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Forefront from Dexter + Chaney is an enterprise-level software program designed for construction and construction-related businesses. Founded in 1981, the vendor continues to improve Forefront each year, adding even more new features and enhancing existing ones. Large scale and feature rich, Forefront offers industry-specific functionality for heavy highway, utility, electrical, mechanical, specialty, and general contractors. Although it can be scaled down to also suit smaller companies, its wealth of features is truly designed for multiple users in an enterprise environment.

Offering Equipment Control and Equipment Tracking modules, Forefront enables users to track depreciation, handle meter reads, record recurring transactions, track and monitor equipment inventory, and monitor employee equipment usage. The Job Cost module offers four different pricing methods: Unit Cost, Cost Plus, Fixed Bid, and Time and Material. Job phases, and estimates can be set up from scratch or copied from a similar job. Job costs are broken down into phases, and the phases can be rolled up to minor and major groups during reporting. The system assists the project manager to prepare cost projections by using dollars, hours, quantities, dollars per hour, units per hour or dollars per unit. Users can calculate time and material costs, prepare billings and assign different billing rates for employees. Multiple billing formats can be created, and fees and other markup items can be included. Phase field codes can contain up to 12 alphanumeric characters and can be unique to each job if desired.

LEARNING CURVE – 5 Stars
Installation of Forefront is completed for all clients via the Internet. Users can watch as a technical support member installs the system; users simply insert the CD when

needed. The Menu System contains a drop-down toolbar at the top of the screen.

more by searching for matching data as information is entered. Clicking on the drill-down icon will display the detail that makes up the figures currently displayed on-screen. And the search window allows users to search for information from another area of Forefront while in a separate module. An excellent Help function provides detailed information on each module and screen, including step-by-step procedures for various tasks.

MODULES & ADD-ONS – 5 Stars
Forefront offers over 30 modules designed specifically for construction and related trades. Modules available include AP, AR, Cash Management, Payroll, Document Imaging, Equipment Control, Equipment Tracking, Esti-Link, Fixed Assets, GL, Human Resources, Info-Link, Inventory Control, Job Cost, Order Processing, Preventive Maintenance, Project Management, Purchase Order, Remote-Link, Sales Analysis, Service Contracts, Small Tools, Time & Materials, Work Order, and Query & Dashboards. Other functions available include a Scale Interface and a Preventive Maintenance module that allows you to enter a complete maintenance schedule for all valuable equipment. Custom programming is also available.

PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS – 5 Stars
The Sales Analysis module allows sales to be tracked company-wide. Details such as customer and customer type, salesperson, commission, gross margin, units sold, and items carried are all available for review and analysis using the sales analysis module. The Project Management module maintains RFIs, submittals, daily logs, meetings, project changes and transmittals, along with a complete directory of all contractors, subcontractors and vendors assigned to each project. The Task Management function lets users enter various tasks, which will direct the user through the software to the screens needed to complete the task. The tasks also integrate with Microsoft Outlook. Users can also add the status, set the priority, and the percentage completed, if appropriate, choosing Forefront or Outlook as the default editor.

IMPORT/EXPORT & INTEGRATION – 5 Stars

Forefront contains over 1,200 standard Crystal Reports reports. These reports can be customized with Crystal Editor, providing even greater customization capability. All reports can be exported to third-party applications such as various spreadsheet and word processing programs. Reports can be saved as PDF, ODBC or HTML reports, and they can be faxed or e-mailed directly from the report-processing screen.

SUPPORT & TRAINING – 5 Stars

Access to the knowledgebase and user forum is available 24 hours per day via the Dexter + Chaney web page. Links are also available to download software updates. Support is available via telephone or fax during regular business hours. Context-sensitive Help is available throughout the program, so if a user is in the GL module, the Help function will display Help files that relate to the GL. Several manuals are also available, including the Tutorial, Getting Started and Forefront Overview, which are perfect for getting familiar with the product.

RELATIVE VALUE – 5 Stars

It's difficult to put a monetary value on Forefront. It's a technically sophisticated system that runs in the $50,000 range for an eight- to 12-user system. The true value of Forefront is the range of modules, back-end strength and ease of use that make this a construction software product that is well worth the expense for enterprise-level companies who cannot exist on anything less than the best.

2007 Overall Rating – 5 Stars

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