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CAD Manager's Newsletter (#459)

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By: Robert Green

What I Wish I Had Known About CAD Management

If I could have a conversation with my younger self, I'd explain to him that being a CAD manager requires much more than just technical skill.

There's a quote from the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard that has always captivated me: "You live life looking forward, you understand life looking backward." This has made me think about the lessons I've learned over the years that have most helped me succeed in my CAD manager's role. What I've come to realize is that there are certain principles — core rules, if you like — that CAD managers should consider before anything else. These rules for how you approach the job, communicate, and build career equity over time are the things I wish I'd known when I started this journey.

So in this edition of the *CAD Manager's Newsletter*, I'll do something a bit different and share with you an imaginary conversation with my younger self just getting started on the CAD manager's journey. I hope you find this a provocative way to consider new possibilities for the New Year. Here goes.

This Job Is All About Project Management

You know, this job isn't really isn't as technical as you might think. Sure, you're a great technical professional — one who can figure out most anything CAD-based if given some time to research it — but that skill set isn't what will give you success in the end.

Instead, you'll achieve long-term success in this position because you can manage projects and deliverables and do whatever needs to be done to achieve that goal. In some companies, you'll need to eliminate years of disorganization; in others, you may focus more on standards or training issues. The only thing you know for sure is that the challenge at each company will always be different, and the market is always changing.

So, if you think you can become a great CAD manager by only having a technical skill set focused on a single discipline — such as BIM or MCAD — think again. You'll do far better to develop a wide-ranging skill set that embraces project management and human factors first, then build your technical skills behind the scenes as you can.

Conclusion: Being technical without being managerial will limit your success — so think more like a project manager.

See the Big Picture

Realize that great project managers get results from diverse teams of people, so it won't be enough to just understand how CAD users think. Think about taking a building project from concept through construction and ask yourself, "What do I need to understand to make this all work?" From that starting point, you'll start to comprehend the big picture.

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When you think about a project in its entirety, you begin to see that it isn't just BIM that you must understand, but all the interface points and stages of the project. And since different project stages utilize different groups of workers, you'll need to understand BIM users, estimators, on-site personnel, construction management, and QA personnel's information requirements. Building projects don't happen in the office they happen at the job site. And machinery integration doesn't just happen in the office either — machinery is built on the manufacturing floor.

Conclusion: You'll be a far better CAD manager if you understand the big picture of where CAD deliverables go and how to support all the teams that use your deliverables to execute projects. Read more »

Tools and Resources

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Send your tool recommendation(s) to editors@cadalyst.com by Monday, January 18, for consideration. Be sure to include:

- ► Your full name, the name of the tool, and the company that provides it
- ► The website where readers can access or download the tool
- ► A brief description of what you use it for and/or why you like it.

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About the Author: Robert Green

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