

**Editor's Note:** *Looking for answers to your tech issues?*

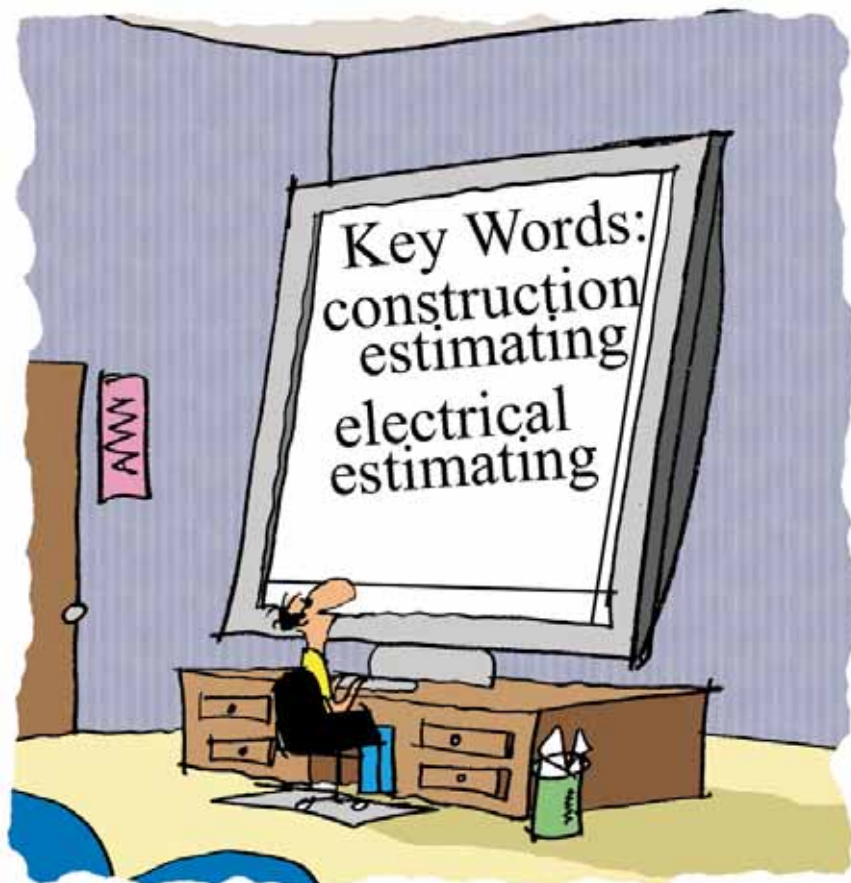
*Send your construction-related technology questions to [heyfred@foundationsoft.com](mailto:heyfred@foundationsoft.com).*

**Q:** Can you recommend the best place to go for information (in layman's terms) about estimating software for electrical contractors? I run a busy subcontracting company, and I don't want to waste a lot of time researching technology products that may or may not have the features we need. Mainly, we are interested in replacing our spreadsheet system with software that can be customized to handle our assemblies and interface with our job cost accounting system. Any suggestions on where to start?

*Phil*

**A:** The Internet is probably the best place to begin your research. Using keywords like *construction estimating*, or *electrical estimating* in Google or Yahoo, for example, will bring you to various vendor websites. There you can identify which software products may best fit your needs using a pre-defined list of must-have product features and functions. Some vendor websites will list industry or technology "partners" that may help determine if your existing accounting software will integrate or not.

In addition, there are websites (such as [www.ctsguides.com](http://www.ctsguides.com)) that are devoted solely to construction software. Offering product comparisons,



reviews and other useful information, these sites can help streamline the search process. Beyond feature comparisons, make sure you look at other equally important considerations, such as product technology and the software company itself.

In my opinion, Phil, you are headed in the right direction with your decision to shop for technology that can offer construction-specific functionality and integration with another best of breed application. But know that it will take time. Make sure you

consider everything involved (including your staff's ability to change, current processes in place, training and implementation issues and more) before making your final purchasing decision. In the long run, it will serve you well!

*Fred* ■

*Disclaimer: Technically Speaking reserves the right to change names and edit questions for privacy, length, and readability issues.*