

How TLCD Pioneered Adoption of BIM

Part One of a Three Part Series

Studies in Success

Company: TLCD Architecture

Software on Board: Revit® Architecture, Globe Link Plug-in for Revit, AutoCAD®, Autodesk® 3ds Max® Design, Google SketchUp Pro, V-Ray for SketchUp from ASGvis, LLC, Google Earth, GoToMeeting, modo® from Luxology, LLC, Adobe® Creative Suite®, Microsoft Office Suite

Company: TLCD

TLCD Architecture is an architectural and interior design practice founded on collaboration, exploration and innovation. The company has a strong commitment to design excellence and social responsibility; its core values are People, Place and Craft. TLCD designs buildings that comprise the core infrastructure of society, from cultural, civic, educational and medical centers, to hospitality, mixed-use and commercial projects that serve our communities.

Founded in 1965, TLCD Architecture is a 50-person practice based in Santa Rosa, California. The company provides expertise in planning and programming, architectural and interior design, furniture planning and selection. Its work evidences a strong commitment to sustainability, with 22 members of the TLCD staff LEED accredited.

Summary

In 2000 when Revit was a little-known emerging solution, TLCD recognized the potential of BIM as a strategic initiative for the firm. As one of the earliest BIM adopters, TLCD was entering uncharted territory. The firm has discovered ways to use BIM across all TLCD practice areas and virtually all project types. As one of the earliest adopters, the firm has mandated BIM as its core methodology for project delivery since 2006.

The Challenge

At the 2000 AIA convention, a newcomer-to-the-market software solution caught the eye of Don Tomasi, Sr. Principal of TLCD. The booth Tomasi visited was that of Massachusetts-based Revit Technology Corporation. Tomasi was intrigued with the Revit demonstration and brought a demo copy back to the office.

Staff members hailed Revit as “cool,” tinkered with it and began implementing it on their Santa Rosa, California Indian Health Center project.

TLCD recognized that project managers and firm principals would need to be acquainted with Revit at a depth appropriate to their purposes. The firm worked with Ideate to create a Revit primer that was initially called the “Project Managers Course.” The course evolved to become the one-day Revit Architecture for Project Managers course now offered by Ideate throughout the year.

After the Indian Health Center project, Tomasi asked for feedback from staff members. They acknowledged Revit was challenging, but when asked, “Do you want to go back?” the answer was a resounding ‘no.’ They were willing to grapple with the shortcomings of even the very early version of Revit, because, as Tomasi says, “Revit works the way architects think.”

**“Revit works the way
architects think.”**

—Don Tomasi,
Sr. Principal, TLCD



When Autodesk snapped up Revit the following year, that signaled Tomasi his initial hunch was right. The strength of Autodesk behind the product made ongoing upgrades and product support a certainty. TLCD purchased Autodesk Revit from Ideate, Inc.

It's hard to say whether TLCD became an early BIM adopter because the firm is visionary, or if the TLCD management plan that offers superior cutting edge tools – the latest, most powerful, productivity focused technology in hardware and software – to its staff was the impetus behind the visionary commitment to BIM. At the outset, barriers to BIM arose on a number of fronts.

The Solution

Prospective clients saw the leap as one that might be costly to them and perhaps unnecessary. When queried skillfully, clients admitted they didn't want their architecture firm to "learn on their dime." Unaware and inexperienced in the process, they perceived stunning 3D visualizations as extraordinary "high-ticket" items. They needed education. TLCD became committed to educate.

As a pioneer, TLCD stood isolated in its AEC community. The firm needed to cultivate awareness, build proficiency and encourage collaboration among professional colleagues.

As a creative experimenter and envelope-pusher, TLCD needed a resource for timely expert support and for increasing its access to and use of interoperable technologies. Ideate was that resource.

As a company committed to a new methodology, TLCD determined that having an in-house champion was paramount. The only way to achieve their goals would be to have a point person dedicated to BIM and related emerging technologies.

