



MICS — Builder Information System

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Builder Information System (BIS) from Management Information Control Systems, Inc. (MICS) is a slick package that offers core job



BUILDER INFORMATION SYSTEM

cost functionality with numerous optional integrated modules for a well-rounded system that can fit the needs of a wide variety of construction firms. The BIS Standard Edition begins at approximately \$4,000; the Professional Edition begins at approximately \$8,400; and the Enterprise Edition begins at approximately \$12,025. Each price is for a typical system including initial training and technical support plans. Prices will vary

depending on number of users and the exact complement of modules selected.

LEARNING CURVE

Installation is exceptionally easy and quick. All modules load from a single CD, and a license diskette is used to quickly load licenses and determine which modules can be accessed. 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. Throughout the program, a consistent user interface 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.

Data-entry screens reflect the same kind of thoughtful design and ease of use. Multi-tab screens separate information categorically. Any field that derives its information from another table has a magnifying glass icon that opens a record list and search screen. Wherever there are multiple items on a data-entry form, such as a purchase order, you'll find a grid for entering items. ★★★★★

MODULES & FUNCTIONALITY

Written in Microsoft Visual FoxPro, BIS is available at three levels: Standard, Professional and Enterprise. Standard is designed for contractors and subcontractors moving up from non construction-specific software who need job costing and job billing functionality. Professional is an expanded version for multi-company or multi-user configurations. The Enterprise level adds anytime/anywhere Internet access via Microsoft's Windows 2000 or 2003 Terminal Server, as well as other enhanced security and reporting capabilities. Each edition can be upgraded without the need to convert data or relearn the user interface.

The base (Standard) package includes GL, AR, AP, Job Cost, Job Billing and Payroll. Optional modules available within the Standard edition include Bank Reconciliation, Password and Subcontract Control. By stepping up to the Professional or Enterprise edition, you can add Document Link & Imaging, Document Manager, Equipment Control, Inventory, Purchase Order, Report Writer, Report Server, and Union.

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,

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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.

The entire system features true real-time processing, eliminating the need to process transactions in batch. As new information is entered from any module, all other modules and reports are instantly updated. If a transaction needs to be edited, changed or deleted, the program automatically creates the appropriate reversing entries. BIS allows two consecutive years (24 months) to be open at any time. Transactions can be entered in any month in the current or prior year. ★★★★★

IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION

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. ★★★★★

SUPPORT & TRAINING

Several technical support plans are available, as well as numerous training alternatives. Telephone training may be purchased on an hourly basis. Online classroom-style training is also offered at scheduled times. In addition, the company can provide certified trainers for two-day onsite workshops. All registered users also have access to the company web site for additional information, product updates and downloads. ★★★★★

REPORTING

Each module provides a nice selection of professionally formatted reports, with a wide range of selection and filtering criteria. Reports can be previewed or printed as well as exported to a variety of formats including *.RTF, *.PDF, *.XLS, *.TIF and *.TXT. Reports can also be e-mailed directly from the print preview screen. Many reports contain a very nice hyperlink drill-down feature that lets you click on an

item (such as customer ID) within the report, to open the underlying data-entry screen for the selected record. The latest program version upgrade (1135) made quite a number of report enhancements to improve the information available in many of the core reports.

An optional Report Server module adds the ability to automatically generate, print, export or e-mail reports using a scheduled process. You can schedule reports to be sent on specified dates, recurring days of the week or month, or recurring hours of each day. You can send similar reports to multiple people or different reports to different people. ★★★★★

RELATIVE VALUE

BIS 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. An online demo and multimedia tour are available to review the program’s features. ★★★★★

2005 OVERALL RATING

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