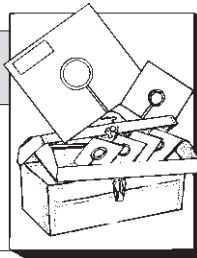# Job Cost Software Worth the Price

by Morris D. Carey, Jr.

**B**ack in January, I reviewed a program called JS *Estimating* by Jenny Systems (1776 Asbury Road, SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506; 616/942-8220) commenting that at the rock-bottom price of $150, I wasn't sure how owner Fred Meyerson was going to market his product nationally and stay in business.

Well he has, and maybe the reason is how easy his program is to load, use, and of course, buy. If simple is what you want, JS Estimating is definitely worth a look. And now for some more good news, JS Estimating has a sibling.

### JS Job Cost

The new member in the Jenny Systems family that makes the JS Estimating system even more attractive is called *JS Job Cost*. It also sells for $150. This is one I really like. Meyerson has not just done it again, he has completely outdone himself. JS Job Cost is simple, complete, and unpretentious. In all the best uses of the phrase, it is quick and dirty.

The program comes on two disks: one is a demo and the other holds the actual program. I spent about 15 minutes one afternoon letting the demo teach me to run the program. That's all it took. When I loaded the program into my PC, the first thing I saw was the main menu. From there all I had to do was follow the instructions on the screen.

You won't believe how easy this program is to use. The JS Job Cost interfaces with the JS Estimating program, but the job cost module can also be used as a stand-alone program with figures from other estimating systems, or hand-generated numbers. The data will have to be keyed in, but that doesn't take too long.

The JS Job Cost menu allows you to create a vendor/employee database with names, addresses, phone numbers, etc., but it's kept simple and straightforward. Another menu choice gives you the option of entering customer information similar to the vendor/employee database. Still another menu selection allows you to set up estimating divisions—a number and a description for each category you ordinarily use to job cost. There are 90 or so divisions available; I use about 35 in my job-cost accounting system. Two other menu selections are for entering job information (number, name, location, description, etc.), and job income (check number, invoice number, amount received, etc.).

If you have four employees, five customers, five projects, 50 vendors and 40 division codes, you might spend an hour or two loading the data—four or five hours if you're a real slow typist. Once the basic data is on board, you simply call up a job by the number you assigned or pop up the jobs list, highlight the entry

you want to work on, hit the enter key, and load the job into the program. Meyerson uses pop-up data screens very effectively throughout the program. This makes it much easier for the many hunt-and-peck typists among us.

I found a couple of minor bugs worth mentioning, but not worth getting too concerned about. First, in the company configuration screen (where you put your company name, address, and phone number for use as the header in reports), I couldn't get the phone field to accept my phone number. None of the reports seemed to use that information anyway, although that may have been the result of the program failing to take my phone number in the first place.

Second, I found the job-cost data entry screen to be a little too simple. Ordinarily, when I job cost wages (in dollars or hours or both), I classify the cost type to labor. Meyerson allows each entry to be cost coded as *labor*, *material*, or *other* (*other* exists as a miscellaneous cost type). That's fine, but when the wage field is filled with hours, I would expect to see labor automatically become the default for the cost type field. This would cut down on entry time and help to improve overall data entry accuracy.

The standard reports that come with the system are as simple and easy to read as any I have ever seen at any price. Job income reports reflect income less costs showing overall profit or loss in dollars and as a percentage of income. Another report compares the original estimate to actual costs, allowing a look at profit and loss by division. Still another printout provides similar information by division and cost type. Job costs are broken down into columns by the three available cost types, plus a fourth column that represents the total of the three cost types.

No matter how small your company is, you can't afford not to job cost. Accurate estimating coupled with effective job costing separates the men and women from the boys and girls in the contracting business. If you have a small or medium-size remodeling or custom home building business and you're worried about the cost of estimating and job costing software, investigate Jenny Systems.

### Bits and Pieces

Beginning next month, I will be adding a Mac section to my column since I recently acquired a Macintosh IIx. I am currently testing *Archicad* (Graphisoft, South San Francisco, Calif.; 800/344-3468)—a solid modeling, 3-D CADD program that creates an estimate as you draw. I have never seen anything like it. It's out of reach for a lot of small contractors at $4,000, but if it performs like I think it will, it should prove to be a bargain for bigger volume guys even on top of a $6,000 to $10,000 Mac. More on this soon. ■

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*This Job Cost/Estimate Report generated by the JS Estimating software shows the difference between the estimated and the actual labor costs for a particular job, and it calculates the percentage of that difference.*