

## Bid More Accurately by Connecting Estimating and Performance Tracking

Written by: Greg Norris, Director of Marketing Communications, B2W Software

Knowing how their company's actual costs compared with the estimates for past projects is obviously valuable information for contractors putting together bids for new work. Modern estimating software with built-in connectivity to the performance tracking application makes the previously difficult job of retrieving that data quick and easy.

Production rate actuals are what estimators are looking for. These are the rates of production that crews at their company achieved on past jobs for specific activities. Conditions and circumstances are never exactly alike, but averaging the actual rates for multiple jobs can be a great predictor of what crews will achieve in the future. Filtering these rates according to past jobs most like the one they are bidding on can further increase the accuracy of the bid.

The challenge for contractors that manage estimating and performance tracking with spreadsheets and paper is that this review of historical data can be cumbersome. Estimators are often forced to find and filter performance reports from past jobs manually and one at a time. In the interest of saving time, many instead rely on memory or on data from only a few of the most recent jobs.

Specialized and connected software changes the equation. Now, estimators can use an API (application programming interface) to set up what is essentially a live connection between their estimating software and the software application they use for performance tracking.



APIs are increasingly common. They connect software and data sources to each other by providing a shared standard for interoperability. In simpler terms, the API is a messenger allowing two applications to talk to each other. An API can take orders or requests from a system, relay them to another system, and return the information to fulfill the order.

This kind of connection between an application used for estimating and one used to report production quantities, labor and equipment hours, and material utilization hours in the field gives estimators an obvious advantage. They can look up production rates for current and historical projects quickly and easily. This can be done within the estimating application, providing valuable information with very little time or effort.


Estimators simply choose an item or activity for which they want to review past costs and productivity and the range

of jobs they want to include. The software, using the API connectivity, will review the appropriate electronic field logs and provide the production rate actuals for asphalt paving, pipe installation, cut and fill or any other item or activity specified.

Filtering capabilities in the estimating software are important. They enable estimators to select a date range and tracking or account IDs for the jobs they want to include in their search. This gives them the most relevant and comparable production rate actuals.

As an example, let's say an estimator has used the API connection between the estimating software and the field tracking software to pull actual production rates for an excavating crew for six jobs. He or she then selected three of those jobs to include in the calculation, because they are most like the job being bid.

The summary shows that the upcoming project requires 5,000 cubic yards of material to be excavated. The estimator began the estimate by assuming that 800 cubic yards can be completed per day. The software, however, has calculated the average actual production rate achieved was only 432 cubic yards per day on the three historical jobs selected. The variance is presented in an easy, side-by-side comparison, and the estimator can explore whether to revise the original 800-cubic-yard assumption.

The estimate is the origin of every dollar a heavy construction company earns. With competition intensifying, and with those bids getting larger and more complicated, estimators need every opportunity to work faster and more accurately. Easy retrieval of production rate actuals is another example of how specialized software applications for estimating can give them a big advantage over competitors still relying on paper and spreadsheets. 



---

### About the Author

---

Greg Norris is the Director of Marketing Communications at [B2W Software](#). Greg can be contacted at: [gnorris@b2wsoftware.com](mailto:gnorris@b2wsoftware.com). B2W Software's ONE Platform connects people, workflows and data and includes advanced, unified applications to manage estimating, scheduling, field tracking, equipment maintenance, data capture, and business intelligence.

---

### About the Article

---

Republished from [Construction Executive](#), a publication of [Associated Builders and Contractors](#). Copyright 2023. All rights reserved. Associated Builders and Contractors is a national construction industry trade association representing more than 21,000 members. Based on the merit shop philosophy, ABC helps its members develop people, win work, and deliver work safely, ethically, and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which they work.

Any views and opinions expressed in this article may or may not reflect the views and opinions of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). By publishing this piece, CMAA is not expressing endorsement of the individual, the article, or their association, organization, or company.