

BIM: It's all about change

Building Information Modelling, or Digital Construction, is spearheading a revolution in the construction industry. It is arguably the single most important driver for change across the sector and BIM Level 2 in the UK requires companies to think differently and embrace organisational change. Successful change management must be supported by a clear plan and BIM is no different. Through this blog and in the posts which will follow, I am going to explore what this means for organisations across the construction supply chain.

Importance of strategy for adopting BIM

Embracing the requirements of BIM will mean different things to different organisations depending on where they are in the construction supply chain. Adapting to the new ways of working is complex and at Project Five we have seen first hand how challenging it can be for companies. One doesn't just flick a switch and turn BIM on!

Clients, for example, must understand how to set their Employer's Information Requirements and how to work collaboratively with their supply chains. They will have to adapt their procurement processes and develop approaches to supply chain assessment. This is on top of having to understand the processes for Pre- and Post-contract BIM Execution Plans as well as how BIM can support asset management.

For designers and contractors, it is understanding what clients are asking for; how to interpret and deliver against the EIRs and develop and manage the Pre- and Post-contract BIM Execution Planning processes. It is developing the processes to deliver the specific requirements of Task and Master Information Delivery Plans. It is also setting up, managing and working with the Common Data Environment. Oh, and there's COBie and Asset Information Models!

As a Tier 2 sub-contractor it is understanding the specific information requirements being placed on them and how they will be required to work collaboratively with the Tier 1 contractor and other suppliers. It is understanding the process requirements, the BIM Execution Plan and the Common Data Environment. Across the whole wider supply chain there is a need to understand the specific information requirements for projects and how to work collaboratively to deliver the outcomes.

Wherever an organisation sits in the supply chain, it is critical to identify how BIM is going to affect the way that organisation works. Even more important is to then develop a strategy. Too often we've seen companies ask an individual to find out about BIM and 'make it happen.' Without exception we have seen these companies flounder in their attempts to become 'BIM ready.' This is either through lack of leadership (more of that later) or underestimating the scale of the challenge.

Don't underestimate complexity

These issues just scratch the surface and BIM adoption is complex. It is often the complexity that organisations underestimate.

Wherever organisations sit in the supply chain, there are three central tenets they will need to consider. Broadly speaking, these are people, process and technology. Adopting BIM means our people will need to develop new skills and knowledge. Organisations will need to adopt and work in accordance with new processes. And to a greater or lesser extent (depending on what they are asked to deliver) they will need to adopt and use new technological approaches to information production and management.

The extent to which each of these key issues affects any individual organisation is dependent on the project role they are expected to fulfil. Irrespective of what these specific requirements are, every organisation adapting to the use of BIM should have a strategy for dealing with these issues. A strategy is based on having a clear vision of what you need to achieve and a plan of how to get there.

It will need to include an analysis of your current situation and developing targeted actions to address:

- The adoption of the technology requirements to meet your needs;
- The development of robust processes for information management; and
- The training and development required to support your people.

The importance of leadership

Any strategy, any approach to change, needs to be underpinned by clear and strong leadership from the top. Someone who owns the strategy. Someone who sets the vision and drives the approach through the organisation. In our experience, those companies with which we've worked and which have successfully implemented their BIM strategy have always had a strong leader supporting those responsible for tackling some of the specific BIM challenges.

Communication is key

It is well known that successful change occurs when there is clear leadership. It also needs to be supported by clear and timely communication with staff. And that means with ALL staff. Everyone in your organisation will have to know at least something about BIM. People respond best when they are directly involved in the delivery of a change process. Not only that, they are more likely to support the change when they feel supported in their roles. A simple analysis of your skills and training needs around BIM will help to identify who needs to know what and what training they will require.

So what next?

NFB research in 2016 mirrored the findings of the CN BIM Survey and subsequently led to our application to the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) for funding to support our Digital Construction – BIM the next generation project.

This programme will work with SME tier 1 contractors to identify 10 construction projects which will be delivered incorporating BIM technologies and processes across the supply chain. We will engage projects at an early stage and at all levels to influence the behaviours and practices to maximise the impact BIM offers.

The objectives of the training and support programmes include:

- Benchmarking and measuring levels of collaborative maturity on the projects;
- Identifying the skills and training needs required to deliver a live BIM project;
- Creating the technical and cultural environment to develop, implement and manage a common data environment on the projects;
- Incorporating BIM and Lean principles to ensure effective and efficient project delivery;
- Developing case studies to support an increase in BIM projects at this level; and
- Creating a framework for successful delivery of BIM projects.

To find out more about the programme, or to register an interest in being involved, contact the Business & Skills team on 03450 570 0042.

