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## Technology Update

By [Equipment Today Staff](#)

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### Rugged, Reliable and Wireless

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Toughbook computers from Panasonic Computer Solutions Co. include the CF-19 convertible tablet PC and the CF-30 clamshell notebook. Features include Intel Core Duo processors, additional security features and optional embedded access to next-generation wireless data networks from all major cellular wireless carriers.



**Panasonic Toughbook**

These MIL-SPEC-certified notebooks incorporate daylight-readable screens and rugged magnesium alloy cases, sealed keyboards and ports, flexible internal connectors and shock-mounted screens and hard drives. The CF-19 features a bright 550-Nit (candelas per sq. meter) screen with a low-reflection coating, while the CF-30 boasts a 1,000-Nit LCD, delivering the brightness of a fixed-mount display in a portable computer. The brighter screens are designed not to compromise battery life.

Multiple wireless options (WLAN, WWAN, GPS and Bluetooth) ensure users stay

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connected and easily located. The Toughbook models incorporate a wireless-ready design that allows contractors to purchase, or upgrade to, embedded access to next-generation data networks from all major carriers. Optional integrated radio modems enable access to UMTS/HSDPA-based solutions from Cingular Wireless and the EV-DO networks of Sprint or Verizon. An optional integrated GPS receiver is also available.

To safeguard data, the units are equipped with a cable lock slot and Trusted Platform Module (TPM v1.2) security chip, and offer an optional fingerprint scanner. The CF-30 can also be configured with an optional SmartCard reader.

Both Toughbook computers feature backwards compatibility with existing vehicle mount solutions.

#### **One-click Synchronization Streamlines Field Data Collection**

As part of Hard Dollar's complete project execution system, the field data collection system provides a more efficient way to collect time and progress data, resulting in instantaneous actual vs. plan comparisons and real-time visibility into the status of the project. One-click synchronization passes up-to-the-minute job information from the office to field, as well as the latest timesheets and daily diary.

"As the construction industry continues to deal with an escalating labor shortage, contractors are looking for new ways technology can maximize the effectiveness of existing personnel and improve the efficiency of company resources," says Brad Barth, senior vice president, product management. "Hard Dollar's solution can have a dramatic impact on the productivity of both field and home office personnel by streamlining the



Hard Dollar's complete project execution system



Trimble LM80 Layout Manager

entire field data collection process."

Features of the system include:

- Timesheets can be pre-populated with assigned resource information found in the Resource Coordination module.
- The system supports a multi-level approval and revision process for timesheets that automatically maintains an audit trail of changes.
- Information can be synchronized between the home office and field personnel by using a LAN, WAN or Internet connection.
- Approved timesheets can be exported in a variety of formats acceptable to most major construction accounting systems.
- Timesheets for all projects are recorded in a single repository where they can be searched and filtered using various criteria.

The field data collection system is available in both the WorkGroups and Enterprise editions. The module supports automatic wireless synchronization for both Windows and Windows-mobile devices.

#### Software Expands Site Layout Capabilities

Trimble has enhanced its LM80 Layout Manager and LM80 Desktop office software to allow general contractors and concrete contractors to take even more control of their construction layout.

The LM80 Layout Manager is a pocket-sized personal layout tool that lets contractors enter their blueprint, creating a digital replica. It allows users to carry, manage, work with and lay out the jobsite blueprint, regardless of the method and instrumentation used. Version 4.0 offers improved measurement techniques that enable contractors to measure lines, as well as define and accurately lay out flat or sloping surfaces such as building pads and driveways.

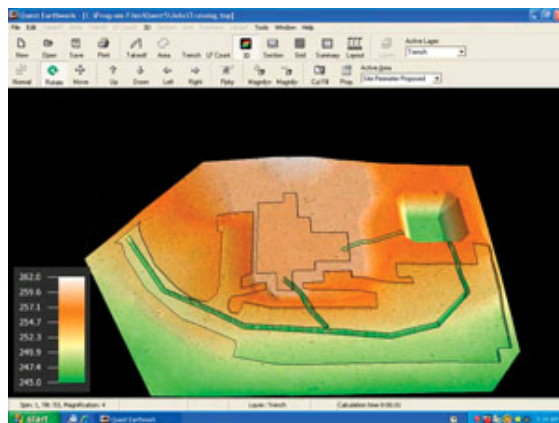
The LM80 Desktop is an easy to use PC-based office software support tool for use with the LM80 Layout Manager. The 2.00 version enables users to create a digital replica of the blueprint, load it onto LM80 Layout Manager and prepare in the office for the field layout. New functionality includes:

- Enter plan capability allows users to draw/generate an electronic copy of a blueprint in the office.
- COGO functions provide the ability to perform coordinate geometry calculations in the office, including angle, distance, area and perimeter.
- CAD file improvements enable use of the DXF files as background line work that can be transferred to the LM80 Layout Manager with the job.

