

The

# Builder

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS

VOLUME 11  
ISSUE 5  
NOVEMBER 2007

**In This Issue...**

- Project Spotlight** p2
- AGC** p3
- BIM** p5
- Risk Management** p6
- Milestones** p7
- Supplier Showcase** p7
- Labor** p8
- Legislative** p9
- Renovation** p10
- Safety** p12

**COMING  
ATTRACTIONS**

*Dec. 11*

*Builders Association  
Annual Meeting*

Fairmont Hotel, Chicago  
200 N. Columbus Drive  
3-6 p.m.

## Scaling The Wall

### *Members Learn What They Need To Know About Building Information Modeling*

The 70 attendees at the Builders Association's Building Information Modeling Forum came to learn how 3D modeling was being used for both big and small projects, and they weren't disappointed on either front by Jim Davy of James McHugh Construction Company.

As part of the second panel of industry users of BIM, Davy related how he had learned the 3D modeling process from scratch, and how at this point in his career he's used it for everything from Trump Tower to a playhouse in his back yard. In between, he related how he believes the technology brings advantages to any job, no matter what the scale.

That bit of experience, however, doesn't mean there's not more McHugh can do, according to Davy.

"We're learning lessons every day on every

project we use it for," he said. "The best advice I can give anyone is to educate the user."

Education is what the Forum was all about, as industry expert Michael Kenig (Vice Chairman, Holder Construction Company) and others let attendees know how Virtual Design & Construction could impact their bottom line. His presentation dealt with the metaphorical wall between those who do use BIM and recognize its benefits, and companies that haven't yet thought about using BIM. While BIM is building steam with contractors on both coasts and in other parts of the Midwest, contractors in Chicago have been slow to adopt the technology.

The Builders Association took the opportunity to help its members understand what BIM is and how it can help their business.

"It's really starting to catch on like wildfire," said Kenig, who is recognized nationally as one of the experts on the topic. "We're seeing that traditional methods are starting to be replaced

**please see BIM Forum, page 4**



*Dan Klancnik (right) of C.G. Schmidt goes through the finer points of his presentation as (from left) Chuck Hardy of GSA, David Cintron Jr. of DAC Studios and Dave Weihing of Thornton Tomasetti look on. The Building Information Modeling Forum provided potential BIM users with the information they need to get started from companies and individuals already using the technology.*

**BIM Forum, from page 1**

by something different.

“It isn’t just something that’s for larger projects. You can get some benefit out of this on every project.”

The Forum included local contractors, architects and owners who are using BIM. In addition to Kenig and Davy, presenters included:

- David Cintron Jr., DAC Studios, Ltd.
- Kristine K. Fallon, Kristine K. Fallon & Associates
- Robert Grupe, USG
- Chuck Hardy, General Services Administration, Co-Chair of the Construction Users Roundtable Process Transformation Committee
- Jim Kamilis, Hill Mechanical Group
- Dan Klancnik, Virtual Construction Coordinator, C.G. Schmidt
- Dave Weihing, Thornton Tomasetti

Hardy brought an owner’s prospective to the contractors and explained how Building Information Modeling can make a contractor attractive to owners and increase communication all the way around.

“It can be used on all levels,” Hardy said of the technology. “It can be used for analysis, safety and scheduling help. It goes beyond the issue of cost. It helps with information sharing and contingency.

“BIM is the reason why I’m seeing a lot more collaboration in the industry now than I’ve ever seen in my career.”

In addition, Hardy alluded to the “looming crisis in human capital” in the construction industry. BIM, he said, could be one way to produce better buildings faster, which would lessen the impact of any labor shortage.

Klancnik says his company was able to learn from early mistakes, and encouraged contractors considering BIM to learn from the miscues of the companies that tried the technology before them. The most important components, he said, were talking to the right people before the company even started and getting every project manager in the company trained in the technology.

Many of the panelists cited better communication as one benefit of BIM when it is being used to its full potential. However, Kamilis - under whose watch Hill Mechanical has gone from no integration to 28 full-time users - stressed the importance of communicating before even trying to implement it.

“Management doesn’t really understand the terminology,” he said, underscoring the importance of first time users to make management understand the terminology and the benefits. “Designers are, in essence, creating the drawings for the foremen, and you have to communicate as much as possible and keep everyone on the same page.

“It’s important to invest in training and it’s important to set

realistic goals.”

The upfront investment required to start using BIM is one big deterrent for contractors, and panelists discussed when new users would see a return on that investment. Arranging for the original two-dimensional drawings to be outsourced and changed into 3D can take some of the bite out of the cost. C.G. Schmidt integrated BIM a little over a year ago and sends its drawings to a company overseas for 3D conversions, but Klancnik doesn’t recommend the strategy for everyone.

“The benefits are cost and quality,” Klancnik said. “There are drawbacks in terms of a language barrier, but that can be overcome. The company we work with does this kind of work all over and they’re very good at it.

“There is a risk in outsourcing the conversions, and it depends on the company. It’s not a one-size-fits-all sort of thing. You have to establish a relationship with a good company that consistently does good work. It can be hit-and-miss.”

Each presenter gave a final word of advice for companies considering adopting the technology.


“The most important thing is to get the big boss at your company to buy into it,” Klancnik said. “Make him understand. In our first year, we probably spent hundreds of thousands, but we saved hundreds of thousands, and we’ll continue to get those savings thanks to our initial investment.”

Kamilis said companies should know exactly what they want to do with BIM before diving into it, and Fallon’s suggestion was that companies should use a pilot project to see where they stumble and go from there.


From clash detection to intellectual property protection, those who attended this Forum were able to see BIM’s benefits and pitfalls, and get a better idea of what to expect when their company adopts this essential technology.

See the presentations from the Forum at [www.bldrs.org](http://www.bldrs.org).

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