Initiative 1 – Create a New Position

A position was created to spearhead BIM as a project delivery system and at the helm is Guy Messick, Director of Design Technology. Since 2004, Messick has overseen the many aspects of BIM for TLCD. As technologies emerge, Messick intercepts, evaluates and implements those that contribute to meaningful interoperability.

“Everyone involved, not only design and production personnel, needs to understand how Revit affects project design and execution.”

—Alan Butler,
Sr. Principal, TLCD



Initiative 2 – Training and Support

Messick makes sure that new TLCD staff members complete the Ideate three-day Revit Architecture Fundamentals course. Principals, project managers and all other staff with responsibility for managing Revit projects take the one-day hands-on Ideate Revit Architecture for Project Managers course.

Alan Butler, Sr. Principal, TLCD, describes the reasoning behind the firm's emphasis on Ideate education and training, "The paradigm is different. Everyone involved, not only design and production personnel, really needs to understand how Revit affects project design and execution."

After Ideate training, staff members enter a TLCD Revit project as part of their in-house training process. Messick also heads-up "lunch-and-learn" focused training sessions.

Messick explains, "Higher levels of learning happen in-house. We work through new processes, figure out new techniques, but the courses from Ideate are very useful. We recommend Ideate training to Autodesk User Groups International and other groups."

Ideate technical support has also helped TLCD in its successful adoption of BIM. Messick says, "The support contract is an important part of our relationship with Ideate. When we call with questions, we can usually surprise even the Ideate staff. We tend to create novel questions because we experiment and try new approaches. We rely on Ideate tech support."

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—Guy Messick,
Director of Design
Technology, TLCD



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—Guy Messick

Initiative 3 – Cross Pollinate Within the Industry

According to Don Tomasi, having an in-house champion to organize information sharing opportunities for the professional community, including Revit user group events hosted at TLCD with Ideate, has been crucial. When a company is pioneering a new core method for project delivery, information exchange with other trailblazing companies and consultants expands the collective knowledge base.

One of the unexpected consequences of sharing information and offering leadership in the adoption of BIM is the cultivation of more consultants who are valuable BIM-adept resources for TLCD.

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Initiative 4 – All-in Commitment

Messick compares the TLCD “all in” approach to Revit with the more common practice. Most firms begin with a pilot project running parallel with their traditional projects. They create multiple teams – the BIM and the non-BIM (traditional). The Revit team gets close scrutiny, and so do its financials. In Messick’s opinion, it is difficult if not impossible to isolate a pilot project. One can try to cost it out, but processes are very different.

According to Messick, the firm jumped into Revit with both feet. He says, “Now Revit is part of our firm’s culture.”



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—Guy Messick

About Ideate, Inc.

Ideate, Inc., a leading Autodesk Value Added Reseller, provides software and hardware, implementation services, training, support and consulting services for the Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC), civil and multi-media industries. Established in 1992, Ideate, Inc. is recognized as an Autodesk Premier Solutions Provider (PSP) – Building Architecture, Autodesk’s highest level of authorization. Ideate, Inc. operates five Autodesk Authorized Training Centers on the West Coast: San Francisco, CA; Sacramento, CA; San Jose, CA; Portland, OR and Seattle, WA. Ideate facilities are also acknowledged as Autodesk Authorized Certification Centers, providing globally recognized certification courses for professionals who sell, service and support Autodesk products and solutions. For more information about Ideate, Inc. visit www.ideateinc.com

With a specific focus on Building Information Modeling (BIM), Ideate is also the developer of Ideate Explorer for Revit, the simple, powerful tool that helps Revit users explore, quantify and manage the 10,000+ building elements in a Revit building information model. For complete information on Ideate Explorer for Revit, visit www.ideateexplorer.com. Ideate Explorer is a division of Ideate, Inc.

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Ideate, Inc.

Corporate Headquarters:
44 Montgomery Street
Suite 1000
San Francisco, California 94104

888.662.7238

sales@ideateinc.com

ideateinc.com

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