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Intuit ' Master Builder

May. 08, 2005

Released in October 2004, Master Builder Version 10 brings more than 60 new features and enhancements, including new information-sharing capabilities, communications features, estimating enhancements, production tools, and new accounting and business analysis features. Master Builder costs \$2,395 for the first seat including one year of support and training. Add-on modules are sold separately for \$930 each (including first-year support) and include Estimating, Services Receivables, Document Control and Inventory.

Learning Curve ' 5 Stars

The product's installation reflects the kind of simple, thoughtful and foolproof engineering that go into the entire Intuit product line. A single CD lets you quickly install the product and provides an optional sample company database for learning and testing. During the installation process, you're asked for the authorization code provided with the CD. Once installation is complete, a separate process fully registers the software, which can be completed online, by phone or by mail. Master Builder can be installed in a single workstation, client/server or peer-to-peer environment.

The main program screen is an attractive desktop with an expandable tree-structure menu on the left side for accessing all modules and functions. The right side of the screen provides an area to place program and function shortcuts, as well as links for Help and other product resources. A standard Windows drop-down menu provides access to a limited number of system-level functions, such as opening and creating companies, desktop configuration options and Help. Data-entry screens are refined with easy-to-use multi-tab windows that use standard Windows record editing

conventions. Applicable key fields have down-arrow icons that open a picklist of items for that field. Selected fields are defined as 'searchable fields,' where you can use the page up and page down keys to quickly move between nearby records. A toolbar at the top of the screen provides standard record navigation (first, previous, next, last) buttons and buttons for save, new, recall, find, count, delete, copy, attach notes and print options.

Modules & Functionality ' 5 Stars

Master Builder divides its functionality into four profit cycle phases: estimating, production, accounting and analysis. Modules are designed to provide integrated control over the entire process. The estimating module provides the tools to successfully put together a proposal, from initial contact to the signing of the contract. In each client record, the program lets you assign a salesperson responsible for managing the client, allowing comprehensive notes about the client over the course of the sales process. The estimating module lets you define global variables, formulas and templates to make the estimating process faster and more accurate. From here, you can also generate the budget, proposal documents, purchase orders and subcontracts.

The production phase includes budgeting, scheduling, equipment management and document control. Master Builder uses a Critical Path Management (CPM) scheduling system that integrates estimating, vendor, equipment and employee information. Call sheets can be generated that list subcontractors and suppliers for the job, with information such as phone numbers, dates, schedules and work descriptions. This phase also includes many of the critical accounting-related aspects of a job, such as job cost reporting, billing summaries, phased summaries, purchase orders, subcontracts and change orders.

The accounting phase includes the standard accounting modules, such as GL, AR, billing, AP, payroll, direct deposit, service receivables and inventory. The GL module supports up to 10-digit account numbers. All 12 accounting periods for the current year are available for posting, as well as the twelfth period of the prior year. Besides standard contract billing, four specialized billing options let you choose the one that suits your specific business needs: time and materials billing, progress billing, unitary billing or loan draw billing. Inventory valuation methods supported include LIFO, FIFO and WAC (weighted average cost).

Finally, the analysis phase includes standard GL reports, extensive accounting and job cost reports, and a financial review function. The financial review function

provides tools for analyzing past performance using numerous graphs and reports. Graphs available include Current Ratio, Quick Ratio, Net Profit/Sales, and Overhead to Direct Expense. Trend graphs are available for Cash, AR, AP, Sales, Gross Profit, Net Profit, Break Even and Working Capital. Version 10 added numerous enhancements, including many to the financial statements to further reflect GAAP accounting principles. Other enhancements include multiple payee support to handle partial vendor payments and multiple secondary payees, the ability to setup new users or redefine existing users by copying user defaults, new safeguards to prevent voiding of cleared checks or deposits, and new documentation enhancements with two new Getting Started guides.

Import/Export/Integration ‘ 5 Stars

Data exchange is virtually unlimited with the optional Master Builder software development kit (SDK) and application program interface (API). With these tools, developers can create any number of third-party products that can interact with Master Builder databases and functionality. Master Builder’s data files are in FoxPro format, allowing them to be accessed via the appropriate ODBC database drivers. Within the program, exports are provided for budget files, proposal files, unitary proposal files, takeoffs and scheduling. Data from reports, quick grids and find queries can be exported to Microsoft Excel. Similarly, you can import budget files, proposal files, takeoffs and scheduler tasks. You can also import lists of jobs, clients, vendors and employees using *.IIF files from QuickBooks.

Support & Training ‘ 5 Stars

Annual support programs provide product updates, tax updates, instructor-led training and live technical support. Intuit offers numerous training options, including online classes, individual training, live seminars and workshops. The online help system is thorough, and many help topics have tutorials in a ‘How to’ format. In addition, Intuit actively supports a network of independent ‘ProAdvisors’ that can assist with routine implementation and training tasks.

Reporting ‘ 5 Stars

Master Builder provides a number of reports including Job Status, Job Cost Journal, Job Cost Summary, Billing Summary, Phased Summary, Bonding Reports and Over/Under Billing Report. Reports can be previewed, printed, e-mailed or faxed directly from within Master Builder. Reports can also be set up to automatically print, e-mail or fax on a pre-set schedule. A built-in report writer lets you completely

customize your reports using a WYSIWYG designer. A toolbar lets you select tables and fields and place them on the design area. Pictures and calculated fields can also be placed on the report.

Relative Value ‘ 5 Stars

This is an impressive program that combines a comfortable, well-designed user interface with many features for both accountants and project managers. Master Builder is a benchmark product in the construction accounting category.

2005 Overall Rating: 5

Intuit, Inc. • Article

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