

Case study: Clarkson Alliance

Costing with Bidcon BIM helps Clarkson Alliance build foundation of a BIM future



David Chapell is Head of Cost Management at Clarkson Alliance. When he joined the team he was delighted to discover that Managing Director, Graham Clarkson, was committed to putting BIM at the heart of the business.

When David came on board to grow cost management as a dedicated discipline alongside the company's existing project management business, he already knew that BIM could provide opportunity, but that there were some practical challenges. He undertook a thorough immersive learning process, attended seminars and researched the tools and options available. It became apparent that, to grow this new business, he would certainly require a robust quantities management platform, strong templates and clear processes that would help add value to the company's client services.

Playing by new rules

David believed that Clarkson Alliance could change the rules of the game:

helping to drive and determine the information that designers should provide to enable better cost planning and value management for BIM projects. The first step was to find the appropriate cost management IT platform that could support that, as he explained: "I had become very interested in how we could improve the efficiency of cost planning and become more collaborative with a design team, using BIM. To do that, it was clear to me that we needed to operate in accordance with the New Rules of Measurement (NRM) – but I had found that very few cost management tools were inherently integrating this."

“ Bidcon BIM ticked all our boxes. ”

The RICS new rules of measurement had been launched in 2012, to provide a coordinated set of rules and standards for cost estimation and cost planning in

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Clarkson Alliance was founded in 2003 with the purpose of providing clients with the highest possible quality of project management. Today it fields a highly experienced, multi-award-winning team, based in Oxford and London and working with clients across the UK on project management, cost management and risk mitigation. Collaboration – with clients, suppliers and third parties – has been at the heart of its mission since the start, and the emergence of BIM has only intensified this belief. Through collaboration, and a commitment to leadership and performance excellence, Clarkson Alliance aims to guarantee the certainty of outcomes on every project, and deliver increased sustainable business benefits at the same time as mitigating risks for its clients.

construction and maintenance projects – yet David found that many major tools in use for BIM projects, including mainstream 3D design review products, were still not immediately compatible with NRM.

The company had already standardised on Asta Powerproject for project management planning and was being introduced to the software's new BIM module when it became aware of Bidcon BIM. "As soon as we learned there was a quantities package that could support BIM, our ears pricked up. We asked what form of output it produced and the

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answer came back as NRM1 and NRM2. Until that time we had not found any system that could output costs in this industry-standard way.”

Driving savings and efficiency

He continued: “Bidcon BIM ticked all our boxes – and, the more questions we asked, the more boxes it ticked. For example: Spon’s is the standard industry price book for construction and, with its inclusion, Bidcon BIM becomes a cost database too.”

It was important that the tool enabled Clarkson Alliance to input and manage its own, carefully negotiated, price and supplier information too: “You can insert your own bespoke rates to form a combination of Spon’s and your own in-house data, to create your own database. It puts your prices at your fingertips, instead of locating them from cost plans or bills of quantities on an ad-hoc basis.”

Looking to the long term

NRM and Spon’s integration were important to help the company follow the RIBA and NBS Digital plans of works for BIM, “BIM can help us to build our business. We can now say to our architect clients ‘you are not alone’ and work with them in a collaborative manner. We no longer have to request plans in 2D. We can help design teams to become more efficient, and structure our activities to help everyone work together with a common purpose on BIM projects, where designers understand the value of producing structured



models and can be assured of an efficient cost planning cost management process. We can advise at an earlier stage, help avoid discrepancies when structuring the model, and feed into the BIM Execution Plan. It all adds up to better client service.”

With the aid of Bidcon BIM, alongside a focus on creating new fit-for-the-future processes, the company is already able to strive for more consistent take-offs, better product specification, and an earlier involvement and collaboration that minimises rework for architects and designers. This transforms the potential for customer services and support, and may even help clients on the start of their BIM journey.

Through Bidcon BIM, the company is already looking ahead to the wider role of cost management as BIM expands. “We already know that we can support Level 2 BIM with 5D planning and, looking forward, I believe Bidcon BIM will help us to introduce NRM3 into cost planning models, and link O&M manuals and facilities maintenance cost data in a Whole Life Costing Approach. Traditionally most cost planning involvement finishes on practical completion of the asset, but it could continue much further providing increased benefits to clients.”

Clarkson Alliance felt comfortable choosing Bidcon BIM as such a key platform in part due to its good relationship with existing supplier, Elecosoft, the developer of Asta Powerproject. In closing, David said: “The fact that Bidcon BIM linked to Asta Powerproject was important to us, but also we knew that if there were any problems we could get answers fast and obtain training easily, thanks to the existing good relationship. They actually seem to want us to ask questions, and always come back quickly to explain things in ways that don’t make you kick yourself for asking.”



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