Do You Need BIM to Compete?

Are your customers requesting — or requiring — deliverables that are driving you to consider this change, or will you have to educate them about the value of BIM? Are your competitors using BIM, and if so, can you determine how they are applying the technology (i.e., only select types or sizes of projects)? How do you foresee this competitive landscape changing?

Are Your Expectations Realistic?

What, exactly, do you think BIM will do for you? Are you expecting to produce projects more quickly and efficiently, to reduce errors, or to produce new types of deliverables? Will you gain access to new types of projects or customers? Will you be able to estimate costs or visualize the project more accurately? Quantify the expected changes to the best of your ability, in concrete terms: numbers of hours and dollars and errors and projects. The more specific you can be, the better you'll be able to determine whether BIM can actually provide what you're hoping for.

Cadalyst Pro Tips #10

How Much Will It Cost?

When you're adding up the dollars, don't stop at the price of software: Be sure to take into account the costs of training, reduced productivity while users get up to speed, and even IT upgrades, if you'll need new cloud resources or your current hardware isn't powerful enough for the software you'll use. Check for government incentives to help offset the cost of BIM.

How Do the Options Compare?

Some applications offer more capabilities than others, but you don't necessarily need the most feature-rich option. Are the specific tools or component libraries you need available within the main software product, or through third-party add-ons? And although you will likely be paying thousands of dollars no matter which software application you choose, be aware that costs vary widely among titles.

What Are Your Needs?

There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution that addresses everyone's needs equally. An architect and a mechanical contractor have different goals and requirements, as do small and large companies. To select appropriate tools, start by making a detailed profile of your company: What size is it, and how big are your projects? What's your budget? Are you looking to expand in terms of your services or the customers you serve? What outside parties do you typically coordinate with on a project, and what software tools do they use? What governmental regulations affect you and the projects you bid on?

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Questions to Ask Before Adopting BIM

Although it's not yet ubiquitous, building information modeling has become much more common in AEC and civil engineering environments in recent years. As with any technology that's increasing in popularity, you may feel pressured to implement it. But before you make the leap, be sure that you — and your company as a whole — thoroughly understand the costs, the potential benefits, and your reasons for making the change.