As in ten testimonials to computers from the people in and around the wall and ceiling industry who use them

The computer industry has grown so rapidly that several companies have sales topping a billion dollars. IBM continues to dominate the overall picture, but firms such as Burroughs have huge followings within the contracting industry. Also popular among construction firms are smaller companies that have tailored programs specifically to the industry. Among these is Concord, which markets a complete system.

The world has finally gotten over its initial fears of the computerization of society. Computers will not, after all, supplant the human race in our lifetime.

The computer industry -- in infancy when compared to other major U.S. businesses -- has a decade-and-a-half history behind it that could rival the Industrial Revolution for its sheer impact on the world community.

As noted by International Data Corporation in its prepared text for a recent Fortune magazine advertising supplement, “Not so long ago, the internal combustion engine reshaped a continent and a society; now it’s the computer. Its technology is so awesome, its effects so far reaching, that the computerization of American business has been imbued with a life of its own.”

And, why not? The state of technology in computerization has evolved to the point that even smaller businesses can make an affordable decision to computerize. The adaptability of computers to meet single or multiple business functions, the availability of upgrade software to allow computer systems to grow with the demands of users, and the mounting pressures for the electronic processing of data ranging from business letters to sophisticated business records have made the cost:benefit ratio of computerization extremely effective.

Too, the functions of computers are seemingly infinitive. Computers, which are a product of the human mind, have evolved into extensions of the human mind. There are as many kinds of computer functions in today’s business world as there are business applications for the assembling, storing and use of data.

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are, in fact, computers which design other computers! Even the type for this magazine article was produced by a computerized process.

The industry itself is populated by an enormous cast of giants, mid-range companies and relatively small businesses, a fact which mirrors the diversity in the size and complexity of computers available on today’s market.

This broad range of products -- coupled with the adaptability of computer systems to fit an almost unlimited number of specific business functions -- has touched off increased use of the computer by contractors and subcontractors in and around the wall and ceiling industries.

But, you don’t have to take our word for it. Just consider the following brace of testimonials. To borrow the rating from the recent Hollywood film, this group gives computers a perfect “10”:

Consider this finding of a recent U.S. Government bulletin dealing with the use of computers by construction industry contractors: “An increasing number of contractors are finding computers a valuable tool for selecting jobs, controlling costs and meeting schedules. One of the most important applications of computers is keeping track of equipment . . . similarly, material and labor costs can be tracked on a day-to-day basis to determine variances between budgeted and actual costs.”

“We could not get by without our computer,” says Ray Boyd, president of the Garland, Texas based Ray Boyd Plaster and Tile Company. “It would take twice the office staff people we have now in order to handle the amount of items that come from our computer. Even then, I would seriously doubt that the information provided would be equivalent to what we receive from the computer. I would say, definitely, the computer is a technology that is here to stay in ours -- and in other industries.”

“We would not be in the position we are today without our computer,” adds Don Chambers, president of J & B Acoustical in Mansfield, Ohio. “Ten years ago, we were told that anyone who did not contemplate the use of the computer in contracting would not be a serious factor in the future marketplace. It was as true then as it is today. There is simply no way we could handle the number of reporting phases, the sophistication of the reporting or the volume of work that would be necessary if we did not have the computer.”
It has often been said that any company with 25-30 employees should have a computer,” says Robert F. Watkins, a contractor and president of Aetna Drywall in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. “As our industry diversifies, the complexity and need for cost controls increase the demand for computerization. . . . Due to the complexity of the business and the demand for rapidity in construction, the contractor must know his costs as they are experienced. Finding out on a historic basis is too late.”

“The computer has become our backbone,” adds Judd Fouch, CEO of Lynch Acoustical Specialties in Traverse City, Michigan. “It has enabled us to exercise more control, and it enables us to know where we are on a project at any given time.”

“The computer gives us significant detail,” echoes Randy Ritsema, Lynch’s chief estimator. “We would typically use it for pre-job costing, actual job costing, comparison of actual costs to estimated costs, job scheduling and phasing, payables and receivables, payroll and even a working inventory. As for bidding operations, the computer is a valuable tool.”

“The computer has become our backbone,” says John E. Tefft, who markets computers through Fails Management System’s Concord, the successful use of computers adds up to money in the bank: “The computerized contractor will use his computer to control the outcome of his job. He understands there is no point in having a sophisticated system and not using the information available for job control. In the end, he will have made a real investment in his system, but he will benefit from it. The system will produce a return on the investment.”

And, AWCI’s Executive Vice-President Joe M. Baker notes that contractors are increasing the use of computers because of the complexity and numbers of reporting functions. “We are on the threshold of computer-based management systems in the full wall-ceiling-flooring business,” Baker noted, and he added that developments in the computer industry “make computer systems cost effective for most contractors in our industry.”