#### Upgrade Enhances Earth Measuring Capabilities

This Spring, Quest Solutions introduced Earthwork 7.0, the latest version of its earth measuring software. The cut-and-fill program includes a number of new features and enhancements.

New features include Linear Foot takeoff for pipe, fencing and curbs, as well as



Earthwork 7.0

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Count Item takeoff capabilities for manholes and catch basins. Also new is the Trench Templates feature, which incorporates vertical, V-shape, T-shape, Y-shape and other types of templates.

In terms of enhancements, the program's 3-D, Cross Section and Grid Views now incorporate trenching. In addition, the Summary View will now total trench excavation, backfill and bedding material.

#### **Software Simplifies Survey and GPS System Functions**

Leica Geosystems offers two new software systems designed to simplify operation of its survey and grade control products.

SiteSmart-Translator converts various types of GPS and total station files for machine automation applications. Data is received in the field more quickly, eliminating lengthy delays associated with data preparation.

The software is designed to import and convert design data from virtually any CAD package capable of exporting design formats, such as DWG, DXF and LandXML. The imported data can then be viewed using standard 3D view commands. In addition, design surface, plan view and center-line files can be viewed simultaneously.

Data is exported via selectable formats used by DigSmart 3D, GradeSmart 3D and onboard system 1200 applications.

SmartWorx onboard software has also been introduced for the System 1200 instrument family. This software suite supplies a seamless data flow between SmartWorx and Leica Geo Office software, as well as with all office software packages through flexible import and export routines.

TPS1200, GPS1200, SmartStation, SmartRover and SmartPole utilize this flexible onboard software. It enables operators to switch instantly between GPS and TPS, using whichever is most convenient and suitable for the application. No extra training is required.

#### **Software Needs Bring Branco to Forefront**

Since its founding in 1933 by the Branham brothers of Neosho, MO, Branco Enterprises has completed hundreds of commercial, industrial, office, waste water and other projects throughout the four-state region of Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas. The company, which is now owned and operated by sons and nephews of the founder, has steadily grown to become one of the Midwest's largest construction services providers, with more than 160 employees. It has made an industry ranking of the nation's top 200 environmental contractors for the past two years.

A critical reason for Branco Enterprises' long-term success has been its ability to ensure that its general construction, construction management and design-build work is profitable for the company, as well as on time and within budget for the customer.

To help it manage its operations effectively, the company utilizes Dexter + Chaney's Forefront Construction Suite. Forefront provides a project management, human resources and document imaging software solution that enables Branco to integrate its financial and operations group. Both the financial staff and operations have access to and use the same critical information.

Branco installed Forefront in October 2005 after an extensive review of construction software packages. "We ultimately chose Forefront because of the company's reputation, Forefront's Document Imaging capability and the Project Management, Human Resources and Esti-Link modules that we believed would improve our efficiency," says Bryce McDermott (shown), Branco's controller. "Forefront's reporting options also were critical to us."

The program is now employed by all levels of Branco personnel, including its president, John Branham.

"Our president uses the contract status feature in Forefront's Job Cost module to monitor all projects in progress," McDermott explains. "As controller, I appreciate

the ability to customize reports... Project managers employ the projected-cost capability in the Job Cost module to track the progress of their jobs. They also code their invoices using the invoice routing/approval capability in the Accounts Payable module. Our invoice-coding process is now very efficient, and we've dramatically reduced our coding errors."

In addition, the equipment manager uses the preventive maintenance module to track and schedule maintenance, while the Estimating Department uses the Esti-Link module to link information between Forefront and the estimating software. The warehouse manager tracks small tools via the Small Tool module.

McDermott notes that many of these processes were previously performed manually. Since the program was installed, company revenues have increased by 25% with no addition to the administrative staff.

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