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*From the April/May 2006 Review of
Construction Accounting Software*

The American Contractor from Maxwell Systems Inc. is a business management software product designed for small to midsize construction contractors and service businesses. Particularly useful for companies expecting future expansion, The American Contractor comes in three editions: Express, starts with two users; Essential, five users; and Enterprise, starts with 15 users. Excellent service management and dispatch features also make The American Contractor a good fit for those who routinely send employees into the field on service calls.

LEARNING CURVE — 5 Stars

Installation of The American Contractor was quick and problem free. You can opt to use the default chart of accounts or customize it to reflect your needs. After logging into the program, the Session Manager will appear. This is the interface you will use to access the main areas of The American Contractor, including Accounting, Command Center, Project Scheduling, Document Control, Estimating and Admin functions. Icons at the top of each screen provide access to other modules so there's no need to return to the Session Manager until you wish to log out.

Plan on spending a good amount of time entering beginning balances, tracking codes, budgeting information, and descriptions and serial numbers for all company-owned

equipment. If converting from another system and you don't have the staff, expertise or time to do all of the entry, you can use Quick Start, a service provided (for an additional cost) by The American Contractor. Quick Start will import and setup up your master files, including beginning balances for AR,

AP and General Ledger. User-definable cost codes, purchase order forms, a

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to vital cost, scheduling and financial information; Document Control and Info Center, which help get a handle on out-of-control paper by storing information on your desktop or in electronic folders; and Estimating, where the Proposal Wizard helps you produce quick, professional bids.

Job cost tracking lets you handle a variety of venues including subdivisions and tract homes. You can create budgets for each project, complete with notification when you go over budget, and you can easily track contractor license or insurance expirations. Multiple invoice formats allow you to choose the one that best suits your needs. Payroll can be entered by employee, job or crew, and will easily handle multi-state transactions.

The Service Management feature contains an excellent work order entry feature that can enter and track all new work orders by priority. There is also a dispatch screen, where jobs and equipment can be scheduled and progress monitored. Also available is AC Tracker (for an additional cost), which enables you to link your inventory and equipment to a barcode scanning system, print labels and keep better track of all of your valuable inventory.

IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION — 5 Stars

All features in The American Contractor are designed to work with each other, so information entered once will show up in all the necessary areas. The American Contractor easily integrates with a variety of third-party software including MS Office, Payroll Processing Services, Project Scheduling Programs and Estimating Services. Also available is Esti-Link, which provides an electronic link between The American Contractor and various estimating software and pricing products. Mobile Max works with wireless devices such as Pocket PC, Bluetooth and most major carriers, so your technicians can download dispatched work orders and have access to inventory, equipment and other resources.

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REPORTING — 4.5 Stars

Over 450 standard reports are included with The American Contractor. Both standard and user-defined reports can be accessed in each individual function such as accounting or job costing or run from the Command Center. Completed reports can then be viewed, printed, exported to another program or e-mailed. The Report Folio, included with the program, gives you a breakdown on each program available from The American Contractor.

RELATIVE VALUE — 4.5 Stars

At a cost of \$19,500, The American Contractor Enterprise System is ideally designed for midsize to large companies that need to keep a tight rein on production, equipment and service-related tasks. Smaller companies could ideally start with a less robust version of The American Contractor and expand their product when needed. The Express package is priced at \$4,295, and Essential, with more modules and users, is priced at \$9,895.

2006 Overall Rating — 4.5 Stars

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