

# Right here, right now



With more than 3,000 stakeholders engaged on numerous data-centre projects across Europe, Sisk is reaping the benefits of having the latest information available on demand to each and every one of them – via Autodesk Construction Cloud.

**YEARS OF** experience using BIM 360 stood John Sisk & Son in very good stead indeed when it came to the logical next step in its digital transformation: the implementation of Autodesk Construction Cloud (ACC).

As Warren Judge, BU Digital Project Delivery (DPD) Lead for data centres at Sisk, explains, the company was quick to adopt ACC when Autodesk introduced it. The fact that this happened during Covid meant that the demand for a digital solution like ACC was thrown into sharper relief than ever before.

already mandated the use of Autodesk tools on their projects. “We have comprehensive and strict BIM requirements from our clients, from the start of construction right through to the handover,” says José Carlos Peñas, senior BIM Manager, Sisk. ACC has enabled Sisk to adhere to these requirements while also ensuring that all parties working on its data centre projects have continual access to only the most up-to-date information.

As José explains, the process across Sisk’s data centre projects begins with the

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“There was a huge need at that time for a cloud-based platform,” says Warren. “People were moving from site-based environments to working from home, and they needed to be able to access project information pretty much instantly.”

Which is, of course, precisely where ACC came in. And although its advent represented a major step forward in Sisk’s digital journey, the process of shifting over to the new software was by all accounts relatively seamless. Among the various reasons for this was the fact that the bulk of Sisk’s data-centre clients

engagement of the design teams as soon as the design models and other details have been received. “After that we set up the various sub-contractors and construction teams on ACC so that they can each start developing their own models.” From his perspective, ACC has meant that all team members are now much more involved in the BIM process, which helps avoid rework. “It also allows us to collaborate from remote locations; we have sub-contractors and equipment suppliers working all over Europe, yet all the information is stored in one location [nothing is stored locally],” he says. “ACC has

meant that this kind of remote work can happen a lot more seamlessly than in the past.”

It is clear just how much ACC has allowed Sisk to improve productivity and efficiency when it comes to coordinating different trades and sub-contractors. “All sub-contractors have live information from all the construction teams,” says José. “For example, the electrical sub-contractor can be sure that they are always looking at the very latest version of the steel model, the fitout model, the concrete model, etc.” In other words, one runaway benefit of ACC has been the reassurance of having a ‘single source of truth’. There is only one version of each model, and that is the live version. This frees team members from having to worry about whether they should be checking previous versions of a model, and ultimately means a far lower chance of rework being needed on site.

Warren is unequivocal about this being the biggest win for Sisk from its adoption of ACC: the fact of having information you can trust at your fingertips. It is, he adds, particularly relevant given that the company has teams scattered across the continent – and times have very much changed. “Gone are the days when you might have to walk back from the site to the office to load up a model,” he says. “Now you can review and raise issues in real time. The projects we are delivering in multiple countries across Europe involve mission-critical infrastructure, which demands that the information we have is robust.” The fact that ACC fulfils this need means that Sisk’s site teams can be confident in what they’re viewing or reviewing and, crucially, can use that to make their lives easier. “A lot of what we do here is ultimately driven by our site teams,” adds Warren.

Sisk has a history of technological innovation that feeds into its present-day successes in this regard. In terms of BIM maturity, the company’s Data Centre Business Unit adopted PAS 1192 as far back as 2016 when it was working on some data centre projects in Dublin, and more recently ISO 19650. That knowhow was then transferred across to projects in Europe and, says Warren, was to prove very valuable when it came to handling different clients via the new system. “The clients we work for have some pretty robust processes in place already, and the fact that every client is different means that every project can have different procedures and workflows,” he says. “That’s where our Data Centre Business Unit team comes in; they are experienced in using BIM 360, and the transition to ACC was smooth for us because of those skillsets.” In practical terms, this team has the skills to be able to flex and adapt ACC as they see fit, depending on the client or region in question.

For its part, ACC is sufficiently flexible to allow Sisk to make those changes, and cater to differing client prerequisites. “We have been able to adapt ACC to clients’ processes so that we are efficiently using the tools while at the same time being compliant with our contract requirements,” says José.

Apart from Sisk already being well versed digitally, another factor that worked in its favour when it came to the smooth transition to ACC was its longstanding relationship with both Autodesk itself and its reseller, NTI Diathec. “We have worked with NTI Diathec for many years and have a solid relationship in terms of procurement, support and implementation, and we also have a tight working relationship with the Autodesk team, with whom we are in regular contact,” says Warren.

It is worth noting that Sisk’s considered deployment of digital tools has not gone unnoticed; its Data Centre Business Unit has to date scooped not one but two Autodesk Excellence Awards (the first in 2020 and the second in 2022). This ties in with the fact that the construction company is relatively advanced in its digital transformation process, with the use of ACC now a mature and consistent element of all its data centre work across Europe. It makes the most of the various functions and services that ACC offers, from design collaboration to model co-ordination and more.

For anyone yet to start the process of digital transformation and/or deployment of ACC, it is clear that early legwork is key – as is engagement with Autodesk. “They are at the coalface of this every day in terms of on-boarding, implementation, rollout to site teams, and how best to achieve all that,” notes Warren. Sisk also ran extensive hands-on training for the members of its site teams at an early stage to ensure they were comfortable using the new tools. That’s because, as Warren sees it, the success of these tools doesn’t sit with the BIM team but is, rather, about bringing them to the masses. A case in point is Sisk’s team members who are putting data centres in place around Europe – all of whom the company wanted to ensure were comfortable viewing and using BIM models.

According to José, meanwhile, when plotting digital transformation it’s vital to begin with the end in mind. “It is very important to spend enough time at the start of a project setting the platform up properly, testing it and refining it before rolling it out.” This means not just preparing the platform for the initial BIM coordination period, he says, but also looking at how the models are going to evolve all the way through to final delivery. It is an approach that has evidently served Sisk well. ■

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