

Construction

EXECUTIVE

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Hot Products

Innovative Products Showcase

ComputerEase™

BY DONALD BERRY

Industry manufacturers and suppliers play a vital role in the construction process. They design and produce the building materials, services and technology that contractors depend on to run their business. Please join us in saluting these companies as you read about their contributions to the construction industry in the pages that follow.





ComputerEase Introduces *FieldEase*, A Mobile Workforce Solution Written For The Tablet PC

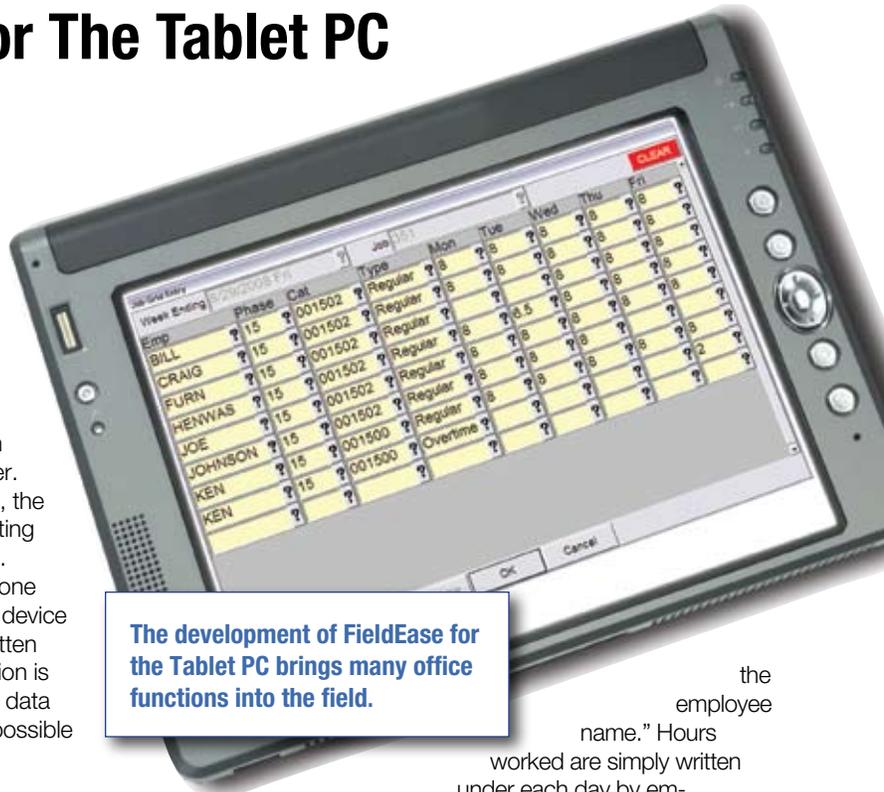
One of the fastest growing technologies in the construction industry is remote job-to-office communication using Tablet PC technology. In 2008, ComputerEase introduced *FieldEase* for the Tablet PC. "*FieldEase* gives contractors yet another important tool to help streamline operations between the office and the worksite while

adding dollars to the bottom line," says John Meibers, President of ComputerEase.

A contractor can purchase a Tablet PC for about \$1,000 that accepts electronic handwritten data entry and easily interfaces with the home office computer. "The Tablet PC is, in fact, the size of an 8 1/2" X 11" writing pad," Meibers points out. "It functions as a standalone portable PC as well as a device that recognizes hand written messages. This information is converted into electronic data files, making data entry possible without a key pad."

Tablet PC technology is quickly replacing the small, handheld PDA devices that have become so popular, says Meibers. "While these handheld devices have made headway in remote processing, the small keyboard and tiny screen (about the size of a deck of cards) make it difficult for practical use in the field. Project managers and field supervisors have been demanding a larger, more powerful device."

