On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid for Masonry Companies

Masonry is a craftsmanship trade of complexity which can vary from laying a simple brick wall to installing an ornate exterior on a high-rise building. Not so very long ago, all aspects of masonry, from design to takeoff to build-out, were done the old-fashioned way—by hand.

While a machine may never replace the craft of masonry, there continue to be technological advancements ranging from how materials are prepared to the pre-mixed mortar. The same applies to how the mason trade performs project takeoff and estimating. For companies in this business, the financial success of a project is often determined even before a company is awarded the work. It all starts with a high-quality bid built on the accuracy and timeliness of a company's takeoff and estimation processes.

As in many other industries, technology innovations that improve efficiencies have

appeared in the construction sector. The masonry trade is no different. It is a business of both precision and detail where every aspect of a job is unique. Concrete block or brick? Architectural precast lintels or precast pilasters? Stone or travertine? The devil is in the details. To increase productivity, reduce waste and increase profits, masons invest in technology and equipment that increase their lay rate and mortar yield. However, tools that improve efficiency and effectiveness are not limited to the mason's toolkit.

On Center Software developed On-Screen Takeoff® and Quick Bid®, which are ideal for

Masonry contractors. Together, they are designed to speed up the process and improve accuracy for material takeoff and estimating. This software automates masonry workflows from bid to completion.

Productive contractors enjoy a healthy profit knowing that their project begins with accurate takeoffs and estimates. These tasks are the cornerstone of every construction trade and have always been a challenge. In today's highly competitive marketplace where "the low bid gets the job," a company can lose money before the first brick is ever laid unless it has accurate and timely takeoffs and estimates.

Manual Processes are Costly

Before digital technologies such as On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid, the tools used for takeoff and estimating consisted of the rolling linear scale, colored pencils, highlighters, notepads, and calculators. As the use of personal computers grew in business, estimators replaced their calculators with electronic spreadsheets and compound formulas. Many estimators still use these tools today to manually perform material takeoffs and to generate educated cost "guesstimates" that make their way into formal bids.

Manual processes are time and labor-intensive. Knowledgeable masonry estimators carefully comb through many printed architectural and engineering plans to tabulate quantities of brick, sand, and mortar, as well as the requirements of various other masonry related materials like bracing, fasteners and wall ties. It takes significant time and skill to determine the real values due to unique conditions and odd shapes where it is challenging measuring precise values.

Further complicating the process is the prospect of change orders and requests for alternatives. With manual processes and spreadsheets, the estimator must sift through marked-up plans and prior estimates to work up a change or develop an alternative and incorporate it into the overall project budget and bid. Even small changes create a time burden and add to the cost of bidding on projects.

Many businesses invest considerable time and money in their takeoff and estimating processes in the hope of winning work. While manual processes are still common today, there is a better and more accurate way for masonry companies to double their estimating productivity. Companies submit more bids in less time with greater confidence when they use digital takeoff and estimating applications. Moreover, of course, more and better bids mean more lucrative work.

On-Screen Takeoff & Quick Bid Improve Productivity

On-Screen Takeoff allows knowledgeable masonry estimators to measure areas, lengths, and volumes; exclude window and door cutouts; count quantities; and select system components from digital plans viewed on a computer screen providing a representation of the actual wall, its material, colors, bonding, openings, offsets, and so forth. As counts and measurements are taken with the click of a computer mouse, the on-screen® plan is highlighted to show what has been processed. The estimator applies conditions like block walls, brick veneer on steel or wood structure, and fire brick. Rather than tabulating the takeoffs on a legal pad or spreadsheet, the estimator lets the application track and tally all the material needs.

Quick Bid, an estimating application, applies the current material, labor, markups, and other costs to the takeoff data to estimate project costs. An important element of creating an accurate estimate is breaking a project down into smaller pieces and rolling them up into an overall bid.

An example would be creating estimates by block walls, veneer walls, bracing, or CSI divisions.

Today's digital takeoff and estimating solutions are usually separate applications, but On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid have a high degree of integration so that takeoff data flows right into cost estimates. The products' capabilities and features are robust with full-featured takeoff and estimating solutions that do more to simplify and accelerate the bid development process.

Reduce Redundancy and Increase Efficiency

On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid pay for themselves in several ways—first by increasing the number of jobs a company bids to win more work; second by eliminating the need to print, handle, and store bulky paper-based plans and other documents; and third by easing the estimator's analysis of the building and grouping objects into appropriate assemblies for streamlined installation.

