



HeavyNews

Estimating & Job Tracking Software for Infrastructure Contractors

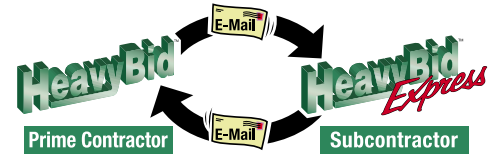
HCSS Sets New Standard for Interfacing with Subs/Suppliers

In our continual effort to make the estimator's job easier, we have announced a new standard for sending quotes back and forth between prime contractors and their subs and suppliers. This standard is to be used in the next update of both *HeavyBid* and *HeavyBid/Express*, and it can be used by any other software vendor who wishes to facilitate the exchange of quote data between contractors.

A major problem in sending quotes is that primes and subs use a wide variety of systems from various software vendors, and there is currently no standard that makes it easy for everyone to electronically import each other's quotes. *HeavyBid* has a new quote importing feature that will read data in several formats including *Excel* files that works very well; however, we are promoting a standard that makes it even easier

and includes a security feature that can be used between all contractors no matter who their software vendor is.

Our new standard is based on the popular XML (Extensible Markup Language) method of passing data from one application to another. Any software vendor who writes data in this format and includes our password procedure into their software can have secured quotes passed between their customers and any *HeavyBid* or *HeavyBid/Express* customer. Thus, 10 subs could all quote 10 prime contractors for a total of 100 quotes, and no one could read anyone else's quote if it ended up at the wrong company. A white paper on our website at www.hcss.com/XMLpaper explains how this standard can be implemented by any software vendor.



To make it easy for smaller contractors and subcontractors to use automated estimating software, HCSS has been providing *HeavyBid/Express* for the past two years, and over 7,000 copies have been requested. A new update incorporating our new XML standard and the ability to send price quotes to *HeavyBid* will cost \$300, and thus allow these companies an easy, low-cost way to send secure electronic quotes to prime contractors.

These features will be demonstrated at the User's Group Meetings in Houston in January and February and will be available in both *HeavyBid* and *HeavyBid/Express* in the Spring.

HCSS Expands - Takes Over the 11th Floor



We are proud to announce that HCSS will be taking over the entire 11th floor of our building on May 1, 2003. The past year has been a time of expansion for HCSS. And, as a result of adding many new employees to our staff, we need more space. Several of the new staff members are programmers, so you should start seeing an even faster rate of improvement to our software.

To take a peek at our office, visit www.hcss.com, and watch the virtual HCSS office tour!

2003 User's Group Meetings Time is Running Out!!!

The deadlines are fast approaching for all 2003 HCSS user meetings. This year, HCSS is hosting the Annual User's Group Meeting in Houston and a separate *HeavyJob* Foreman User's Group Meeting in Philadelphia. Sign up now to reserve your space.

Both the 2003 Annual User's Group Meeting classes and Thursday morning outings are filling up fast. Don't forget that the first meeting is in mid-January this year!

The Annual *HeavyJob* Foreman User's Group Meeting, especially for foremen, superintendents, and hands-on field supervisors, is sure to be an informative and exciting time for all attendees. This meeting is on February 1st, so make your plans now!

Sign up using the last page of the User's Group Meeting brochure or the Foreman User's Group Meeting mailer, or register online at www.myhcss.com. We hope to see you there!

Annual HCSS User's Group Meetings

January 16-18, 2003

February 20-22, 2003

Hotel Inter-Continental, Houston, TX

Annual *HeavyJob* Foreman User's Group Meeting

Saturday, February 1, 2003

Sheraton Park Ridge Hotel, Philadelphia, PA

Customer Profile: The Ruhlin Company

Last year the Heavy Civil Group at The Ruhlin Company used *HeavyBid* to estimate and bid 48 jobs worth almost \$400,000,000 with only seven people," said Greg Horning, senior estimator with the Ohio-based company. "Those jobs were mostly structures and paving work, so they involved a lot of heavy takeoff and everything." Since Ruhlin purchased *HeavyBid* in 1995, the company has benefited greatly from the standardization that the program has brought to the estimating department. Everyone used something different prior to *HeavyBid*. "Several guys used another estimating and takeoff program, some used pencil and paper, some used Lotus or Symphony spreadsheets. Then, we would dump all that information into a spreadsheet program and crunch the numbers manually," said Horning. You can imagine the extra work that Ruhlin's old process entailed. "With *HeavyBid* everyone in the estimating department now has access to the same resources. For example, *HeavyBid* allows us to put in our wage rates for the estimate once. We can do this any time before the letting, or make other global changes to the estimate right up to the last minute. Otherwise, everyone would have to have the estimate rates right then, or you



would have to go back and change everything manually. That's the kind of flexibility that *HeavyBid* has given us," reports Horning.

