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Message from the Director

Benchmark Estimating Software - The complete estimating and quoting package

Glenn Hamblen is a marketing graduate from the University of Wollongong and the latest member of the Benchmark team. When he started work on this Newsletter one month ago, he asked me to tell him the Benchmark story. For those of you who know me you will understand that he didn't have to ask twice!

So here it is - the Benchmark story! Nearly 10 years of hard, enjoyable and incredibly rewarding work condensed into 2 minutes . . .

As an Estimator with then 25 years experience, Benchmark was originally a simple idea of mine to make the task of estimating easier and faster. It has now developed into a complete estimating and quoting package, and one that our clients tell us, is a true market leader in many ways.

My whole philosophy of Benchmark was to give an estimator all the tools they required at their fingertips, and for it to be easy to use. From this philosophy, we have seen the development of many unique and amazingly powerful features that are visible today.

The Item and Resource Libraries were radical concepts in estimating, as many other estimating packages operated on the principle of having a master project from which you copied. The Resource Library provided organisations with the controls they needed to manage their base cost data. The Item Library saved estimator's reinventing the wheel and improved estimating consistency. In recent times I have seen the Item Library act as a primary source of corporate knowledge for our clients; something that is vital to a company's continuity.

Then the Routine Library was created to speed up common estimating procedures to further benefit the estimator. Routines turned out to be a perfect tool for pricing day-to-day estimates quickly, and for pricing Items in larger projects where many variables affected the price.



As Benchmark has advanced, so too have the ideas of our customers and our staff on how to best simplify and speed up estimating while retaining accuracy.

Auto Allocate, the first of a series of power estimating features, prices Bills of Quantities in less than 50% of the time it normally takes. More recently we have developed Power Routines; a new module with unlimited potential and capable of pricing maintenance and particular construction estimates in a matter of minutes.

It has always been my aim to keep Benchmark focused purely on estimating, as I cannot stress to you enough the importance of getting your estimates right! Despite this, and through much valued involvement with our clients, we have learnt and understood the importance of being compatible with other business systems. Linking to project management software, accounting software and spreadsheets allows us to retain our focus on the estimating process at the same time as facilitating integration with your business systems.

Many other features have transpired over the years. Notable features are the quoting side of the package which includes quote follow up, marketing reports, auto email, the new quote with options report and the upcoming Word template quote reports.

All these features are great, but most importantly Benchmark offers ease of use, speed and unparalleled flexibility to price day-to-day quotes, construction projects and maintenance tenders. It even allows you to estimate at the detailed, resource level or with unit rates. All these aspects make Benchmark the complete estimating and quoting package!!

Yours, in the interest of better estimating,

Rob MacDonald
Director

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Client Success Story

Brisbane CityWorks Asphalt Operations Group

Benchmark's flexibility to interface with other business systems helps Brisbane CityWorks manage projects and resources across the business

Brisbane CityWorks is one of Queensland's largest civil construction and maintenance organisations, and is a part of the largest local government authority in Australia, Brisbane City Council. The Brisbane CityWorks corporate vision is, "to be an innovative business, dedicated to achieving growth and excellence by providing outstanding integrated civil construction and maintenance services to all customers".

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Brisbane CityWorks Asphalt Operations Group have implemented Benchmark Estimating Software; this reflects their desire to be innovative, facilitates the continued growth of the organisation, and integrates their business systems so they efficiently and effectively deliver to their customers.

The Asphalt Operations Group employ around 210 people, and provide asphalt products, asphalt and quarry materials testing, asphalt services, and asphalt maintenance.

Optimising resource usage and knowledge management

Benchmark's new 'Resource-based Export to Microsoft Project' module, which allows organisations to more effectively manage their jobs, has also helped Brisbane CityWorks better manage their plant resources across the entire council. Asphalt Operations Manager Doug O'Brien says, "we wanted to use the new 'Export to Microsoft Project' to balance our demand for shared plant resources across council. Now that we have achieved this, we can evaluate resource demand in the short to medium term to optimise the utilisation of our resources."



This ability of Benchmark to integrate with other business systems also helps Brisbane CityWorks share knowledge throughout the organization to better manage and plan projects. Brisbane CityWorks are currently implementing Microsoft Project Server and are planning on having Benchmark integrate with this software as well.

Easy updating of resource costs

Benchmark's ability to manage detailed resource costs provides unparalleled accuracy and, as Doug points out, is very easy to do; "we recently had an increase in wages, and it was extremely easy to update the resource costs for labour across all of our current estimates and field projects from the one screen. This ensured we made the appropriate allowances and did not blow out the budget".

The ideal estimating system for Public Works

Benchmark is now the number one estimating system for the Public Works, and Doug O'Brien believes the pressure of stringent budgets is the main reason why Benchmark works so well for local government authorities. Benchmark's accuracy and transparent structure "makes it very easy to drill down into your estimate in great detail. This allows you to plan your costs and work tightly with your fixed budget."



The new Client List is now online. This will provide our current clients with exposure as leaders in business innovation, as it shows that they are implementing best practice estimating in their organisation. It also demonstrates how Benchmark is successfully being used by hundreds of reputable organisations of different scale and in many different industries.

If you are a current client and want to be included, simply contact us by email or phone. Conversely, if you have any changes to your details as they appear, or if your website address has changed, please contact us.

