

Job Costing Tracks all Jobs in Detail

With stored information on 700 cities, "RSMeans" allows users to rework an estimate based on a specific location.



By Lori Widmer

To call this program just an accounting solution for the construction sector would be shortchanging it – Sage Timberline Office accounting and management offers construction businesses a soup-to-nuts business management and accounting tool.

Benefits and Features

- Job costing is extensive and includes the ability to track all jobs in as much or little detail as the user wants. Typical job cost tracking includes contract amounts, estimates, costs, subcontracts, purchase orders, quantity totals, customer information and billings. Projects can be tracked by week, month, quarter or year.
 - Information, such as estimates or direct costs, can be imported into the system from other programs.
 - Users reconcile accounts through the Sage Timberline Office desktop, with Microsoft Excel available as a tool for part of the reconciliation process.
 - The Estimating application uses "RSMeans," which allows users to rework an estimate based on a specific location. The application stores information on 700 cities, so it's more likely a user will have access to local pricing, which can mean more accurate estimates.
- The procurement feature helps select vendors and with the purchasing process. The application generates requests for quotes (RFQs), manages the materials side of a project and integrates with handheld software to track inventory and record purchases from the job site.
- Reporting tools are robust and include interactive inquiries, allowing users to drill-down through multiple levels of data and get an up-to-the-minute snapshot of important business information.



Support

Sage offers three support levels and communication options: phone, email and client extranet. Self-help resources are available online, including SmartStart, a free 60-day support option that gives users software maintenance and unlimited support starting the 61st day after the product is purchased, or on the first contact with the support staff.

Also available are online training sessions, classroom training, consulting services, optional subscription service plans, online help and self-help options, and an annual conference for users. An independent Timberline Users Group online facilitates user-to-user help, discusses the product on an interactive board, and receives news and information as well as holds events and conferences.

Summary

This user was able to set up companies quickly. As I sampled the reconciliation function, Sage Timberline Office integrated flawlessly with MS Excel. The simple, yet appealing desktop and main screen, contradict the power this application delivers. One slightly different turn of events occurred when I installed Timberline Office, creating a conflict with the Sage Master Builder product I already installed. Even with this minor glitch, the Timberline Office product is a notable software solution for the construction industry.

What Users Say

"The company gained immediate results, such as cutting billing from three days to four hours, and job cost time more than 30 percent, while enabling us to manage multiple projects simultaneously," says **Thomas A. Frank** of James Frank Construction, Inc. in Portland, Ore.

A common occurrence at Griffin Companies in Minneapolis, Minn., is the need to retrieve and make copies of all the leases connected with a particular property – a cumbersome task. "Soon after the implementation of Document Management, one of these situations arose," says **Sharon Moore**, controller. When an important client wanted to refinance a high-rise building, the client thought it might take several days to pull these leases together. Through Timberline, I presented a CD containing all the leases in the required format. The jaws dropped on every single person in the room."

Sage Software

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Executive Dashboard Displays all Functions

Accounting functionality is fully integrated with the project management side of the application.



By Lori Widmer

Sage Software introduced its Sage Master Builder solution for the construction industry, and on first blush, this program is a finely honed instrument. Touted as a “profit cycle” management tool, Sage Master Builder allows users to move through the entire project life span, from job estimation to analysis of the business processes.

The Executive Dashboard is the jumping-off point for the entire application. The page displays cash accounts, cash position, receivables, payables, income from operations, outstanding change orders and under-billed jobs. It provides a fast look at where the business stands financially and, more importantly, offer the “why” behind the numbers.

Benefits and Features

- Users are able to make more accurate job estimates. Information from vendors can be updated easily. Templates make it easy for users to create estimates and proposals. Data is entered once and accessed throughout the system.
- Budgets are set up faster, and users are able to manage purchases with vendors and subcontractors. Users have integrated paper management on all correspondence for a particular job.
- Accounting functionality is fully integrated with the project management side of the application. Cash flow is monitored and managed through both the income and expenses entered into the system.
- With the Under-Billed Jobs section of the dashboard, users see the bid amount, actual cost and difference, as well as the percentage of the contract bid that project represents. The collapsible menu in the program allows users to input information, although the system is a bit unwieldy to the untrained eye.
- A great feature of this system is its ability to show user trends within his or her company through a list of job costing graphs, including gross and/or net profit/sales figures, current ratios, and a comparison of overhead to direct expense.
- Monthly overhead reports allow users to see their financial picture instantly.



Support

Customer Support is available on a subscription basis with several options. BasicCare gives users self-service online resources, including a technical support database. TotalCare offers unlimited phone and fax support, and includes registration discounts to Sage’s annual customer conference. There are also training packages and learning services in real time and on demand.

Summary

For at-a-glance income and expenditures, Master Builder is dynamite. There’s no guesswork – all the figures are on the Executive Dashboard, and users are able to drill down into the data and see specific areas and figures within those areas. Sage Master Builder may seem bare bones on the surface, but is a solid solution. While there is certainly a need for training to understand the functionality, users who can conquer the application’s full capabilities will have tons of performance.

What Users Say

“I can break out varying workers comp codes automatically, and with the push of a button, get information that helps me evaluate my business needs,” says **Michael McCutcheon** of McCutcheon Construction in Berkeley, Calif. “Our supervisors need to know what costs are running, report change orders and schedule changes with the client. Without integrated software, it can be extremely inefficient, if not almost impossible.”

“During construction, 47 change orders totaling \$215,000 were issued to and approved by the owner,” says **Joseyne Santacroce** of Accounting Certified General Contractors, Inc., in Melbourne, Fla. “Without the help of Sage Master Builder, this job would have been a total nightmare.”

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