As a senior estimator, Horning's favorite feature in *HeavyBid* is the Bid Closing tool. "Normally on bid days with quotes coming in and everything that's happening, time is a big factor; there's a lot of tension in the air. *HeavyBid* allows us to make our changes, send them back into the bid, re-summarize and put the costs where they should be, then re-balance the bid based on our real costs. I think this is one of the best features of the system," said Horning.

Ruhlin recently purchased a subscription to HCSS' www.bidhistory.com service to help plug estimates. "I see that as saving a couple of hours, because a lot of times for bonding, or just to get an idea of the job value and the job breakdown, our chief estimator will say, 'here, go plug this project,'" says Horning. "With the sort and filter features on *bidhistory.com*, I can pull in the jobs that we've already bid and use those to get unit prices to help plug a bid. Then, all I have to do is a little editing to clean up some of the lump sum items. Using *bidhistory.com*, I am able to get my estimate in a quarter of the time that it took before."

Technical support was one of the most important things that Ruhlin considered when originally buying HCSS software. "The tech support has

been great. When you call you always get someone in tech support. To me, that's great," states Horning. One example of HCSS' commitment to customer support is an event that occurred around 7 p.m. on the evening before a letting. Horning relates, "We were working on the bid and got some bad data. We promptly called in to tech support and the technician told us to send him our file. So we sent him the file, and within an hour, he had it repaired and back to me; we were back in business - all after normal working hours."

As a long time customer, Horning has attended the annual HCSS User's Group Meetings for the past nine years. He has actually purchased *HeavyBid* twice; he first purchased the system in 1992 at a company he worked for prior to joining Ruhlin. He now serves on the HCSS President's Advisory Board, where he contributes his feedback to HCSS on their current performance and future direction. "How many software companies do you know that actually listen to their customers?" asks Horning. "That's one thing that HCSS has always been great at."

The Ruhlin Company

Founded: 1915

Company Size: \$100 million

Number of Jobs Bid Annually: 48

Senior Estimator: Greg Horning

Location: Sharon Center, Ohio



HCSS will be traveling around the country to various industry tradeshows in 2003. Stop by, chat a bit and see the latest HCSS products and services if you plan to attend any of the following shows. We just might have a special gift for you!

2003 Trade Show Schedule

Schedule	Date	City	Booth #
UCT	Jan 14-16	Houston	722
WOC	Feb 4-7	Las Vegas	1640, 9841
WOA/NAPA	Mar 18-20	Nashville	1533
NUCA	Mar 19-21	San Antonio	429
AGC/Constructor	Mar 21-22	Hawaii	408
NHES	April 10-11	Toronto	340
CFMA	May 3-7	San Diego	402

Sneak Preview: New Versions of HeavyBid and HeavyJob Premiering at User's Group Meetings

Many new, exciting *HeavyBid* and *HeavyJob* features will be unveiled at the Annual User's Group Meeting this January and February. You will be able to load a separate preview version when you arrive containing sample data to be used throughout the meetings. Even better this year is that we have included data in bid history, cost history, and the vendor/contact systems so you can see how everything interfaces together!

HeavyBid programmers have been working hard to complete some major enhancements before the January meeting which comes early this year. This includes a new, simpler, but more powerful technique for subtotaling bid items; better ways to send electronic bids between *HeavyBid/Express* and *HeavyBid*; a spreadsheet quote import; improved way to export estimate data to *HeavyJob* and accounting on the

same screen; and a new *Excel* interface discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. If you have not been downloading the monthly updates, you will also be seeing an accumulation of all of the changes throughout the year.

