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Q&A with Ruekert/Mielke

The transition to AutoCAD Civil 3D Q&A with Tim Anderson, CADD Manager for Ruekert/Mielke.

When Ruekert/Mielke decided to adopt AutoCAD Civil 3D, they made sure they had a game plan in place, including aggressive goals & training. Their commitment, coupled with the functionality of C3D, are paying off as the company and its clients realize significant savings of time, money & overall efficiency.

- 1** *Over the course of many years, Ruekert/Mielke has achieved a high degree of expertise using Land Desktop, yet your firm recently made the transition to the next generation of 3D modeling with AutoCAD® Civil 3D®. Can you tell us what precipitated that change and where the implementation stands today?*

At Ruekert/Mielke we were early adopters of Land Desktop and had a lot of time to develop the expertise you referenced. The early releases of AutoCAD Civil 3D piqued our interest – the dynamic functionality in particular - but Land Desktop was our “claim to fame,” and we were reluctant to risk a new investment.

We also had concerns about specific functionality within the product – survey functionality in particular - and these were addressed in subsequent releases. With the 2010 release we were finally convinced that the solution was robust enough to meet our particular requirements. The slow economy also left us with available staff time, so in June of 2009 we made a commitment to jump fully into AutoCAD Civil 3D.

For our implementation, we set an aggressive goal of converting more than 300 projects to Civil 3D within 6 months, and today we are working on 100% of our projects in 3D. The formal implementation is complete, but there is still a lot of opportunity to gain efficiencies through improved processes and additional features in the solution. We are in a cycle of learning and growing. In fact, adoption has opened up opportunities for our CAD operators to become true engineering technicians – thereby enhancing both their self-esteem and value to the company.

- 2** *Moving to AutoCAD Civil 3D and a parametric modeling environment offers some obvious and not-so-obvious benefits. What feature or functionality did you find most compelling, and what specific benefit were you looking to achieve?*

As I mentioned earlier, the dynamic updating is perhaps the biggest benefit to us. As a multi-site firm, using a model-based project on a shared server ensures everybody is always working on the most current design and can visualize and understand in real-time the impact of changes made by somebody else. No time or information is lost between different iterations.

Some of the specific features we find most compelling include corridors, piping networks and improvements to the survey functionality. We have probably reduced by half the amount of time we used to spend drafting, resulting in significant savings of time, money and overall efficiency for us and our clients.

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- 3 *Some parts of the civil industry do not fully understand the value and downstream benefits of AutoCAD Civil 3D and a parametric modeling environment. Do you have any words of encouragement for them at this point?*

It's an investment in the success of your business – not just in the future, but right away. The dynamic updates in this model-based technology can help you realize time savings almost immediately. And the more time you are able to invest in creating high-quality templates, the more time you save for everybody else who is working on the project. Case in point – shortly after implementation we received a large number of new projects that would have created a logjam as we got to the inevitable late changes. But with our new processes, the logjam never happened.

This IS the future of the industry, and the technology is improving exponentially – so if you're not updating your processes you're very quickly going to be left behind when we emerge from this recession.

- 4 *After an early commitment to employee training, Ruekert/Mielke has very rapidly achieved post-implementation productivity. How central has that training been to this success, and what other factors were involved?*

Training was essential – you can't benefit from the features and functionality if you don't know how to use them. We wanted to make a clean break from LDT. We worked with MasterGraphics to develop 2 weeks of customized training for 10 of our staff in early June. This was geared toward a full and immediate installation of the software after training – we removed Land Desktop from our entire system and focused on building our templates and styles, with most emphasis on corridors and pipe networks. Within the next few months, everybody was on board.

As it turned out, we got slammed with new projects when August arrived – we didn't even have time for our pilot program. Fortunately, the intensive training and transition had prepared us well. The time we would previously have expected to spend on a project went down almost immediately. For example, we created a 10,000 lineal ft subdivision in C3D in the same time it would have taken us to develop a 5,000 lineal ft subdivision in LDT only a year ago. Immediate returns for us and our customers.

- 5 *What advice or recommendations can you offer to ensure a successful implementation?*

Dive in – the sooner the better. Develop the right plan with the right partner, get buy-in from management and ownership, and get excited about the opportunity.

Set specific goals – aggressive but realistic – and keep setting goals after the initial implementation. There is more functionality in the solution than you'll expect.

6 *Were there any specific challenges that you faced and how did you address them?*

Probably the biggest obstacle was ourselves – specifically, the fear of change among our senior staff. As a result we did keep a copy of LDT as a back-up, but we haven't used it and it no longer exists on our system. Mostly, we have been touting the features and benefits and sharing our successes with these individuals, who will benefit the most.

Getting slammed with projects in August was a little nerve-wracking for most of us, but we quickly realized that we had the right tool for handling the workload. Making the full switch right away worked very much in our favor.

Developing styles and template has also been a challenge – because we're starting from scratch and they are constantly changing and improving every time we touch them. But our team is empowered to make the necessary changes and additions – training and trust are central to success here.

7 *What are the next steps for your team?*

One specific next step - we recently upgraded to Windows 7 on a 64-bit machine, and we believe this will further accelerate the improvement of our processes and help us get even more efficiencies. For example, survey crews are now double-coding points, and this will allow us to create more accurate surfaces.

In general, however, we need to continue setting new goals. We have only scratched the surface of potential efficiencies with this software, so we need to keep challenging ourselves to get more out of it.

Visit the Ruekert/Mielke website: www.ruekert-mielke.com

Learn more about AutoCAD Civil 3D: www.mastergraphics.com/civil3d