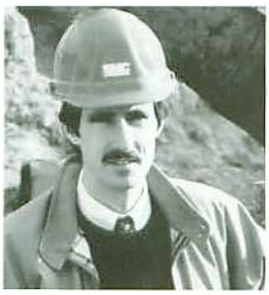

Philip La Berge, *Cost Engineer*

SMC Concrete Construction Just Put Their Problems On ICE.®

"Now we have an estimating system that's fine-tuned to the way we do estimating."

SMC Concrete Construction in Annandale, Virginia, handles big jobs in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The 40-year-old company also found a way to handle their estimating problems. They simply put their problems on ICE.

Purely a concrete sub-contractor, SMC is an open shop which employs about 600 people. Specializing in multi-story offices and apartment buildings, the company forms and pours concrete for these structures to the tune of about $50 million a year. Philip La Berge, Cost Engineer, says that SMC usually has 10 to 15 active jobs at any given time, and cites "a number of interesting projects" -- an understatement to be sure.

ICE tables are powerful

La Berge says that going the ICE route has definitely meant big savings for his company. "The powerful logic of the ICE System gives us tremendous flexibility to adjust the program to the way we do estimating. The fundamental process of estimating, generating quantities and multiplying them times unit costs, is incorporated in the structure of tables which we can either modify or create ourselves. The tables generate quantities and match them to cost codes based on the dimensions and specifications keyed into every line of takeoff.

"The ICE table structure is incredible. For instance, we started with the ICE program, filled in our own price tables, and created our own Unit Price Catalogs. Now all we have to do when we bid a job is key in takeoff and tell the program to calculate. Much more of our time is spent on the important part of producing an estimate, which is checking and analyzing the information."

ICE and easy digitizing

"Digitizing tablets for our six estimators greatly increased our estimating abilities, especially for estimates on apartment buildings and other structures wiht odd floor shapes. It takes about 30 seconds to takeoff structural floor slabs with the Digitizer, where it could take as long as 30 minutes to enter manually."

To illustrate the ICE System's effectiveness, La Berge cites recent projects in the Washington metropolitan area ranging from 100,000 square feet to over 1.3 million square feet. "The ICE System helps us estimate and be competitive on structures with a wide variety of shapes and sizes in one of the most competitive markets in the country."

ICE makes us consistent

La Berge says, "ICE lets me get estimates the same way from all six estimators. I develop the criteria and the computer does the calculating. The beauty of this is that we are consistent in the way we do our estimates and all our estimates are dependably alike."

ICE is logical

La Berge says, "The underlying logic of MC² is just beautiful in that it allows you to generate and sort information in an infinite number of ways. For instance, suppose you were a concrete subcontractor who wanted to estimate a number of different buildings and you wanted to price the jobs a number of different ways. ICE would let you quickly, accurately, and consistently do exactly that. Also, suppose that you had bid and won the job, and now need to produce a payment breakdown rapidly. ICE would enable you to do it. ICE would also let you interface with your accounting package so you can track job costs. As far as we are concerned, ICE is the perfect solution for a company our size. We are happy as we can be with the system."

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SMC wins on ICE

La Berge says everyone at SMC is sold on ICE, and cited MC²'s help in training employees and making them comfortable with the system.

"MC²'s PC-ICE has unleashed the power of computerized estimating for us by incorporating the fundamentals of hand calculated estimates with the power of PC based micro-processors. By having the ability to quickly estimate work using a variety of labor rates, crew sizes, production values or Unit Price Catalogs we feel we have gained the edge in an increasingly competitive construction market."

It appears that SMC has poured itself a firm foundation on ICE.