With the growing interest in *HeavyJob*, HCSS programmers have added many useful features such as: a log-in for the *HeavyJob/Manager* System; an increase from 11 to 25 cost-codes per time card; improved billing module including billings for subcontractors; wireless e-mail capabilities for the *HeavyJob/Pocket* System; ability to move pending change orders to approved status; a master database for laborers and equipment; and a simplified import/export via e-mail that makes it easy for the foremen to e-mail time cards or receive database changes at the click of a button.

The Thankless Task of Being the Family Cook

by Mike Rydin, HCSS President

My wife does most of the cooking at our house. Recently it has dawned on me that she does not get all of the appreciation she deserves. In fact, she gets very little appreciation.

Periodically she gets excited and prepares a "new" dish. Unfortunately her reward is that the boys usually complain or outright refuse to eat it. They prefer to go without food, and, thus, make my wife feel guilty as well as discourage her from trying new things. Sometimes, her experiments are total failures and then I join with the boys in complaining. That must be very discouraging. I am amazed how she still continues to try new things.

I would like to point out, though, that communicating what you like or dislike is good. If you don't say anything, you will continue to get the same thing served. The other day she asked why I didn't eat all of what she thought was my favorite rice dish. I then informed her after 17 years of marriage and eating rice regularly, that I really didn't like rice that much and preferred potatoes.

What a surprise that was to her. Not saying anything about rice for 17 years was a huge mistake on my part. Since my boys have been raised on rice, they don't care for potatoes, so I am doomed to rice until they go off to college.

I now, however, try to make it a point to compliment my wife anytime I especially like the food (which is quite often), even when it is the same dish she has served many times before. I have really liked most of the food she has served over the years and am truly amazed how many wonderful things she can prepare. However, it never occurred to me to say anything about it until I started noticing how many complaints she receives versus compliments.

The moral of this story is that if there is something about your spouse that you really like, don't keep it a secret like I did - tell them. After all, it's nice to know that you're appreciated.

HCSS Utilizes Future Technologies

Many of you have been contacted by other software companies claiming to have new and better technology, because they are rewriting their outdated applications and using some of the more recent programming languages such as those in the Microsoft .NET platform. Because of their new programming languages, they wish you to believe that someday they may be able to do the same things that HCSS currently does.

All programming languages have to be able to perform similar functions. Which language any particular software company uses has to do with their evaluation of how much productivity they can get from their programmers compared to the alternatives, what kind of support they receive, and how much of the licensing costs are passed on to the end user among other things.

We have continued to use the same programming language vendor for years because it has provided superior support and continued technological advancement, qualities shared by us at HCSS.

We consistently update our products to take full advantage of these advancements. For instance, the next **HeavyBid** update has a powerful new interface that links **HeavyBid** fields to any cell in any *Excel* spreadsheet and offers the option to keep the cells updated if the spreadsheet data changes. You will be able to make elaborate spreadsheets of takeoff data and quickly link as many cells as you wish to any number of **HeavyBid** data fields. This new feature will be shown at the User's Group Meetings and be available in the Spring.

We have been using Microsoft .NET elements such as XML for some time, and our language vendor is committed to incorporating the latest Microsoft features such as SOAP and Web Services. We also are preparing a **HeavyBid** version that uses the SQL database technology, which may be helpful to the IT directors at large companies who wish to standardize on this popular technology. We at HCSS are committed to using the best technology available to solve the business problems of our customers

Bid News

Illinois

Resurfacing IL64 in Cook County (1.01 mi)

Central Blacktop Co., Inc.	\$898,222.21
Arrow Road Construction Co.	\$898,777.00
Plote Construction, Inc.	\$953,620.94
K-Five Construction Corp.	\$963,369.20
E.A. Cox Company	\$994,367.44

Massachusetts

Central Artery Project #C19E6

Modern Continental's bid of \$38,177,939 left only 0.69% on the table!

