



California News

HCSS Visits Customers Along Interstate 580

California is a state full of dedicated HCSS customers, and in October we set out to visit four of them, including four-product customer Ford Construction, to see how they were using HCSS products on a daily basis.

The main goal of the trip was to watch them use HCSS products in a live setting and to see if there

were any changes or new features that should be added to help them work even better. Of particular interest was the integration of HCSS products with the other software applications they use.

The HCSS employees were so excited about getting to see these products in real-life situations and being able to see how they were used differently by each

company, that they spent all evening in the hotel room talking about what they learned each day. When they returned to the office, they brought back many suggestions and ideas that are already in the process of being implemented! This trip has motivated us to take similar trips in the future to learn more about our customers' operations.



Steve McGough (Chief Operating Officer), Tom Webb (Director of Professional Services), Genaro Garza (Assistant Technical Support Manager), & Mike Rydin (President) visit Ford Construction in Lodi.



Genaro, Mike, Tom, & Steve visit DeSilva Gates Construction Dublin, CA.



Genaro, Tom, Mike, & Steve visit Top Grade Construction in Livermore.



Tom, Mike, Steve, & Genaro visit RGW Construction in Livermore.

California State University, Chico Department of Construction Management Uses HCSS

In 1997, the Chico State Department of Construction Management began using **HeavyBid** software in the classroom. Chico State has a separate estimating class for unit price heavy construction contract estimating.

With little effort, it became clear that HCSS is the leader in its industry. In 1997, Professor Richard Holman attended the annual User's Group meeting in Houston. Subsequently, HCSS made a clear commitment to the education process by donating fully functional software to the department of Construction Management for use in the classroom.



At Chico State, a full 16 week semester is devoted to understanding the nuances of unit price bidding. The students learn how to create and edit the labor, equipment, and material libraries in **HeavyBid**. The students are then given a "real world" project and required to perform take-offs, productivity rates, and pricing. Subcontract quotes are provided by the instructor. During the final weeks of the semester, the students learn the difference between cost and price. On the final week of school, the students must submit their bids and a public opening is conducted. The apparent low bidder is then required to present their estimate to the class for "peer review."

This classroom process provides the students with a clear understanding of estimate preparation from start

to finish. It also provides the construction industry with graduates who have used and understand **HeavyBid** software. Many students have received job offers as a result of their background with HCSS products. As one company stated, "I don't have to train Chico State graduates on how to operate the software... I can give them the data and tell them to prepare an estimate and they know how to do it."

Chico State is one of the largest Construction Management programs in the country. With more than 500 students currently in the program and more than 100 companies recruiting these students, the need for the students and industry to understand one another is crucial. HCSS **HeavyBid** provides a clear bridge between education and industry.

Purchasing Laptops for HeavyJob/Field

One of the most common questions we get at HCSS is, "How much should I spend on a laptop for my foremen to run *HeavyJob/Field*?" With so many choices available today, picking the right laptop can be a daunting task. From a business perspective, you need a laptop that will run *HeavyJob/Field*, but not cost a small fortune.

Many folks are concerned with what specifications the laptop must have to run the



software. We list our minimum system requirements as 64MB RAM, Pentium 2 or 3 processor, VGA monitor, CD-ROM drive, and a mouse device. You would be hard pressed to find a laptop that does not meet these minimum requirements. The bottom line is that any current laptop is more than adequate to run *HeavyJob*.

So what are the choices? Since just about any hardware will suffice, it comes down to a decision between durability and price. A common choice for durability is the Panasonic ToughBook. It comes with the latest technology, and is specifically designed to be rugged enough to take the inherent abuse of being in the field. Unfortunately, that ruggedness will set you back about \$3,000 per unit.

Or better yet, you can opt for a more economically viable solution: buy an inexpensive laptop and a rugged carrying case. You could buy five \$600 laptops for the price of one ToughBook. Even if you have a foreman that breaks or loses one laptop every year, it would

take five years to justify the purchase of a highly durable laptop.

Dell Computers (www.dell.com) regularly offers the low-end Inspiron notebook computers for under \$700 and often has sales that bring the price to under \$600! Other main retailers to watch for that may offer new laptops in the \$600 range include www.hp.com, www.gateway.com, and www.toshibadirect.com. Don't forget to keep an eye out for sales at your local electronics superstore like Best Buy, Circuit City, CompUSA, or Fry's. Quite often they offer new laptops for about \$600.

If you don't mind yesterday's technology or "scratch and dent" models, you can always purchase refurbished laptops for even less. Online resellers like www.geeks.com, www.LaptopOutlet.com, and www.USAnotebook.com offer refurbished laptops at a price ranging from \$250-\$600. Some even offer a warranty on their laptops. Don't forget to check with Dell and Gateway to see what kind of refurbished inventory they have.

VT for Pipe: Save Time...Be Accurate

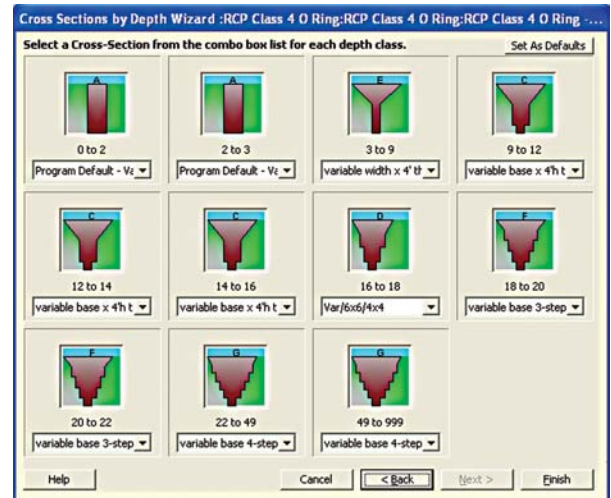
Time. In this industry it just seems to evaporate. We always need more of it, but it never seems to be there. Anything we can do to save time is usually a good thing. For utility contractors, *VT for Pipe* does just that...saves time.

There are several things in the *VT for Pipe* arsenal that can help save significant time, and one of them is the trench profile tool. This allows you to set up standards that can be used to instantly calculate excavation, backfill and bedding quantities, regardless of the depth and type of cut. (See illustration.)

These standards can be setup for different types of ground materials, pipe, depths, and cut. As your depths change, so do the trench profiles –

automatically. The ability to change these standards at any time gives you the power to change your takeoff without having to do it all over again.

At our February User's Group meeting we will feature two classroom sessions showcasing *VT for Pipe*. One class will provide a brief overview of the product and its capabilities while the second class, whether you own it or not, is a hands-on workshop that will give you a chance to try out the software to really see how the time saving features can work for you.



HCSS was a sponsor of the Huntington's Disease Society 5K at the Fluor Daniel Facility in Sugar Land, TX on September 10, 2005 and had the largest corporate team!

If you have any questions about how to use software to improve productivity in your business, contact Hudson Reed, your Software

Consultant for California at HudsonR@hcss.com or 800-683-3196.