"*FieldEase* for the Tablet PC



The development of *FieldEase* for the Tablet PC brings many office functions into the field.

gives field supervisors an easy and efficient way to enter data using simple handwritten input. Most processing is done without even touching a keyboard," Meibers points out, noting that several applications are coming onto the market which rely on electronic handwritten technology.

One of the most convenient new features in *FieldEase* are handwritten, custom timesheets that can be prepared in the field daily and emailed back to the payroll accounting system in the home office. "This eliminates dual entry in the accounting system and ensures timely job costing and payroll preparation," says Meibers. "The supervisor uses either drop down boxes containing employee and job information from the home office, or enters the information simply by writing in the job and

the employee name." Hours worked are simply written under each day by employee and cost code. Units and percent complete can also be handwritten on the PC screen and sent to the integrated home office accounting system for job costing and billing preparation.

"Prior to using *FieldEase* all of our time was turned in manually," says Jenny Jones, Purchasing and Payroll Manager for Jostin Concrete. "Our project managers wrote everything on paper and there was quite a bit of double-entry. With *FieldEase* everything is now done electronically. Our superintendents don't have to make a special trip to the office. Using *FieldEase*, the data goes straight into the accounting system, streamlining the entire process."

Another very important application found in *FieldEase* is remote work order processing. "Processing work orders is

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-Jenny Jones, Purchasing and Payroll Manager Jostin Concrete



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a snap with *FieldEase*," says Meibers. "It gives project team members the ability to handwrite work completed and automatically price the work order on the spot." Parts from inventory, billing rates, flat rate pricing codes and customer information are accessible in the field via the accounting system interface at the home office.

When the work order is complete, inventory is updated, accounts receivable is posted, site history is maintained and all accounting are updated through wireless connection, explains Meibers. "Best of all, the customer can be asked to sign the work order right on the Tablet PC for electronic storage and transfer back to the home office. The tech can also include electronic notes to accompany the work order or the invoice. These could be in the form of a diagram or special billing instructions for the home office."

"The evolution of *FieldEase* to the Tablet PC will greatly impact service contractors," Meibers says. "The ability to dispatch calls, complete work orders and process service invoices in the same day will greatly improve cash flow for our service management clients."

Meibers says the hottest new concept with *FieldEase* has come to be known as "forms and notes." This new tool uses hand writing recognition on the Tablet PC to create custom fill-in-the-line forms with the capability to write separate pages of notes to transmit with the form back to the office. The form and notes can be filed electronically in a job or customer folder at the home office which are easily accessible by anyone in the company at any time. Forms and notes can also be emailed to customers, subcontractors and suppliers.

"A common use of this new tool is in-field change orders," says Meibers. "A field supervisor can prepare a change order, have the customer or subcontractor electronically sign it for approval and email a copy to the home office and to the contractor. Change orders and other documents created in *FieldEase* are stored in job and customer files at the home office." Purchase orders, daily field reports and daily field work orders can be handwritten in the field with special instructions, notes or drawings and then emailed to the home office and suppliers or subcontractors.

"An electronic signature can accompany a PO for future reference," notes Meibers. "There is no limit to how the forms and notes feature in *FieldEase* can

be utilized. It is the newest technology we see gaining widespread acceptance in the construction industry."

"ComputerEase has always offered a five-star accounting software system," Meibers says of the company's 25-year history. "However, in listening to our customers, they wanted a product that would allow them to shorten the turn-around time between the office and field. *FieldEase* is that product. It allows contractors to save time and money while improving jobsite communications."

Converting handwritten data on a Tablet PC into electronic files is the third wave of software technology to hit the industry, according to Meibers. "Accounting and estimating were first to arrive. Project management was the second major wave. Remote processing from the field using handwritten technology is the latest wave and it is here to stay. Early adopters will realize the greatest advantage over the competition."

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ComputerEase**



FieldEase allows you to complete work orders and capture signatures for same-day invoicing.



We're Ending the Paper Chase.

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