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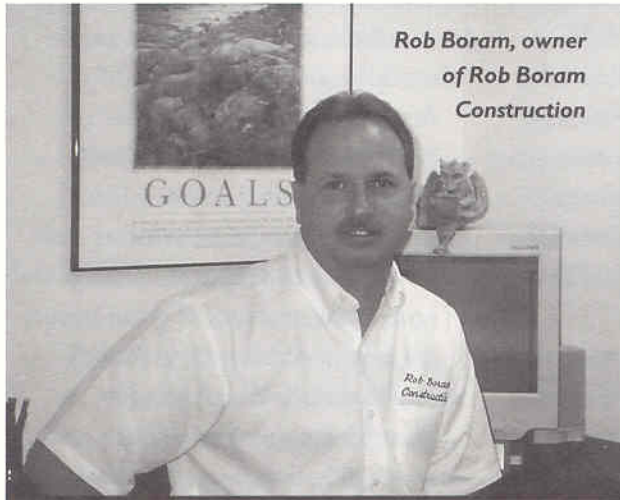
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Client

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Rob Boram, owner  
of Rob Boram  
Construction

## Where's the Money??

*If you're not using The Master Builder for your estimating, Rob Boram has a message for you: "You're missing the Boat."*

By Pam Schulz

**R**ob Boram Construction in Wellsburg, West Virginia, has been a Master Builder client since his company was launched in 1985. But unlike many other companies who begin using Master Builder strictly for accounting, Boram purchased the program with estimating in mind. He wanted to be able to build his own database and have the speed and efficiency advantages that the system provides. He initially purchased the estimating and job cost program (in MB4) but "As soon as I saw the power of estimating I wanted a full package", and soon added the complete accounting system. As a result the company always has accurate and timely information, especially job cost reporting, which

according to Boram, "Is what it's all about."

Mr. Boram provided several answers to our question- "Where's the Money?"

**Speed**—By fully utilizing the power of assemblies, phases and templates, Boram is able to produce estimates very quickly. Price updates are easier to manage with a parts and assemblies based system because simply changing the parts prices will allow you to determine the new assembly price almost instantly. This has a great advantage over other methods such as unit costs that require that the estimator redetermine each unit cost to account for price changes. The use of templates and phases allows the estimator to use "pre-built" information many times. In Boram's

case, he uses phases for each major portion of a project (kitchens, bathrooms, etc.) and brings in a template as the starting point for each new job. He then is able to plug in measurements and certain unique items and quickly produce an estimate.

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## Where's the Money??

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How does this speed "Show us the Money?" Boram is able to pre-qualify many potential clients over the phone. This minimizes the amount of time that can be wasted if the customer simply cannot afford the project and also sets expectations from the beginning.

**Accuracy**—Boram's actual costs to estimated costs have historically been very close—around 5%, and in some cases as close as 1%. Because of this level of accuracy, Boram can estimate confidently, knowing the client is getting good value based on what he knows he can do the job for. Obviously this theory works, since the company gets approximately 90% of the jobs bid.

Because accurate job costing information is always available, the company is able to transfer information to a special report called "the mother of all forms" and compare estimated to actual. This instant and constant feedback provides the information the company needs to produce future accurate estimates.

**Teamwork**—full utilization of both the estimating and accounting sides of Master Builder helps every member of the team. First, as mentioned above, the estimate is used as a sales tool. After the pre-qualification process is successful Boram prints out the takeoff (without quantities) to use as part of his presentation to the client. The client can see how the estimate and the specifications agree. There is a greater degree of confidence in

the company and work to be done since the client can see that Boram has "everything covered" and can show how the numbers came about.

The same estimate is used to control production. Since the hours for each task are readily available, the company can easily control the production speed by adding staffing where necessary. Feedback to the field is very important. Job reports are shared weekly so the field personnel can help coordinate the job progression. The job is estimated in such a way that the project can be built right off of the estimate. This eliminates the need for the production manager to "re-estimate" the job.

Finally, the same estimate is exported to the budget and the job cost information is obtained automatically through paying bills and payroll allowing the process to come full circle—the actual job costs are compared to the budgeted amounts and the information gained can be used for future estimates and overall company planning.

Boram says "If you use MB to the fullest you will be able to generate profitability." Using the tools at hand, the company can be much more organized. This organization allows a new job to be started immediately after another job is completed—a more efficient use of the company's resources.

"The great thing is that MB is a lot of things to a lot of people." With that, Boram offers some advice that will help you gain more from your system:

1. Daily time cards are a key to success. It is vital that the phases and cost codes are completed properly. This is the key to the accurate job cost information that will be used in your production guidance and future estimating.
2. Phases are a powerful tool—make use of them. Boram uses phases to identify different parts of a remodel—kitchen, bath, etc. so that information from a variety of jobs can easily be gathered and used for future estimating.
3. Good history is what it's all about. The company is able to accurately produce estimates and pre-qualify the client because of the enormous amount of good historical data available.
4. Estimate in detail—job cost in general. Boram uses only 23 cost codes. It is important that you are able to interpret and use your data. Equally important, since teamwork is so vital, be careful that you do not make your system too complicated for your staff to use and understand.

As Boram points out—"It's not just one thing such as a good database or something else." This company has shown that using all of the tools available allows a "team event" and the company has grown and prospered. ■

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