

## Does size matter for BIM?

A recent Construction News BIM survey suggests that perhaps size matters after all. The results suggest that BIM is more likely to be adopted by larger contractors and on larger projects. So does this point towards BIM being more appropriate for larger projects and for larger companies? Is BIM beyond the means of small contractors?

The survey coincides with the passing of the level 2 target date and the announcement of funding to develop standards for BIM level 3. Alongside other data, such as the NFB BIM Survey, it gives us a snapshot of the maturity of the industry. What it doesn't necessarily do is give us an understanding of the reasons for the apparent size bias.

Is it that clients delivering larger projects are more capable of procuring with BIM in mind? Are there greater opportunities to use BIM on larger projects? Is there more budget to give it a go?

## BIM and the Construction Industry

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Perhaps the BIM mandate being focused primarily on centrally procured projects means a bias towards larger projects. Or maybe larger contractors simply have more resources to support the implementation of BIM.

The results are certainly consistent with anecdotal evidence and market intelligence. Project Five has been gathering over the last couple of years. One of the many frustrations we hear from organisations across the supply chain is that clients procuring smaller projects just aren't asking for BIM. Or is it that they don't know what they want? The survey tells us that most respondents said less than 25% of tenders include Employer's Information Requirements with specific data needs set out. And in this respect there was much less of a size bias which perhaps points to a wider need to address client capability around BIM.

## What are the other barriers to BIM adoption?

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In many respects, it is easy to blame clients for a lack of demand or to dismiss it as something suitable only on larger projects. But BIM is complex and aside from size, there are a multitude of factors the supply chain must address to become 'ready'.

Interestingly, '*skills*' and '*process implementation*' were far and away the two most important barriers to being level 2 ready. Much more so than cost and these findings are consistent in the responses from contractors, consultants and architects.

It is not until we get down to the smaller contractors (<50 employees) and smaller projects (<£10 million) that cost is perceived as an equally important barrier. What we don't know is whether this is perception or reality.

What it does suggest, however, is that there is a continued need to support small and medium sized companies. In doing so, the focus needs to be on their skills and developing the business processes which support the use of BIM.

## How can we help?

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.

