went in the electrical industry in the near future via the following sources:

- a. GRAYBAR, which is NOT a public company, will post its 10-Q for Q1 at some point. The company has to do this because it has so many shares out (in the hands of retirees and current employees).
- b. REXEL SA, which is based in France, has a huge U.S. subsidiary. The company normally posts a comprehensive press release on quarterly earnings, which offers some glimmers about what's going on in the U.S. (or at least "North America").

'Free' Capital Improvements (Green!)

(posted 4/14/09) National Real Estate Investor ran [an interesting article](#) this past January, most of it consisting of it of a Q&A with Stephen Gossett Jr of Transcend Equity Development. According to the piece:

"Transcend has retrofitted 30 buildings in the Northeast and six more under contract slated to begin this year."

"Transcend finances energy-related capital improvements, such as HVAC systems, for building owners at no cost."

". . . the company spends \$3 million in improvements per building [on average]."

"The primary problem with the whole energy-efficiency industry in working with commercial real estate is the landlord-tenant standoff. The big issue is that the landlords are responsible for the capital side of the building, and the tenants are responsible for the either some of or all of the operating expenses. Our program was

designed to bridge this landlord/tenant gap, and is very unique in that regard."



To check whether I'd written this up recently (to avoid a dupe), I did a search on Gossett. It turns out the EleBlog DID have something on him previously, but not on this article. See [this report](#) on a Commercial Property News article from 4/08.

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