Most importantly, these applications assist in the accurate translation of specified specialty system design requirements into an equally accurate takeoff and estimate. Digital plans and designs imported directly into On-Screen Takeoff allow an estimator to take off all aspects of the project, including door and window cutouts, lintels, brick and block courses, grout, wall ties and expansion joints, to name a few. Because the estimator specifies and views specific conditions directly on the computer screen, it is easy to work up precise quantities for brick, block, mortar, and wall ties to develop accurate estimates that meet the designed masonry project requirements.

With Quick Bid, estimators can maintain and manage a library of standard assemblies and low-voltage designs and sub-systems. These assemblies are combinations of materials, quantities, costs, and labor that together form a unit of activity. These standard parts can be instantly recalled and reused among projects to save time. Built-in cost databases that are unique to low-voltage materials are another time-saver designed to reduce errors and develop a more accurate bid. Moreover, Quick Bid allows an estimator to import complete and current cost lists from multiple sources including vendors and subcontractors.

By using Quick Bid and On-Screen Takeoff estimators avoid spending significant time comparing revisions by simply overlaying any new plans over the original plans to identify and highlight the differences, identify potential conflicts, and perform a new takeoff. The system applies the changes to the estimate, all with a few clicks of a mouse. A knowledgeable estimator uses the On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid to specify what assemblies and labor are required to perform a particular portion of a project, as well as how many assemblies are required based on the measures identified during the takeoff process. Once the materials and labor are determined, prices and rates are applied, a markup is calculated, and the detailed estimate is published for the bid.

The integrated tool sets perform calculations and extensions automatically and can include multi-level breakouts, complete industry code and materials databases, and reporting functions. They quickly tie together estimates, labor needs, and cost analysis in one solution to make truly informed business decisions. Contractors have complete control over the estimating process, and ultimately bid more accurately and increase profitability.

ON CENTER SOFTWARE CONTRACTOR SUITE CUSTOMER RESEARCH

Increase your profits by 20%

Percentage of profits increase with the use of On Center Software's Contractor Suite

- Greater than 50%: **2%**
- 40-50%: **4%**
- 30-40%: **13%**
- 20-30%: **20%**
- 10-20%: **31%**
- Up to 10%: **29%**
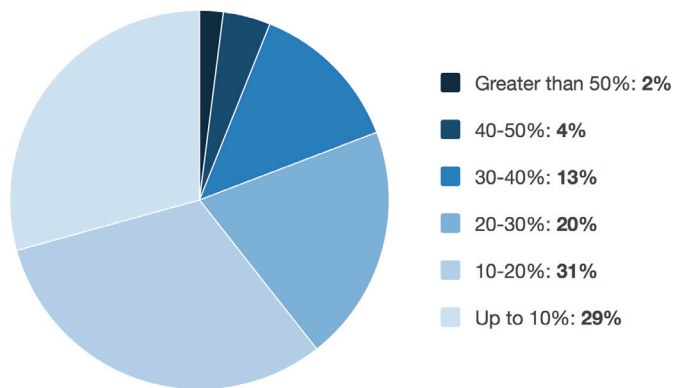
Source: TechValidate survey of 45 users of On Center Software Contractor Suite

On Center SOFTWARE | TechValidate

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Better Ways to Manage Costs

Quick Bid generates reports that help the business owner manage labor and material costs. There are reports to manage material inventories and purchases and to plan man-hours and costs for a variety of labor categories and tasks. Depending on the reporting capabilities, labor is broken down into subcategories for site labor, installation labor and separate values for labor which can include tasks like bracing, grouting, brick and block laying. Furthermore, material requirements are reported by what is needed and when to facilitate just-in-time purchasing.

A better way to conduct business

Masonry companies that already adopted On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid can't imagine doing business without these tools. These programs help the owners:

- **Save Time and Money:** Reduce the cost of shipping and printing plans. Spend far less time doing takeoffs and estimating costs for each bid. Submit more bids to win more projects.
- **Reduce Costly Mistakes:** Eliminate manual entry errors and see visually on the screen that everything is accounted for, which decreases the likelihood of having to perform "value engineering" to recoup lost revenue and cost from an error-filled bid.
- **Improve Collaboration:** Get everyone on the same page for how to bid and work a job.
- **Differentiate from Competition:** Submit bids, respond to change requests and offer alternatives quickly and with confidence.

Conclusion

A mason's success begins with expertise, attention to detail, and hard work, and continues with the ability to takeoff, estimate and bid projects in a timely and accurate manner. Taking too long to generate a bid or bidding too high from inaccurate input costs will cause companies to lose jobs. Conversely, if a company bids too low due to incorrect information, it will lose money on its work. The objective is to get it right the first time, every time. On Center Software's digital takeoff and estimating software make the difference between keeping a company busy and profitable and just keeping the doors open.