



Star Rating

Builder Information System Available At Three Levels

By Brent Dirks, CPA, EA, MCSE

Builder Information System (BIS) from MICS (800-838-6427; www.bissoftware.com) is a slick package that offers core job cost functionality plus numerous optional integrated modules for a well rounded system that



BUILDER INFORMATION SYSTEM

can fit the needs of a wide variety of construction firms. The base package includes GL, AR, AP, Job Cost, Job Billing and Payroll. Optional modules include Inventory, Equipment Control Field Level Password, Bank Reconciliation, Purchase Order, Subcontract Control, Document Manager, Report Writer and a new Document Link module that should be available by the time this article goes to press.

Installation is exceptionally easy and quick. All modules load from a single CD, and a license diskette is used to determine which modules can be accessed. Written in Microsoft Visual FoxPro, BIS is available at three levels: Standard, Professional and Enterprise. The Standard edition is designed for contractors and subcontractors moving up from non-construction specific software with a

need for job costing and job billing functionality. The Professional version is expanded for multi-company or multi-user configurations. The Enterprise level adds anytime/anywhere Internet access via Microsoft's Windows 2000 Terminal Server, as well as other enhanced security and reporting capabilities.

Navigation among all program functions is provided by a standard Windows drop-down menu system that is organized by function, such as Jobs, List, Transactions and Reports. The items available under each of these categories will depend on which modules are licensed. MICS has gone to the additional design effort to earn the "Designed for Microsoft" logo, which shows in its consistent user interface that employs well-established Windows conventions for menu and record navigation, lookups and so forth. This makes it easy for new users to open the program and be immediately productive without time-consuming and expensive training.

The Job Cost module provides tracking for costs by cost code, change order and cost type. Once the job is set up, transactions entered through BIS's GL, Cash Disbursements, Cash Receipts, AR, Inventory and Payroll are automatically posted to Job Revenue or Job Cost Labor, Material, Subcontract, or Other direct cost. The program uses "real-time" posting to make information instantly available across modules. A user-definable cost code library lets you create tracking categories such as general requirements, fees and licenses, demolition, foundation, framing,

electrical, HVAC, roofing, plumbing, and so forth. Codes can be up to 10 characters and can designate the unit of measure and cost type, such as labor, material and subcontract. A good library of presentation-quality reports is also provided.

As mentioned above, a new Document Link Module is scheduled to be available by the time this article goes to press. It will allow links throughout the program to nearly any type of file, such as blueprints, job site images and project schedules. Any type of file can be attached to a transaction, master file record, or even a report. The program then simply calls on whatever third-party software you have loaded to view the attached documents. This should be particularly helpful for remote-access users who may need access to scanned documents or other documentation offsite.

BIS for Windows is designed to be fully ODBC compliant, which allows limitless capabilities for customized report writing and data mining using a third-party package, such as Crystal Reports. The program also allows numerous data imports from third-party estimating packages.

Builder Information System is a powerful, attractive package that addresses the job cost needs for any company size, from the smallest startup to the enterprise-level concern with hundreds of employees. Its solid design lets you get to work quickly. Training is available from the company, including telephone, online and onsite options. An online demo and a multimedia tour are also available in order to review BIS's features. ■ ★★★★★

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