



New Lead Tracker A Big Help

by Morris D. Carey, Jr.

I've been waiting for someone to come up with a worthwhile customer lead-tracking system, and it has finally happened.

Northwest Construction Software recently released a program called Lead Tracker. The two-disk program is designed to help you manage your customer list and sales statistics.

Lead Tracker can tell you which advertising method generates the best rate of sale, who makes the most sales, which kind of job sells best, and more. Sales Analysis Reports are listed by territory, salesperson, work type, or lead source. You can select a report for any given date or range of dates, and for all leads or for any user-defined group of leads.

The program keeps track of open and closed leads in both the current and previous years. Sales figures can be represented as a percentage or dollar amount. Reports output to the screen, printer, or disk, and there's even a bar graph function that makes statistics easy to look at.

My hat is off to the folks at Northwest. This company really has insight into the needs of the professional contractor.

For more information on Lead Tracker, write: Northwest Construction Software, 11110 SW Partridge Loop, Beaverton, OR 97007, or call 503/644-6152.

Another Good Estimator

As you know, I'm always on the lookout for new and interesting estimating programs, and another

good one just crossed my desk. It's called Professional Remodeling Estimator (PRE) and sells for a very reasonable \$295. It's in spreadsheet format (which makes it easy for non-computer types to work with), and comes with about 2,000 items in its own, easy-to-alter database.

This program is especially nice for remodelers (and other contractors who deal with the public) because the database provides room for a written description of each item. This makes estimates easier to explain.

No single estimating program is best for everyone, so PRE offers a demonstration disk. It's amazingly simple to follow. In less than 10 minutes you will be able to decide for yourself whether or not this is the program for you.

In his column in *Qualified Remodeler*, Dave Love claims PRE is the best estimating program on the market. PRE is good, but it's not that good. It's super for the first-time user, but not the experienced power-estimator. If you want simple and easy, PRE is a good choice.

For a free demo disk, write: PC Services, 133 SW Second Ave., Suite 220, Portland, OR 97204. PC Services also offers a job-cost module, an estimating program for small home builders, and an estimating program for fire-repair contractors.

A Reader Writes:

I enjoyed reading your recent article listing companies that sell accounting programs. Would it be

possible to send me a list of vendors that sell CAD programs?

Eyal Kishoni
Wenonah, N.J.

Unfortunately, nothing in the PC world comes close to drawing programs made for Mac users. Of the software I've tried, Autocad and Generic CAD are the two best PC drawing programs money can buy. Both are sold by Autodesk (2320 Marinship Way, Sausalito, CA 94965; 415/332-2344). The price ranges from \$200 to about \$3,000 for the basic software, plus any hardware modifications (math co-processors, added RAM) you might need. If you want to draw and estimate at the same time, Autocad works great with Timberline's Precision Plus, and Generic CAD works well with CMS Esprit.

On the Macintosh end, one of the best drawing and estimating programs is ArchiCAD. The bad news is that, including hardware, it costs over \$10,000 to get it up and running.

The program is complicated, but for the power-user, it's worth every penny. Once it's set up, all you have to do is draw plan views; the program takes care of the rest. Sections, elevations, perspectives, colors, shadowing, etc., are automatic.

For more information, write: Graphisoft, 400 Oyster Point Blvd., Suite 429, So. San Francisco, CA 94080. ■

Morris D. Carey, a partner with the remodeling firm of Carey Bros. Construction in Pittsburg, Calif., reviews construction-related computer products and conducts computer seminars. He alternates this column with Craig Savage, who writes on Macintosh-based systems.

If you have a question about computing in construction, address it to State-of-the-Art Contractor, JLC, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.