Michigan

Reconstruct and Widen Long Lake Rd

Six-S, Inc.	\$8,562,497.07
Dans Excavating	\$8,823,952.63
John Carlo, Inc.	\$9,258,119.65

New Jersey

Victory Bridge - Bridge Replacement

George Harms Construction Co.	\$109,121,431.00
Perini/Tutor-Saliba JV	\$141,496,927.00
Koch Skanska/Slattery Skanska/Weeks	\$149,850,460.00

New York

Whitestone Expressway Road & Viaduct

Tully/Pegno JV	\$177,057,796.00
Defoe Corporation	\$192,086,895.00
Yonkers/Modern Continental JV	\$192,211,220.00
Perini/O&G JV	\$212,456,630.00
Schiavonne/Granite Halmar JV	\$212,526,396.00

Ohio

Summit County - Major Reconstruction

Ruhlin Company	\$24,246,395.86
Great Lakes Construction Co., Inc.	\$24,337,782.15
Kokosing Construction Co., Inc.	\$27,852,323.87
National Engineering & Contracting ...	\$28,496,062.87
Kenmore Construction Co. Inc.	\$28,718,050.68
Shelly & Sands/McCourt Constr. JV ...	\$28,738,260.17
Perk Company Inc	\$30,483,664.00

Pennsylvania

York - SR83

Kinsley Construction	\$58,800,398.02
Allan A. Myers	\$61,444,676.80
Dick Corp.	\$63,474,179.50
Trumbull Corp.	\$65,886,560.61

Texas

Jackson County - FM 616

Garey Construction Ltd.'s bid of \$1,147,720.81 left just 0.245% on the table!

HeavyBid Customers Noted in Green

User Tips



View Parent Biditem Totals

You can see the totals for the parent biditem on the Estimate Entry screen by selecting the desired parent biditem and clicking the Biditem Totals icon (2nd icon on the right of the screen). This will show you a snapshot of totals for that parent biditem.

Calculating Escalation

An average escalation can be computed in your estimate in several ways. In Estimate Information under the Setup Menu on the Optional Information tab, you can setup an average escalation rate for a cost type. For example, you could setup labor as having an average escalation of 5%. Any labor entered into the estimate would then be increased by 5%. This assumes your preference (Tools Menu) is set to compute escalation which is the default when the system is shipped.

Each labor craft can have its own escalation which takes precedence over the estimate general rate. So if your ironworkers had a 7% average escalation for the life of this job, you could set those in the labor setup screen and it would override the 5%. Later, if you changed the 5% on the Estimate Information tab to 4%, it would still not override the 7% already in the ironworkers tab.

It is also possible to go into the resource area of the estimate entry screens and change escalation individually. However, these values will be

changed back if you ever change either the general estimate rate or a particular labor craft rate. If that is likely to happen, we recommend you not use individual rates. The next update will have new features to make it easy to control escalation changes in groups of individual resources in several different ways.

Run Cost Summary Automatically

In *HeavyBid* 3.1g (December 1st update), you may set the cost summary and spread to run automatically when you enter the Bid Summary screen by going to Tools>Preferences>Estimate Preferences tab>Defaults tab and selecting "Automatically run Summary & Spread when entering the Bid Summary screen".



Fast Way to Enter Hours

You can now enter an employee's hours for all cost codes on a time card without having to switch tab pages. To access this feature, right-click in the hours column, and select Hrs By Emp/Eqp or click the header of one of the hours columns.

A tree list of all Employees/Equipment with the Cost Codes will be displayed in a small window. Hours can be entered against the Cost Codes for each Employee/Equipment resource. Hours can also be copied from the grid on the right-hand side of the window, so they don't have to be re-entered numerous times (for resource items working the same hours in the same Cost Codes).

Original Cost Code Method Still Exists

If all you need to do is add one cost code to the time card and don't want to see the whole Select Cost Codes screen, you can still use the original cost code selection list. Simply right-click the cost code you want to change, and select "Change Cost Code".

Sorting Employees on Time Card

If you are used to carrying around a scrap piece of paper to record employee hours throughout the day, you may find that the order on *HeavyJob's* Time Card is not the same as the order on your piece of paper. No problem! Simply bring up the Select Employees and Equipment list on the time card and sort them to match the order on your scrap piece of paper. You can also sort Equipment pieces to be directly beneath the person operating them.

Slow Estimate Creation?

Does it take you longer than one minute to create a New Estimate on your network version of *HeavyBid*? If so, you should have your IT person read the article "Troubleshooting Slow Estimate Creations" on the front page of www.myhcss.com. HCSS has discovered and summarized six different Microsoft articles that tell how to improve problems with slow file copying resulting from various combinations of operating systems.



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