On Center
S O F T W A R E

On-Screen Takeoff & Quick Bid for Walls and Ceilings

In the highly competitive world of the walls and ceilings trade, all efficiencies that can be gained — from the takeoff process through build-out — are crucial to a company's bottom line. The success of a project is known even before a company awards the work. It all starts with a high-quality bid built on the accuracy and timeliness of a company's takeoff and estimation processes.

Contractors submit more bid proposals in less time with greater confidence when they use On-Screen Takeoff® and Quick Bid®... better projects mean work volume that is profitable, not burdensome.

Walls and ceilings contractors operate businesses filled with details, where every aspect of a job is unique. Not long ago, this trade only involved covering studs and rafters. Today these tradesmen install firewalls, sound walls, smoke walls, and more sophisticated structures like positive-pressure walls to seal and keep out contaminants from another source.[1] Specialty contracting is now common. In short, this trade has become more complex and precise.

To enhance productivity, reduce waste and increase profits, wall and ceiling contractors invest in technology and equipment such as automatic taping systems. Tools that improve efficiency and effectiveness are not limited to the construction site. The drive for accuracy begins in the digital takeoff interpretation of structural/engineering drawings and designs to assure that all required finishes and preventative solutions are addressed up front. This is the best way to avoid unnecessary problems down the road, such as failed inspections, rework and project penalties.

Manual Processes are Insufficient and Costly

Before digital technologies, the tools used for takeoff and estimating consisted of the rolling linear scale, colored pencils, highlighters, ledger pads, and a calculator. As personal computers

became common in business, estimators replaced their calculators and ledgers with electronic spreadsheets and complex formulas. Many estimators still use these tools today to manually perform material takeoffs and to generate educated cost "guesstimates" that slowly make their way into formal bids. On-Screen Takeoff (OST) and Quick Bid (QB), take the guessing out of these types of workflows. The advanced takeoff capabilities of OST and accurate calculation engine of QB eliminate inefficiency and redundancy.

Manual processes are both time and labor intensive. Estimators spend too many hours carefully combing through numerous printed plans to calculate product counts such as the lineal feet of ceiling track, the wall and ceiling perimeters and area for drywall and ceiling panels, the number of drywall screws, the amount of tape and mud, and the amount of estimated waste. It takes significant time and skill to determine the material values due to unique conditions and odd shapes where it's challenging to measure correct values. With OST's *Autocount* and *Typical Groups* feature, the software uses optical character recognition (OCR) and area takeoff to count similar objects automatically and to take off areas that are the same height, and depth throughout a plan. These features are huge time savers for anyone counting similar items by hand.

Further complicating the process is the prospect of change orders, requests for alternatives, and the inevitable deviations from the original architectural "design intent" where the actual development and implementation plans of the other trades deviate. Many times the original plans allow the estimator to calculate a bid for a single ceiling frame-out, only later to discover another set of plans that have recessed can-lights and the third version of plans that have sprinkler heads in the same ceiling.

Detecting, managing and reconciling these conflicts are complicated and time-consuming tasks. With manual processes, the estimator must sift through marked-up plans and prior estimates to work up a change or develop an alternative and incorporate it into the overall project budget and bid. Even small changes create a time burden that adds to the cost of bidding on projects—and takes away from the profit margin.

On Center Software organized its takeoff and estimating software to mirror virtually organized tab folders. *Alternates* and *Change Orders* tabs allow you to easily see the scope of work changes that come from change orders and the estimated design changes that affect the existing bid.

Many contractors invest considerable time and money in their takeoff and

estimating processes in the hope of winning the project. On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid are more accurate and efficient solutions for walls and ceilings contractors to double their estimating productivity. Contractors submit more bid proposals in less time with greater confidence when they use OST and QB. And of course, more and better projects mean work volume that is profitable, not burdensome.

On Screen Takeoff & Quick Bid Improve Productivity

OST allows walls and ceilings estimators to measure areas, lengths, and volumes; count quantities; and select system components from digital plans viewed on a computer screen. As counts and measurements calculate with the click of a mouse, the on-screen drawing is highlighted to show what area of the drawings is involved. The estimator applies conditions such as wall type, height, length, window/door cutouts, ceiling grid, and finish type. Rather than tabulating the takeoffs on a ledger or spreadsheet, the estimator lets OST track and tally all the material needs.

