



# 4Clicks Quarterly

November 2009

Volume 3, Number 4

*The Best Project  
Estimating and  
Management  
Software  
Available*

V2.604 is  
Here!

*So just when you  
thought e4Clicks  
couldn't get any  
better this year ...  
we've gone ahead  
and added even  
more improvements!  
Some of you might  
not even be updated  
to version 2.603 yet,  
and now version  
2.604 is here!*

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## Season's Greetings!

We hope all of you have enjoyed a great year in 2009 – even August and September! We sincerely appreciate our relationship with each of you and earnestly wish you another fruitful year in 2010!

We sincerely hope that Project Estimator added value to your organization this past year. Please continue to let us know how we can improve our products and services for you!

As has become our custom, we have forgone sending out cards to everyone and, instead, have made financial contributions to numerous deserving charities.

Everyone among the 4Clicks team would like to sincerely wish you the happiest of holidays throughout the coming months!

*Michael, Amanda, Amy, Bill, Chelsi, Jeff, Josh, and Tom*



## 2010 Training Schedule

We have been very encouraged that our training classes are adding really great value to those attending. We are finalizing our schedule for next year, and we are expanding the number of classes as well as the cities where they will be offered. The schedule will be released this month or next.



**Introductory** and **Advanced** training classes will be offered almost monthly in different cities: Las Vegas; Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; Orlando; San Antonio; and, of course, Colorado Springs. (See the page 2 for some location pictures.)

As always, we can also visit your location to meet your specific training needs. So feel free to contact us if this might be a better solution to your training requirements.

## RSMMeans Special Pricing

Don't forget about the 20% discount we are offering on all 2010 RSMMeans' products! This includes all of their electronic data, hard copy pricing books, and reference material. 2009 pricing has been retained for this deal to enhance your savings, and with our hard copy pricing guides already discounted 20%, this deal provides you them with 40% savings!

Remember, payment must be received by November 30th to receive this discount.



# Version 2.604

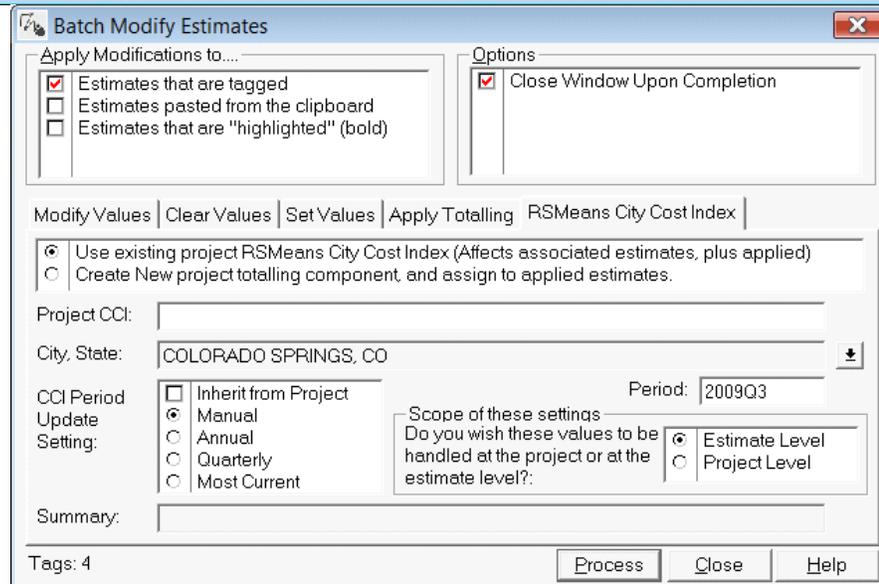
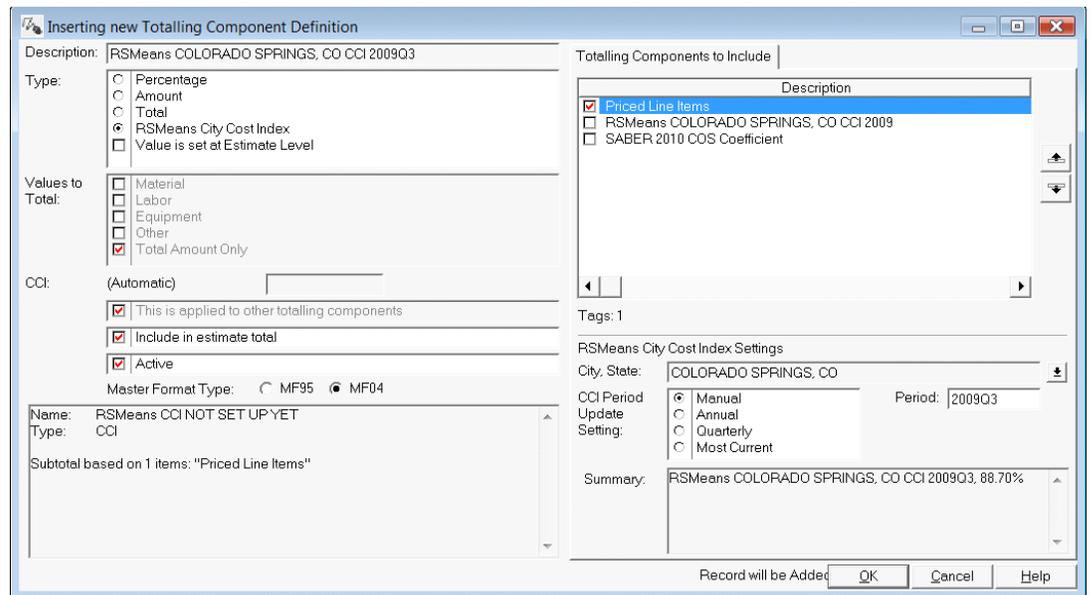
We are excited to announce a new updated version of Project Estimator. This version adds several useful, new tools to the software. See the new **Read Me** for details.

