

BIM 101

Building Information Modeling (BIM) will eventually be mainstream. It can increase project speed, reduce costs (especially during Construction Administration), allows for tighter contractor pricing, and helps with future building maintenance and repairs.

But don't feel like you're being left in the dust. Many firms are just starting to get their feet wet with BIM. Here are a few things you need to know:

- **Everyone on a BIM project has to commit to drawing/documenting in 3D.** Just because 3D can be hard – and you've got to plan for some training and ramp-up time – no one should be allowed to draw in 2D.
- **The PM and lead architect/engineer should know the model like the back of their hand** so that they can communicate information about it to the contractor quickly and accurately so that things can be corrected or figured out in the field.
- **If possible, hire a Construction Manager early in the process.** In many cases, they're more familiar with BIM than designers are, and can help you through the process.
- **The standard SD, DD, and CD design phases may no longer apply, with a BIM process being**

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more of a continued refinement of the 3D model.

Decisions are made earlier than usual with BIM, and the costs to change them can be significant.

- **The PM and client must agree on and clarify to the team (including subcontractors) how detailed the 3D model needs to be.** You may not need to show every fastener.
- **BIM isn't bulletproof.** Though a good 3D model is highly detailed, with most conflicts worked out, don't expect perfection.
- **Your IT personnel, or those most familiar with the computer systems, should plan for continued and frequent involvement.** There will be periodic software upgrades and coordination issues with subcontractors.
- **Your subcontractors have to work on the model at the same pace.** If one of them is pushing ahead with fine details while your structural engineer is still adjusting the column grid, there are going to be conflicts. ■

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The Slippery Slope of Staff Augmentation

by Karen Compton, CPSM

Peter Block is a bestselling author, and on the subjects of empowerment, stewardship and chosen accountability. In his book, *Flawless Consulting*, Peter writes that, "The task of the consultant is increasingly to build the capacity of clients to make their own assessments and answer their own questions." Nowhere is this issue more difficult than in the world of staff augmentation.

For decades, clients have solicited the design and construction industry seeking "consultants to provide on-call or as needed professional services." While such solicitations are often true consulting assignments, many are often calls for staff augmentation. Staff augmentation may be defined as the ability of a company to provide prescreened professionals that meet the client's criteria for a project and duration. While there may be a specific assignment, the staff member's employment agreement is with his or her own company; however, they are assigned to work on-site usually under the direct supervision of the contracting company. By all outward indicators, the staff person would appear to be an employee. This model works well for the contracting company as issues relating to poor or underperformance can simply be met with a call to the staff person's own company and the individual may be replaced.

This is vastly different than true consulting. Like staff augmentation, consultants may be hired per project or for duration. However, unlike staff augmentation, consultants do not work under the direction or instruction of a client in a supervisory role. Rather, they provide similar or complementary services to more than one company thereby offering the hiring entity the benefit of many perspectives and points of view on a subject or project. So, why is this so important to understand?

True consulting is thoughtful and advisory in nature. It is intended to foster an innate ability to assess and resolve problems in the absence of on-going advice or counsel. However, those that find themselves in the role of providing augmentative assistance under the guise of a consulting agreement may often find themselves in the difficult situation of just taking orders. How then do we, as design and construction professionals, bridge this gap in the face of augmentation?

Recall that on the face of it, the staff you select to assume an augmentative role is arguably the best qualified and most talented individuals for the position(s) required. But, deeper than that is a representation of you and your company's management. To that end, when faced with a situation that is contradictory to your company's philosophy (not the hiring agent) or best business practice, your employee must have an "open door" to your firm to resolve complex and conflicting issues. Without such a "loop," your firm may be found diluting the real and valuable role that your consultancy provides, and at worst, be culpable for actions taken by your employee, but at the direction of another. ■

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