

The Benefits of Using Estimating Software

By George Hague



No task affects as many areas of electrical contracting as the process of estimating. From data entry to project completion, the transition from paper and pencil or spreadsheets to estimating software is well worth the time and investment.

Keeping that in mind, there are six primary reasons why estimating software is critical to a successful profitable workflow:

1. **Speed**
2. **Accuracy**
3. **Consistency**
4. **Procurement**
5. **Project Management**
6. **Professionalism**

Speed: One of the most notable benefits of using estimating software is speed. While any businesses' software investments save time and money, estimating software can impact a contracting businesses' bottom-line exponentially. Letting technology do its part in removing manual entry tasks and the possibility of human error allows for a productive back office and streamlined process.

Accuracy: Today's thriving construction industry remains a competitive market, and contractors need to be able to bid accurately based on actual labor and material costs as well as equipment and subcontract expenses to win more bids. Using the estimate produced by the software to determine a job's true cost and develop a selling price will be beneficial to the contractor as well as for their customer.

Consistency: Using estimating software allows estimators to prepare estimates that use the exact same procedures and values, time and again. In addition, it provides a source for comparison of the

estimate to actual job cost. Retaining a history of job costs gives the estimator the tools necessary to adjust future estimates and avoid costly overruns, or to point out cost-saving procedures.

Procurement: On the job, the estimate will be used to determine labor resources, equipment and subcontractor requirements to properly schedule and track job progress. The software technology is also useful in scheduling timely delivery of materials.

Professionalism: In addition to speed, precision, accuracy and consistency, estimating software delivers a higher level of professionalism. Today's contractors use estimating programs optimize efficiency and maximize profits. The estimate is used as a sales tool to document costs and show that the contractor's sales presentation has been professionally prepared using an estimating software system.

Estimating software for electrical and low-voltage contractors has evolved into smarter and faster tools to help the estimator make decisions such as automatically adjusting labor units by calculating the installation difficulty factor for each item rather than using one factor for an entire installation.

An estimating program should have the ability to correct conduit sizes, and fix installations using the National Electrical Code tables. The right estimating software will quickly and accurately help determine the bottom line cost of a job and ultimately increase profit margins. Contractors will see the clear advantage estimating software can give them, and that advantage will keep them ahead of the competition.

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