AECMAGAZINE

Building Information Modelling (BIM) for Architecture, Engineering and Construction

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# Who keeps moving your BIM goalposts?

Oundle Group Managing Director Joe Croser considers an online subscription that analyses and benchmarks AEC software-user skills to help companies develop competitive advantage

Are you moving your Building Information Modelling (BIM) goalposts or are they being moved for you? Stand still and your competition will beat you to score the next big project. The days of claiming competitive advantage because you are 'BIM Ready' are long gone; being 'ready' is no longer a differentiator — almost everyone now claims some BIM readiness.

I have with great interest read various articles relating to BIM use including: Demonstrating Professional Credentials, Sharing BIM Data, The Cost of Conversion, and The effect of BIM on Health & Safety. None of the blog posts, LinkedIn discussions, or online surveys considered if BIM adoption was the right thing to do — that is now a given. The threads I read dug deeper into how one might maximise a return on investment (ROI) and minimise the risks associated with embracing collaborative BIM workflows. That is good news, especially in the current business climate.

Today, every well-run business is working harder than ever to increase returns on technological, workflow, and human investments. Every purchase is being scrutinised, and performance levels measured to determine if, where, and how the investment is growing. Makes perfect sense to me; you cannot manage what you do not measure, and you will not sustain what you do not manage in this climate.

So how are firms measuring their returns on BIM investments? Well, that depends on who is doing the measuring.

If you ask an IT/CAD/BIM manager to measure the success of an implementation he or she will likely verify that the technology has been installed and configured on the appropriate desktops. He or she may even quote the numbers of active projects and users. But will he or she understand what to expect from them moving forwards? Does he or she know why the business needs to change or how the business and its clients are going to benefit? If not, how will he or she be able to adjust the strategy to deliver all that is expected?

A trainer will likely verify that delegates have attended and completed prescribed training courses. He or she may quote the numbers of certified users if post-training examinations were taken. But does the trainer have insight into the new levels of quality or productivity the business can expect from its newly trained staff? Do they know how their colleagues' skills now compare to their counterparts in competing firms? If not, how will he or she assess the needs for additional training? Or advise colleagues who are charged with resourcing projects with the right mix and balance of skills?

Ask the software support team to measure the successful adoption of the new technology and they will likely verify that the support infrastructure is up and running and that acceptable service levels for responses are being met. But are they analysing the data to understand skills gaps which may give rise to increased risk when sharing data? Can they infer from their service ticket database (assuming that one exists) who is a prime candidate for training to take their skills to the next level or who is a liability for the firm, increasing its risk and exposure?

The financial director might know if the budget has been spent, and if there are more purchase orders in play and may even report on the level of investment made as a leading indicator of the company's commitment to BIM and technological advancement. But does he or she understand the impact on operating expenses? Or how BIM processes might impact the way projects are resourced during the phases of development? If not, how will the budget be balances with the books to optimise the fine balance of operating expenditure and income?

The business development team will be very quick to tell anyone that will listen about their new technology, the depth of their investment across the firm, the enhanced capabilities of their teams, and the benefits they can now promise to their clients. But how will they differentiate their offering from that of their competition? We have already established that being 'BIM ready' will no longer impress. So how will they benchmark their capabilities against others to rise above the crowd?

> **"The next time you need to demonstrate your BIM credentials do it with data and differentiate your firm's BIM ability with hard facts"**

Ask the project directors what they think. Are they going to tell you that they need more or less time to service their clients and deliver their projects? Do they even know? Their primary mission is to bring a project in on time and on budget. But how will they do that blind? How will they resource projects with the right mix of skills and experience to guarantee quality for their clients, and efficiency for their firms? To whom will they turn for help? Human Resources (HR)? The learning and development team? The CAD/BIM manager?

What about HR? Do they have an opinion? Are they sitting at the "new technology adoption and workflow change management table" actively engaging in the strategy for success? If they are, how would they measure the ROI? Would they look for reduced hiring costs, increased staff retention rates, improved talent development metrics, or some other cocktail of value? Do they know what it costs to recruit or how much it costs to get it wrong and how often that happens?

I am barely scratching the surface. We need to make sure we get the most from our investment in BIM. The strategy should serve high-level business goals that are shared across all stakeholder groups, and which are in turn involved at every step to provide balance and to guarantee success.

## Common approach

For every perspective outlined above there is a common approach for measuring the success of new technology and BIM adoption.

For architecture, engineering, and construction firms that struggle to recruit new talent with the right software skills, or to efficiently train existing staff with mixed software abilities, a KnowledgeSmart subscription delivers skills gap analysis and benchmarking services to help maximise return on investment in technology, people and client services. As a mature cloud-based service provider, KnowledgeSmart is the only online subscription offering that analyses and benchmarks AEC software user skills to help firms create new efficiencies and develop competitive advantage.

The KnowledgeSmart service:

- Reduces HR costs of 'failed recruits' by analysing software skills of job candidates during recruitment to increase tenure
- Increases classroom productivity by eliminating need for revision (AKA redundant training time) before learning new skills
- Lowers training course costs by reducing time spent in training classroom after eliminating redundant training time
- Measures the training return on investment by analysing skills pre-training to 'benchmark' proficiency and post-training to measure development.

From measured ROI studies, the average KnowledgeSmart subscriber enjoys a return on investment of between two and five times, before they measure their productivity gains and report on the increased quality of service to infrastructure project clients.

The next time you need to demonstrate your BIM credentials do it with data and differentiate your firm's BIM ability with hard facts.

*Joe Croser is Managing Director of Oundle Group, a business development consultancy that helps technology firms grow, and an Enterprise Programme Mentor with the Prince's Trust, a youth charity that helps change young lives.*