

PROADVISOR review

BSE Estimator version 10.1 by Builders Software Enterprises

Overall Rating **8.9**



Product Name

BSE Estimator version 10.1 by Builders Software Enterprises

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Summary

BSE Estimator provides home builders, remodelers, and other types of contractors with a simple yet effective solution for their estimating needs. The program also offers a basic scheduling system that can provide the contractor's customers with a timeline to keep track of their project's progress. BSE Estimator can be used as a stand-alone product, or it can share data bi-directionally with QuickBooks Pro/Premier 2005-2007 and Enterprise Edition 5.0-7.0.

Strengths

- One of the product's greatest strengths is ease of use. Since the developer has already included two primary masters with nearly 1000 items built into the system, a user can start estimating right away. The ability to customize the product to fit the contractor's needs is virtually limitless.
- BSE has incorporated an on-line video tutorial series to familiarize users with the software. These videos provide an excellent resource for new and experienced users and each topic is explained in detail within a working copy of the software. The user can also be prompted by BSE Estimator when a relevant video is available for a particular function within the program.
- BSE Estimator was created by a builder over 16 years ago and has evolved into an effective tool to automate the estimating process. Also available to load during product installation, the BSE QuickBooks file contains a preset chart of accounts and memorized reports to maximize the benefits of integration between BSE Estimator and QuickBooks. This file supports the completed contract method of accounting for construction projects.

Limitations

- One minor limitation I encountered was the inability to view an estimate total on the estimate summary worksheet without having to open the profit center window. Subtotals by section are available, but a grand total for the project would be useful for informational purposes.
- Another minor limitation for some users is the lack of a written manual or written help within the product. Unless internet access is available, the on-line help videos cannot be viewed and the user must refer to the tutorial video CD.

Wish List

A few of the items I would like to see considered for future program releases are:

- A more robust scheduling system that could keep track of completed tasks and phases as they occur.
- The ability to setup a primary master that could update pricing data with third party databases such as RS Means or others.
- Access to a written manual.

Product Ratings	Rating	Ratings Definitions
<p>Setup and Installation:</p> <p>Whether the product is purchased on CD or by download, the installer will walk you through the process. Complete written installation instructions ensure that each phase will be easy to follow. The first item that is required for the software to operate is the Microsoft.NET Framework 2.0. If you don't have it already installed, the software is included with the installation files so there is no wasted time going on-line and installing directly from Microsoft's website. You also have the option to install one of the available QuickBooks files created by BSE. If installing from a CD, be sure to open the program once before removing the CD so that the installation can complete properly.</p> <p>After installation is complete, the program requires very little setup to begin estimating. Company info, tax rates, and QuickBooks options should be selected before the first estimate is created.</p> <p>Overall, the installation and initial setup of BSE Estimator is very straight-forward and can be accomplished in a matter of minutes.</p>	9.0	<p>10.0 (Perfect): This exceedingly rare score is reserved for a product that is as perfect as it could be.</p> <p>9.0 to 9.9 (Spectacular): A product that receives a rating in this range succeeds at meeting all of its intended users' needs and has no meaningful drawbacks.</p> <p>8.0 to 8.9 (Excellent): A product that receives a rating in this range is superior in so many ways that its relatively few drawbacks are not very important.</p> <p>7.0 to 7.9 (Very good): While the strengths of a product scoring in this range certainly outweigh its weaknesses, it has some minor faults that certain users should be aware of.</p>
<p>Interface:</p> <p>BSE Estimator is very easy to navigate. The menu bar contains all of the available program functions, and the icon bar contains many of the common program features. Once inside a master or an estimate, the icon bar on the left-side of the screen makes switching between functions fast and efficient. The only thing I found a little confusing was that menu items weren't grayed out or unavailable when I was in areas of the program where they couldn't be used.</p>	8.9	<p>6.0 to 6.9 (Good): This range represents a product that is above average. Its strengths slightly outweigh its weaknesses, making it good for most uses but not a standout.</p> <p>5.0 to 5.9 (Average): A product that scores in this range is functional but unremarkable.</p>
<p>Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program includes a sample estimate and two primary masters with over 1000 items built into the database. The contractor can customize the masters to fit their business structure or start estimating right away with the included setup. • An available QuickBooks file can be installed which includes preset options such as memorized reports to maximize the integration with BSE Estimator. • A basic scheduling system is included and allows the builder to upload a customer's schedule to a BSE designed website for the customer to access within their own private portal. • The estimate wizard is a new addition to the product that makes the entire process of creating a customer's estimate easier and more efficient. • The automatic update process at program startup ensures that any available updates can be retrieved and installed on a timely basis. 	8.9	<p>4.0 to 4.9 (Mediocre): Products in this range are below average. They fall in the middle of the pack for most features, but suffer from a few additional major flaws.</p> <p>3.0 to 3.9 (Poor): A customer should probably not consider purchasing a product in this range or lower. There may be one or two specialized circumstances, however, that could justify the purchase of this product for a very low price for a specific demand.</p> <p>2.0 to 2.9 (Terrible): A product that receives a rating in this range does not satisfy any of its intended users' needs and has no meaningful strengths.</p>
<p>Ease of Use/Service and Support</p> <p>Overall, BSE Estimator can be installed and used for the builder's first estimate within a couple of hours. The on-line tutorial videos can help a new user learn all aspects of the software quickly and intuitively. PC to PC training is available over a broadband connection for those who require it.</p> <p>Phone support is available Monday through Friday from 9-5 CST, and</p>	9.0	<p>1.0 to 1.9 (Abysmal): A product in this range should never have been produced. This product has no redeeming qualities and worse, may actually harm the user or the user's productivity.</p>



e-mail support is available after-hours. Depending on the package purchased, support is free for 60 days with the Silver, 1 year with the Gold, and 2 years with the Platinum package. An available annual service contract can be purchased yearly for \$250 which will include all product upgrades and unlimited phone support.

Data Security / Privacy

New to BSE Estimator version 10.1 is the ability to assign user ids and passwords to protect unauthorized access to BSE data. The first user established in the software will have administrative rights and is the only user with access to modify or add users to the system. The software also includes a built-in backup and restore feature on the file menu.

The company has included a copy of their privacy policy under the help menu within BSE Estimator. Additional access to this policy on the company's website could further enhance potential customer confidence that their personal data is secure.

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Integration with QuickBooks

BSE Estimator can export estimate items to the QuickBooks item list and customer estimates can be exported either in summary or detail format depending on the option selected. If desired, pricing information that changes within QuickBooks can be imported back into BSE for any itemized items but not bid type items. If the user selects to install the BSE QuickBooks file, the completed contract system of accounting can be easily used, and the memorized reports for variance tracking and others are already saved in the reports menu within QuickBooks.

The addition of customer demographic data sharing in version 10.1 has improved the integration with QuickBooks and reduced time wasted on redundant data entry. The only limitation encountered was that the first line of the customer billing address box in QuickBooks must be manually updated with the customer name since the export from BSE Estimator doesn't fill that line in automatically.

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