



## Heads Up Landscape Contractors Handles Explosive Growth and 2,000 Estimates a Year by Integrating ProEst Estimating with ComputerEase Accounting

### The Challenge

Founded in 1974 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Heads Up Landscape Contractors is one of the largest commercial landscape firms in the area. The award-winning company has doubled in size over the last four years and now has more than 300 employees. Heads Up attributes its rapid growth to innovative management, the growing “green” construction market (the company has worked on many LEED® Certified projects) and great customer service.

More work means more estimating – and the need for greater efficiencies. So in 2006 Heads Up embarked on a software search to replace its aging proposal program with a leading construction estimating solution. “We were on a product that presented a business risk because it had limited functionality and a small user base,” explains Chief Operations Officer (COO), Andrew Key. “So finding something that was widely used and well supported was a high priority. We also needed more sophisticated capabilities, like the ability to create custom assemblies.”

### The Solution

The company evaluated several estimating programs before selecting ProEst Estimating Software. “We had demos for all of the available estimating products,” says Key, “and ProEst was the best fit our organization. It had more productivity-enhancing features and was also easy-to-use.”

Another deciding factor was ProEst’s ability to integrate with ComputerEase construction accounting software. “We were converting to ComputerEase at the same time that we were upgrading our estimating,” says Key, “and we had to have estimating software that could communicate with our accounting system.” Talking with contractors that use ProEst integrated with ComputerEase assured Heads Up that the two products were well-matched.

### At-A-Glance

#### Company:

Heads Up Landscape Contractors  
Location: Albuquerque, NM  
Industry: Specialty Subcontracting (Landscaping)  
Employees: 300+  
Estimates: 2000+ each year

#### Challenge:

To find an estimating solution with an established user base, sophisticated capabilities and superior support.

#### Solution:

ProEst Estimating software integrated with ComputerEase accounting software.

#### Results:

- > Custom assemblies speed estimate creation
- > Ease-of-use increases productivity
- > Custom reports smooth transition to new software
- > On-site services optimize setup, data conversion and training
- > System flexibility meets unique estimating needs
- > Integration with ComputerEase eliminates redundancy and automates workflow
- > Job setup from estimate detail provides greater insight into costs
- > Increased efficiency supports single-year revenue growth of 43%

## Data Conversion and Training

Importing its existing database into both ProEst and ComputerEase was a top priority for Heads Up. “We had thousands of items in our database because every plant has several sizes and species,” explains Key. “We also had labor factors and mark-ups that we wanted to convert.” ProEst easily migrated the information into ComputerEase.

To optimize conversion, ProEst came on site and worked directly with Heads Up to configure ProEst to meet the company’s unique needs. “There’s a lot of flexibility in ProEst and they figured out a way to handle every estimating problem that our design team threw out,” recalls Key. “Every question that we had was resolved before they left our office. I was highly impressed.”

**“The support is fantastic, the integration with ComputerEase couldn’t be easier to manage and the personalized service we continually receive is excellent. ProEst has delivered everything it promised.”**

**Andrew Key, COO,  
Heads Up Landscape Contractors**

A combination of offsite training and another onsite visit helped get the Heads Up staff quickly up-to-speed on the basics of ProEst. And custom reports helped smooth the transition to the new software. “People aren’t always eager to learn new ways to do things,” says Key. “To ease that apprehension, we had ProEst create reports that were similar to the ones generated by our old system. That way, people could view information in a familiar way.”

## The Results

In 2007 Heads Up’s revenues grew by 43 percent and more than 2,000 estimates were generated for everything from new contracts and maintenance agreements to limited scope enhancement projects. Having ProEst in place has definitely helped the company’s design and estimating teams keep up with the increasing demand.

“Software is no different than a shovel or a rake or a hoe. It’s a tool we use to further our

business,” says Key. “ProEst has proven to be a powerful, robust tool that increases productivity. For example, we’ve created assemblies with highly-flexible components that we use over and over again, which really speeds up estimate generation.”

As Heads Up has grown, it has naturally added staff. According to Key, ProEst’s intuitive interface allows new people to become productive faster. “I’m not an estimator,” he says, “but even I can go into ProEst and create a basic estimate. It’s that easy to use.”

Although Key doesn’t create estimates in ProEst, he is one of the 25 Heads Up employees that use the software on a daily basis. “As COO, ProEst allows me to examine the underlying data that we use to bid projects at a very refined, precise level. If there’s a problem on a job, this helps me determine what’s going wrong so we can take corrective action.”

## An Integrated Information System

By using ProEst with ComputerEase, Heads Up has created an integrated information system that eliminates redundant data entry, establishes automated workflow and gives project managers greater insight into their jobs.

For example, bids are created in ProEst and once the job is sold, data is seamlessly transferred to ComputerEase where the job and budget (including labor) is set up by phase and cost code using the estimate detail. Purchasing then creates purchase orders in ComputerEase from ProEst data using a simple mouse click, and accounting attaches the receipts to invoices for payment. The project managers can use all of this data to review their budgets in detail or summary formats as needed. And all of this happens, says Key, by “pushing a button and moving things from one stage to another.”

## Bottom Line: Promises Delivered

Heads Up couldn’t be happier with its purchase of ProEst and Key highly recommends the estimating software to other contractors. “The support is fantastic, the integration with ComputerEase couldn’t be easier to manage and the personalized service we continually receive is excellent. ProEst has delivered everything it promised.”