The main update deals with City Cost Indexes (CCI's).

You now have some great new tools to allow you to manage multiple instances (quarters) and values for CCI's within one project. So now you can easily manage modifications to your project that may arise in a different quarter than your original contract was awarded. Previously, you had to create an entirely new totalling component for your project. Now, you can simply set the CCI to a different quarter, and your Project Estimator does the rest.

Not only can you now create this brand new CCI totalling component type, but you can also batch modify these components in multiple estimates.

Another new feature is the integration of your CCI's into your RSMMeans Assemblies line items!



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## What's New?

1. For your convenience, the Add/Remove this item to/from Favorites menu option is now duplicated under the Tools menu option in your pricing guides.
2. Two new Contract Type options are available for your contracts: SATOC and MATOC.
3. A new Project Status is available for your projects: Lost Bid.

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# Time and Cost Matters

## Six Ways to Generate More Estimates in Less Time

As an estimating and process improvement consultant, I am always looking for ways to help my customers improve productivity—that is to get more outputs with less inputs—work better, faster, and smarter. There a lot of places to look into a company to improve productivity, and one of those areas is in the estimating department.

The estimating department is one of the main contributors to the sales process. Since project sales can be correlated to a numbers game, the more estimates generated a year, the more projects are won (assuming the bid-to-win ratio remains the same). So, it is worthy to look at ways to generate more estimates in less time. We will talk about improving estimate dependability/accuracy in a future article.

My top 6 recommendations:

1. **Standardize your estimating process.** Use a set of procedures to guide the process and use standard forms to add familiarity and routine which helps to smooth the process.
2. **Use experienced estimators.** They may cost you more in salary per person but in terms of bang-for-the buck, you get much more value with an experienced person than with a junior person. If you can find certified estimators, all the better.
3. **Use estimating software** rather than manual processes. It's faster, more accurate, more dependable. It should be easy to use and maintain, and flexible enough to conform to the needs of your company. No company should have to change the way they estimate to conform to the software. The software is a tool and should be easily adapted into the company's environment.
4. **Use software to generate your take-off quantities.** It is fast and very accurate, plus leaves an audit trail on the drawings as to how the quantity was derived from the drawing so can be used in your checking process (reduces/avoids the estimator's 2-headed terrors—leave-outs and double-dips). They are also useful to correlate past estimating records for future estimates.
5. **Avoid custom-programmed spreadsheets.** In most cases they are make-shift databases, clumsy, and lose out in item-by-item comparisons with the functionalities and features of full functioning database software. But more serious than that, they carry a huge risk if the spreadsheet developer leaves the company. In such cases, the spreadsheet becomes dead in the water because nobody else will be able to maintain the software when it needs to be modified or revised. If that were to happen, your sales process would cease or would be severely impeded.
6. **Invest in software training** so your personnel know how to use the software in the most effective ways. Nobody would put an equipment operator in the field unless they had the proper training—it's much too risky and way too expensive. Similarly, there's no reason to artificially cut costs and, as a result, slow down and put your estimating/sales process at risk.

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## Did You Know?

When you turn on the **Synchronize Values** option in your custom and alternate line items, Project Estimator will now highlight the fields that are tied together?

These fields include the Output, Laborhours, Labor, and Equipment fields.

Here's a little **TOOL TIP** for you. On brand new line items, it's best to set your values in these fields before you turn on the **Synchronize Values** option. Then they will be connected if you need to change your productivity or costs.

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## Hotkey Corner

Hotkeys simply allow you to execute certain process more quickly than using menu options.

In this newsletter, let's look at some hotkeys that are common to Windows™ programs that you may not have realized are available to you in your Project Estimator.

We have talked about copying and pasting. We know that sometimes these options are sometimes in our **right-click** menu. Many times we can highlight text, but will receive no menu when we right-click on the text – as below. We can, however, still use **Ctrl+C** to copy the highlighted text to our Windows™ clipboard.

We can press the **Tab** key on the keyboard to rotate through the fields (or buttons) on our window. We can press **Shift+Tab** on the keyboard to rotate through the fields on our window in the opposite direction.

We can also rotate through the tabs on our window. Pressing **Ctrl+Tab** on the keyboard will rotate through our tabs from left to right. Pressing **Ctrl+Shift+Tab** on the keyboard will rotate through the tabs on our window from right to left. So if we are focused on the **Modify Values** tab and press **Ctrl+Shift+Tab**, we will move to the **RSMeans City Cost Index** tab.

The **Alt** key on the keyboard can also allow us to maneuver on our window without using our mouse. Look for underlined letters in button, field, and panel names. Pressing and holding down the **Alt** key and then the underlined letter will either move the focus to that field (or panel) or act as pressing that button. So pressing **Alt+P** will act as clicking on the **Process** button and begin the batch modification process. Pressing **Alt+A** will change our focus on the window to the **Apply Modifications to...** panel. Then we can use our **Arrow** keys to move up and down in the panel and even use the **Spacebar** to flip the tags on those options.

Pay attention as you use Project Estimator to see how these hotkeys can help you do your work quicker and more efficiently!