Quick Bid applies the current material, labor, markup and other costs to the takeoff data to estimate project costs. An important element of creating an accurate estimate is the ability to break a project down into smaller pieces and

roll them up again into an overall bid; for example, creating estimates by floors or rooms.

From start to finish, On Center Software develops accurate and detailed bids in much less time compared to manual methods. Our automated approach to takeoff and estimation enables quick historical recall from prior bids and change order processing, without starting over from scratch. It also increases the ability to detect conflicts visually and to sort and organize in multiple ways for more efficient scheduling of materials and crews.

On Center Software has a high degree of integration so that takeoff data flows right into cost estimates. The best value lies in On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid which simplifies and accelerates the bid development process.

Reduce Redundancy and Increase Efficiencies

On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid quickly pay for themselves in several ways—first by increasing the number of jobs a company bids to win more work. Second by eliminating the need to print, handle and store large paper-based plans and other documents. Third by easing the estimator's analysis of the building and grouping objects into appropriate assemblies for a smooth

installation. A contractor can save time after pre-inspection when reviewing the initial designs and bids and compare them to the actual MEP designs and implementation. Most importantly, these applications assist in the accurate translation of specified specialty system design requirements into an equally accurate takeoff and estimate. This design might include firewalls, sound walls, smoke walls, and positive-pressure walls.

Digital plans and designs imported directly into On Center Software allow an estimator to quantify all aspects of the project including windows, doors, MEP cutouts and ceiling track layouts. Because the estimator requires and views specific conditions directly on the computer screen, it's easy to work up precise drywall and ceiling counts, types and quantities to develop accurate estimates that meet the design requirements.

In Quick Bid, you can manage a library of standard assemblies and ceiling and wall designs. These assemblies are combinations of materials, quantities, costs and labor that together form a unit of activity. These standard parts can be instantly recalled and reused among projects to save time. Built-in cost databases that are unique to ceilings and walls are another time-saver designed to reduce errors and develop a more

accurate bid. QB enables you to request price updates by email to vendors with *eQuote*. QB also allows you to import complete and current cost lists from multiple sources including vendors and subcontractors.

With On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid, estimators avoid spending significant time as designs change by just over-laying any new plans over the original plans to identify and highlight the differences, identify potential conflicts, and perform a new takeoff. The system directly applies the changes to the estimate, all with a few clicks of a mouse.

Better Ways to Manage Costs

Quick Bid generates reports that help the business owner manage labor and material costs. There are reports to manage material inventories and purchases and to plan person-hours and costs for a variety of job categories and tasks. Depending on the reporting capabilities, labor is broken down into subcategories for site work, installation labor, and separate values for labor, which can include tasks such as handling, finishing, taping, caulking, and insulating.

Furthermore, material requirements are reported by what is needed, and when, to facilitate just-in-time purchasing.

These programs also export costing information to accounting systems—another way to save time and reduce input errors.

A Better Way to Conduct Business

Wall and ceiling contractors that use On-Screen Takeoff and Quick Bid can't imagine doing business without these tools. These programs help construction estimating professionals

- **Save time and money:** *Reduce the cost of shipping and printing plans. Spend far less time doing takeoffs and estimating costs for each bid. Submit more bids to win more projects.*

- **Reduce costly mistakes:** *Eliminate manual entry errors and see visually on the screen that everything is accounted for, and decrease the likelihood of misinterpreting designs and the related inspection problems such as rework and penalties.*

- **Improve collaboration:** *Get everyone in the business on the same page for how to bid and work a job.*

- **Differentiate from the competition:** *Submit bids, respond to change requests and offer alternatives quickly and with confidence.*

Conclusion

A walls and ceilings contractor's success begins with expertise, attention to detail, and hard work, and continues with the ability to takeoff, estimate and bid projects in a timely and accurate manner. Taking too long to generate a bid or bidding too high because of inaccurate input costs will cause companies to lose jobs. Conversely, if a company bids too low due to incorrect information, it will lose money on its work. The objective is to get it right the first time, every time. On Center Software makes the difference between keeping a company busy and profitable, and just keeping the doors open.

[1] On Center Software. (2014) *Walls & Ceilings Software – Digital Takeoff & Bidding*: http://www.designandconstructionweek. myindustrytracker.com/en/article/69329/walls-ceilings-software-digital-takeoff-bidding