



## Conroy Electric Generates Profit in the Office – and in the Field – with ProEst Estimating Software and a PDA

### The Challenge

In the early 1990's, Conroy Electric – which was founded in 1978 – was nearly put out of business due to a large job that was poorly estimated. “I had taken on a fairly big project and hired a professional to do my estimate,” Terry Conroy, the company’s owner, explains. “He missed so many items that my losses on the job were tremendous. I was almost bankrupt.”

The Cranbrook, BC electrical contractor had been tossing around the idea of computerizing his company and felt that estimating software might protect his business from similar losses in the future. “There weren’t many people using computers at that time in our area, especially in construction,” remembers Conroy. “I knew I would never trust anyone else to create my estimates again and I didn’t have confidence in my manual estimating system. In 1992, I made the decision to start computerizing my business.”

### The Solution

Soon thereafter, Conroy Electric implemented accounting software, along with ProEst Estimating.

Today, Conroy generates 30 to 40 estimates a year using ProEst. Ninety percent of his company’s business is commercial work – from big, multi-family housing complexes to small lighting jobs in retail stores – that results in the creation of 600 to 700 invoices annually.

“I use ProEst to estimate everything – from small \$5K jobs up to larger \$750K projects. With ProEst, you can build your database according to how your own company works, based on your own logic; that’s the beauty of the program,” says

### At-A-Glance

**Company:**  
Conroy Electric  
Cranbrook, BC  
Electrical Contractor

**Challenge:**  
Lacked confidence in manual estimating system and needed a more accurate way to create estimates and control job costs.

**Solution:**  
ProEst Estimating Software, along with a PDA for field access to estimate details.

- Results:**
- > Comprehensive and detailed database ensures that all bid items are accounted for in the estimate
  - > Ability to create estimate revisions on demand
  - > Estimating history provides actual labor and material costs, which contributes to greater accuracy of estimates over time
  - > Provides the ability to quickly verify spending against the budget
  - > PDA integration provides access to job information from the field
  - > Consistently creates on-target estimates, which contributes to solid budgets and profitable jobs

Conroy. “An electrical contractor could have a set of divisions in the database that include everything from fire alarms and security systems to lighting and data cable. And these divisions could be further broken down into categories like wire and boxes.” This detailed breakdown of the components needed to complete a job ensures that all bid items are accounted for in the estimate.

## The Results

More than a decade of estimating history within ProEst allows Conroy to generate estimates with incredible accuracy. “When you have a history of where your money is spent,” explains Conroy, “you have a much better idea of what your true labor and material costs will be for a job. ProEst allows me to

**“ProEst allows me to walk onto a job with a solid budget. Over the years, it has cut my losses and has allowed my company to remain profitable.”**

**Terry Conroy, Owner  
Conroy Electric**

walk onto a job with a solid budget. Over the years, it has cut my losses and has allowed my company to remain profitable.”

This historical detail helps Conroy provide his customers with a valuable service: estimate revisions on demand. “What I do in ProEst is create an estimate based on the original specifications, make changes as needed and then easily re-create the estimate. When the project is finalized, I have a very good paper trail that outlines exactly how we achieved our approved bid.”

Conroy also uses ProEst as a project management tool throughout the life of a project. “ProEst allows me to monitor my jobs. I remember one foreman buying rolls and rolls of expensive wire for a job that was winding down and I thought I should check it out. It turned out that all that wire was in my estimate. The ability to quickly verify spending against the budget in ProEst is a huge time saver from a management perspective.”

## ProEst in the Field: Estimates on a PDA

Conroy relies so heavily on his ProEst estimates for budget tracking that he loads them onto his Windows-based personal digital assistant (PDA) and takes the data with him into the field.

“A PDA gives me fast access to the job information,” Conroy explains. “I had an experience on a job where a foreman thought it would take a half hour each to hang several chandeliers, but they ended up taking three hours each. I was on the job site with my PDA and I pulled up that section of the ProEst bid. It turns out that I allowed three hours per light in the estimate.”

For a hands-on owner like Conroy, the ability to have his estimates on a PDA provides a level of control that is vital for quick decision-making. “If I’m on a job site and a foreman asks, ‘What did you allow for the cable in this area?’ I can provide an instant answer.”

## Support

Because Conroy Electric has used ProEst software for so many years, the company has undergone a number of product upgrades (going from the DOS version to the Windows-based program for example). “Though it all,” Conroy says, “ProEst’s support has been tremendous. I get on the phone, explain to them what I need and they deliver. ProEst really takes care of their clients.”

## Bottom Line

“A bad estimate is deadly,” states Conroy. “Once you sign a contract, you’re on the hook. You can’t go to a project owner and say, ‘I missed this \$10,000 item.’ It is very reassuring to be nine months into a 10-month contract knowing that your budget is still healthy. With ProEst, I get a good estimate, which results in a good budget and a profitable job!”