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Consulting Structural Engineers

CAN BIM BE PROFITABLE?

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You have undoubtedly read about the promises of building information modeling (BIM). The question that we design professionals need to address early in a project is how can BIM be profitable. The answer is often related to developing the proper amount of detail in the model to meet the owner's expectations.

The sophistication of the model information is defined in terms of the level of development (LOD). The LOD of a project will identify which objects are modeled as smart elements – complete with parametric information - and which objects can be shown as line work. A low LOD may only include basic elements such as beams and columns. This is useful information to help identify collisions and clashes between elements. A higher LOD is required if the model will be used for contractor take-offs or for shop drawing preparation. The more information that is included as model elements, the more time and fee is required to complete the model. The owner can offset the higher design fees typically associated with higher LOD through reduced construction phase initiated change orders and shorter construction phase by reducing quantity take-off time and shop drawing preparation time.

Another way to make BIM more profitable is by implementing Integrated Project Delivery (IPD). IPD is a process that allows all the members of the project team - including the owner and contractor - to collaborate early in the design process. This process allows the team to make informed decisions early, and deliver a project to the owner more quickly than with traditional project delivery methods. BIM is a useful tool to use in the IPD process because it allows a platform to easily visualize how design team designs impact the overall project. Design conflicts are easier and less expensive to fix during the early design phase than in the field during construction.

Entering our third year of using BIM software, SSA has successfully completed nearly twenty BIM projects. Please do not hesitate to call us to discuss how our BIM and IPD experience can be used to make your next project more profitable.