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Daniel Shirkey

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Mini-Interview, Balfour Beatty

Q) Your presentation is due to focus on optimizing workflows and organizational structures to best leverage technology. What is the most challenging change you have made to your workflow or structure? Why was this change critical, and how did you approach the transition?

Daniel – Our biggest challenge has been to break the mould of traditional 2D estimating which has required a reskilling of our estimators as well as required a much earlier conversation with our design team partners about their use of BIM so we can maximize the value of the technology.

Q) Communication between design and preconstruction is key to any estimation process. What has Balfour Beatty done to improve communication between departments?

Daniel – We have really tried to de-compartmentalize our estimating and VDC departments. We have experimented in a couple ways such as rotating estimating staff into BIM and vice-versa as well as shuffling our seating charts to prompt more foot traffic between departments. Both these steps helped tear down the barriers between the groups and to grow our collective understanding. We have also united as one voice when evaluating new software, tools and processes because we realize that both the estimating and BIM processes are intertwined and the software decisions impact both.

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Q) Looking at your current process, what is the weakest link you would like to work on next? How do you think your processes will improve further in the next few years?

Cecilia - Managing the concurrent estimation of 2D and 3D content for a project. Currently the quantity take-off process is often fragmented and inefficient. Making the transition from one type of information to another more seamless, ideally in one software platform, will enable us to be more efficient and accurate in our quantities and estimating practices.

Q) Changes in workflows and improvements in efficiency have been spearheaded by technology such as BIM and take-off software. Looking ahead, what technologies do you think will most impact your company in the next 5 years?

Daniel - Virtual Reality is a very exciting technology that will begin to have a very disruptive impact in the near future. Improvements in mobile technology are going to make augmented reality more viable as well as minimizing the burden of content preparation that currently reduces its impact.

Cecilia - Estimating software that can provide the means for both 2D and 3D quantity take-off as well as the ability to transition from conceptual to detail estimating easily. Software that also tracks trend logs and design changes and enables the preconstruction process, and feedback to the client, to be immediate and in real time. Software that is web-based, mobile and easy to use for both the expert and novice estimator. One that provides both the BIM and estimation in one database.

Q) What are you hoping to achieve from attending Estimation Technology For Construction 2016? What lessons or insights are you hoping to take away from other contractors or attendees?

Daniel - The wave of technology that our industry has been experiencing has taken a significant swing into the estimation portion of our industry. I am looking to see the diverse approach companies have been taking with these tools and how impactful they have been for their businesses.

Cecilia - I am hopeful to see what other contractors are doing in terms of leaning the BIM and estimating processes relative to software selection, customization and implementation.

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