Recent Client Testimonials

Since the February 06 newsletter, the testimonials page on the website has added the testimonials of Prismo Contracting Services (see page 3), MidCoast Water, Boral Shared Business Services, Neale Jones Civil Contracting, GW & BR Cramer, and JMAC Constructions. Thank you to these companies for their time and kind words.

Visit the New Client List on the Website at:
www.benchmarkestimating.com/clientlist.php

Client Success Story

Northpipe Constructions

Benchmark helps Northpipe improve their win rate

Operating on the North Coast of New South Wales, Northpipe Constructions is a provider of high quality small to medium Civil services including pipelines, subdivisions, plumbing work, and plant hire. Dedicated to providing the highest possible level of service to get the best possible end result, Northpipe also provide innovative solutions to deliver the most cost effective solutions for their customers.



rate has been really good recently; we are winning all sorts of civil work in a range of different areas."

Northpipe Constructions realised a need to improve their estimating system, as their previous system was not up to scratch. They needed a package that provided better detail but maintained ease of use, and Benchmark easily filled this gap.

After first noticing Benchmark at a Civil Contractors Federation meeting, proprietor Barry Hezlett decided Benchmark was the best choice as his estimating solution, and he has not looked back since. Northpipe Constructions is now using Benchmark for their estimating needs, and they have been very successful lately. Barry says "Our strike

Benchmark has benefited Northpipe not just as an estimating solution but also through providing good support services. Using their extensive industry experience, Benchmark also helped Northpipe with the development of their corporate profile, which Barry says "has proven very handy. Many people want to see this document to help them with their selection process and to get an idea of our range of experience and expertise".

Barry concludes "the overall experience with Benchmark has been very good. They are very helpful and responsive with support services and software modifications".

Read all of our Client Success Stories on the Website at:
www.benchmarkestimating.com/clientcasestudies.php

New Client Testimonials

Prismo Contracting Services

"We purchased Benchmark to get an accurate breakdown of our costs and to make use of the management information it provides. Benchmark's performance has been spot on. The software is very easy to use and set up and the Benchmark support staff have been very flexible and receptive to change. The implementation process was very fast and the training that we received from Benchmark was very user friendly. It was very easy for everyone to learn regardless of IT skill level."

Andy Walker, Director
[Prismo Contracting Services](#)
Doncaster, UK

MidCoast Water

"...the software's ability link with our other systems is vital for proficient operations. We can also see great benefits in Routines, as we are able to price water or sewage pipelines and pumping stations by simply answering 7 or 8 questions regarding the job."

Brendan Guiney,
Development Design Engineer
[MidCoast Water](#)
Forster, NSW, Australia

Read the Recent Client Testimonials on the Website at:
www.benchmarkestimating.com/clienttestimonials.php

UK Business Development Manager Amy-Ruth MacDonald keeps us informed on the progress of the United Kingdom office.

Although the UK is not getting much warmer, things are heating up in Benchmark. Recently we have been training and implementing Scottish Borders Council SB Contracts division. We certainly had a great time, and it seems Scottish Borders will soon be reaping the huge benefits of Benchmark. With each training session that we complete here in the UK we further see that good estimating, and Benchmark, will greatly benefit our current and future clients.

Rob, the Director, recently paid the UK office a highly successful two week visit. We were able to visit several companies to maximize the benefits they gained from Benchmark, and we found time to work on the strategic direction of Benchmark in the UK.

Training Information

Benchmark's trainers have been kept busy delivering high quality training courses and implementation throughout Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The New User and Advanced User courses are attracting record attendances, and their popularity is growing as more and more companies select Benchmark as their estimating solution.

New User

7-8 June 06	Brisbane, Australia
27-28 June 06	Newcastle, Australia
12-13 July 06	Parramatta, Australia
2-3 August 06	Brisbane, Australia
16-17 August 06	Parramatta, Australia
30-31 August 06	Melbourne, Australia

Advanced User

26-27 July 06	Parramatta, Australia
23-24 August 06	Brisbane, Australia

Routine Writing

5-6 July 06	Melbourne, Australia
14-15 August 06	Parramatta, Australia

To sign up to any of these courses, go to the 'Training' section on the website or contact one of our offices direct



Product Development - Version 6.05 to be released in mid 2006

The major advancements of the Version 6.05 release include:

- > **Word template reporting** so you can create your quotes in Microsoft Word. This gives you ultimate flexibility in the presentation of your quotes to improve your marketing and win more work.
- > The ability to perform quantity takeoffs faster and more accurately with the new **Item Quantity Takeoff** function. This increases consistency and helps you implement standard takeoff procedures.
- > More options in the highly popular **Quote with Options Report**. You will be able to control font sizes and font types, margins, whether you wish to display sections only, and much more. This will allow you to generate a quote very quickly and in the format you want.
- > More **Exports to Excel** including one that matches the Direct Cost Resources by Item report. This can be used for estimate review, job costing, sensitivity analysis and aid in the effective project management of the job.

Visit the Benchmark Website at:
www.benchmarkestimating.com



benchmark

estimating software

Upcoming Trade Shows

The Benchmark team pride itself on its support of industry. We also enjoy the feedback from our users and prospective users and there is no better way to do this than to exhibit at a trade show. Below are the upcoming trade shows Benchmark are booked in for.

Keep an eye out for Benchmark at one of the following events:

LANDSCAPE AUSTRALIA EXPO

26th - 28th of July
in Sydney, NSW, Australia



LOGOV EXPO

10th - 11th of October
in Logan, QLD, Australia



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