
Section 1

Overview

The Fast Track Estimating System offers the following features:

1.1 The Basic Aim

To design a program for Electrical Estimators that is fast and efficient and continually improves with the changing trends of the Electrical Industry.

1.2 The Basic Concept

Electrical Estimators are under ever increasing pressure to produce more estimates in less time and be closer to that fine line between profit and loss.

The Fast Track Estimating System has been designed to eliminate some of that pressure and make the results of estimates more consistent. Fast Track is designed to take the Estimator into the computer age with minimum impact. For those who already use spreadsheets this program incorporates many of those spreadsheet advantages.

The program allows the non-typing Estimator to produce professional estimates with comprehensive reports at the click of a button.

The first step is to produce a method of tracking a tender. This program has this facility by creating a unique tender number. The Estimator makes the estimate active by taking out the next Tender number. This function is enhanced if used on a network.

Generally, estimators work on more than one estimate at a time, therefore, the user can have more than one active estimate. The user can quickly swap between sections and estimates with a click of a mouse and be ready to input information into any active estimate open at that time. The estimator can progressively build up additional information in this area to eventually produce other reports for the tracking of tenders.

The estimator can deactivate and reactivate any estimate when required.

Once the tender number has been registered, the next step is to enter the section break-up to satisfy the client requirements. The user now proceeds to the section description window and enters the price break up information. Once the estimate is finished the program can produce many reports based on this information such as; summarised hours and material reports, and even direct to the client report showing prices only.

Once the estimate is set up, the next step is to start entering the information collected from the tender documents and drawings. There are five (5) windows for entering estimate information, each window is designed to specialise in a particular form of input. The windows are as follows:

- Estimate Input by Sections
- Estimate Input by See All
- Estimate Input by the Price Book (Copious Data)
- Estimate Input by Counting Screen
- Estimate Input by Clipboard

The above are all ways of inputting information into the estimate. The most commonly used is the "Estimate Input by Sections". The user can, by a single mouse click, enter information into the Estimate containing pricing, discounts and labour rates. This information is held in the "Master List".

The "Master List" is information that is used frequently in an estimate.

The "Master List" can be tailor made to suit the company's specialised needs and the specialised requirements of the individual estimator. The "Master List" information contains Catalogue Number, Description, Prices (that is best referenced from the Trade Services Price File Maintenance System) Discounts and Labour Rates.

The "Master List" also contains information to save time, as an example, "Load Commissioning", and "Pre Commissioning" can also serve as a memory prompt.

Another feature is the "Sub Assemblies", best defined as necessary parts that are automatically added to the main item for its installation. For example, if you have a Single GPO every time you add a quantity of GPOs into your estimate it includes a label, mounting block and the minor fixings as a sub assembly, this saves trying to guess the sundries at the end of the estimate.

1.3 Features That Make It Easy

- Saves time
- You don't have to remember Estimate numbers or Sections numbers
- Information can be copied from other active estimates or sections into new Estimates
- The system is net workable or single user
- Variable Hourly and Material rates can be applied to individual sections
- Automatically extends sections to prices in dollars these can be transferred into Tender Submissions

1.4 Transfer Data Directly

Data can be transferred directly into most spreadsheets and word documents and is a simple feature to use. This allows for further manipulation of the data, such as, material take-offs, purchasing and invoicing. This avoids duplication of work, delays, errors and costly time.

1.5 Quick and Easy to Use

The application includes many sophisticated features yet it is easily used by people with limited computer experience.

Easy to use features:

- Full Windows versatility
- Drop down menus and right mouse clicks

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- Keyboard and mouse operation
 - Easy finding and selection of components by auto finder, list scrolling or full catalogue search
 - Variable information screens can show Estimate details in different formats
 - Soft screen colours minimising eyestrain during long work sessions
 - Drag and Drop facilities for ease of data handling

1.6 Automatic Price Update

The Automatic Price update enables the user to update the "Master List" by simply activating the updating process in conjunction with Smart Price (Copious Data).

1.7 Optional Network Operation

The application can supply information simultaneously to a maximum of 451 other computers within a local area network; this enables larger company's personnel to keep track of the progress of current Tenders.

1.8 Database Engine Serves other Applications

The database set up for this application will support other packages such as accounting systems, cashbooks and address books, even drawings and photos can be stored in the graphics section of the Omnis database making it more cost-effective.

1.9 System Requirements

The program operates on either IBM PC or Macintosh systems. It requires a minimum of 64 Meg of RAM and 100 Meg of hard disk space, this is to store the "Fast Track Estimating System" and the "Smart Price" files. (See further details in this manual).

1.10 Variations

Variations can be estimated on the system using standardised company rates.

1.11 File Saving

Saving to the hard disc is automatic once you click the "OK" button or press the "Return" key. This is unlike a spreadsheet program where the operator is dependent on their memory to do so.

1.12 Auto Checking

The user can call up a function from the menu "Check Estimate" which runs a search and looks for blank entries. When a blank entry is found the program will ask the user to enter a value, if not required it can be skipped. This takes care of items that might have been missed in the estimating process or can be used as an aid to find last minute price inserts.

1.13 Auto Update

The user can update the prices in an Estimate from the Master List that contains identical catalogue numbers. This is necessary when an unforeseen price rise occurs, or a client decides to go ahead with a project that was placed on hold for a long duration.

1.14 Graphing of Future Work Loads

A feature that graphs the hours of successful projects and displays any adverse highs and lows in the forthcoming workloads.

1.15 This Manual

The manual is provided in loose-leaf format so that any updates and improvements can be reflected in the manual. The manual is a controlled document to those organisations that subscribe to Atad Data for the latest program updates.