



MEMORANDUM

To: Whom It May Concern
From: DiAngelo Gleaves, Principal — Gleaves Contractors, Inc.
Date: September 5, 2026
Subject: Our experience using TopOut for estimating

Gleaves Contractors is a structural steel and miscellaneous metals subcontractor based in San Francisco. We bid commercial work throughout the Bay Area — podium multifamily, retail and restaurant build-outs, and public works.

Like most shops our size, we do not carry a full-time estimator. Bidding got done at night and on weekends, after the jobs already under contract were handled. When a set came in with a short fuse, the honest answer was often that we could not get to it. We were passing on work we were qualified to build. That is the problem TopOut solved for us.

What we get. We send a plan set. What comes back is a complete package, not just a number: a takeoff and estimate workbook, a material list, a marked-up set showing where every quantity came from, an RFI log, a project management checklist, and a proposal written for the general contractor. It arrives in days.

The marked-up set. I can open it and see the members and the sheet they came off. When a GC questions a quantity, I answer with the drawing in front of me rather than taking a number on faith. I have caught things in that set, and it has caught things I would have missed.

Everything is editable, and everything is ours. Workbooks come in Excel and proposals in Word — on our letterhead, in our voice, with our rates. I change what I want and send it. It goes out as our document because it is one. I am not retyping somebody else's locked PDF at ten at night.

The RFI discipline. TopOut reads the specifications before it asks a question. Anything answerable by reading the set does not become an RFI. What reaches the general contractor is a short list of things genuinely not shown. That matters more than people outside the trade appreciate — a bidder who sends fifteen questions the drawings already answer has told the GC something about how carefully he reads.

What it is not. It is not an autopilot, and I would be skeptical of anyone who sold it that way. I review every package before it goes out. I set the wage basis, I set the rates, and I make the scope calls — those are mine to make, and they are the ones that cost money when they are wrong. What TopOut took off my desk was the counting and the formatting between a plan set and a bid I could put my name on. The judgment stayed with me.

Bottom line. We bid more work than we used to, and we bid it on time. For a shop our size that is the whole difference. I would recommend TopOut to any subcontractor who is turning down bids for lack of hours in the day.

Sincerely,

DiAngelo Gleaves
Principal
Gleaves Contractors, Inc.