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mechanical, roofing, fire prevention, and general contracting industries. Written and developed in a working service contracting company, EMS provides many built-in tools for the service contractor that might otherwise need to be tracked and managed by hand or other third-party software. The starting price level of the product is \$4,375 for the base accounting, job cost and reporting system, and comes with a six-user license. Additional users can be purchased.

Learning Curve ‘ 4.5 Stars

Installation is quick and simple with no installation options other than the installation location. Two sample companies are provided for training prior to beginning ‘live’ data entry or for new users to get a feel for the program. Although EMS 2000 Professional (reviewed here) is based on the Microsoft Access database, the company also offers EMS 2000 Enterprise, which utilizes Microsoft SQL Server as its database for larger user bases.

A basic drop-down menu system provides items for File Maintenance, Posting/Activities, Reporting, Utilities, Set Up, Specialties and Help. Under each of these functional categories are options for each module. Program navigation and operation takes a little getting used to. Bright, multi-colored data-entry screens provide a somewhat confusing, nonstandard user interface. These colors have documented meanings, but there are just too many different colors with no means for modification. (The company noted that it is in final development of a software release that features a monochromatic color scheme, which will be released in early summer.) Data-entry screens use a single window layout that combines an item list and displays all of the basic information for a particular record. Each screen then has a number of buttons that take you to other related data-entry screens. For example, the customer maintenance screen has buttons for deposit reports, invoice reports, job information, site maintenance, contact setup, repeat invoices, notes/files and service contracts.

Modules & Functionality ‘ 5 Stars

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here. One-click access to other information includes customer data, site data, site maintenance, service data, phase data, AIA data, certified payroll data and job notes.

Of particular interest to service-oriented businesses is the Service Management and Dispatching module, which lets you enter incoming service calls as well as jump directly to the employee/technician scheduling screen. This module can also keep track of the equipment at the site that is to be serviced, which is particularly helpful for service contract work or other periodic maintenance jobs. Service priority codes can be assigned, which print on the work order, and can be used to sort various reports for work prioritization and scheduling. The related scheduling screen features a visual drag-and-drop scheduling grid for each employee.

The Material Estimation module allows you to create inventory costs, labor factors, overhead and gross profit percentages. You can create bids from scratch or from a template. These bids can later be converted quickly to a job. Multiple bid templates can be stored to provide a quick start on bids for similar types of jobs. Templates can also be set up from existing jobs.

Import/Export/Integration ‘ 4 Stars

Data import is supported only within the bar code module, which is able to upload purchase order receipt, material posting, inventory adjustment, inventory transfer, and tool check out/in data from a bar code scanner. Data export through the program is limited to reports. However, any of the data can be exported using Microsoft Access.

Support & Training ‘ 4.5 Stars

Support and training are available from the company headquarters in Billings, Montana. E-mail support and a customer-only web site are provided. The company

also offers customized programming services to address individual needs. Support

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estimated costs, to date, percent complete, costs this period, and a similar group of information related to the hourly estimate, used and so forth. Many reports offer additional filter buttons that display only information related to a certain category, such as labor, materials, equipment, subcontractors and miscellaneous.

Relative Value ‘ 5 Stars

EMS 2000 Professional provides an economical alternative for small service-based contractors, especially those in the HVAC (heating and air conditioning) service business. Specialized modules, such as Refrigerant Tracking provide utilities that would not be available in more generalized job cost software suites. The help system is concise and informative, which helps you get to the proper program function as quickly as possible. After the initial learning curve, the software design is simple and effective.

2005 Overall Rating: 4.5

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