NEWFORMA®

Are You Working In A Connected Environment? You Should Be.

AARON KIVETT, *Technical Product Manager*

ARE YOU STILL DOING THINGS THE OLD WAY?

If you worked in a connected environment, you could manage all your data in one place, no matter what the file format. You could be using software that allows you to sort, search and track everything you do, all through a single pane of glass.

Engineers perform many different tasks, and use different software for almost every one. You use one program for email, another for markup, another for CAD work and 3D modeling, and so on … Unfortunately, most of these programs don't speak with each other.

Your projects end up generating terabytes of data, thousands of emails, and countless renderings and exchanges from all parties involved. To make things worse, there's no audit trail to track all of this, leaving you open to risk!

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT IT?

Putting your data in a connected environment comes with many benefits for you and your clients.

You can…

- Have a single view of the project no matter where project files reside (i.e. emails, CAD files, contracts, submittals, financial documents, schedules, and more).
- Keep your software ecosystem intact and improve your project workflow.
- Collaborate in real-time with everyone on the project (internal and external) and maintain a full audit trail.
- Reduce time-consuming administrative work.

Your clients …

- Can continue business as usual, without learning a new system.
- Get the information they need, quickly.
- Don't need to use FTP sites to get access to documents.

Let's take a look at how it works…

THE CONNECTED ENVIRONMENT IN ACTION

It's 7:30 am and you're about to leave for the office, when you get a call from your client. There's a conflict with an existing utility, and they need you to come to the site to fix the problem. You call your project engineer when in route and inform her modifications to the design are likely headed her way.

When you arrive at the project site you notice an existing 48" concrete pipe cutting across the sound wall you designed. The existing drawings show this pipe was built well beyond the limits of your wall, but here it is, in the way. This sort of thing happens. You'll just have to move some of the drilled shafts for the wall foundation. No big deal.

So, you go back to your car and grab your tablet so you can fix this thing. You open the drawing through the connected environment and get to work.

You know where the pipe is located in relation to the shafts, which allows you to sketch the pipe in your drawing. You space the shafts out to miss the pipe, and make notes about beefing up the grade beam to span a bigger gap.

You send a notification to your project engineer with a link to the drawing (along with some photos you took in the field) and ask her to begin running calculations on the modified drilled shafts and grade beam.

By the time you get into the office, the calculations are done and ready for you to check. You make a few corrections, verify everything is good, and have the drawings revised. You seal the new sheets and issue a revision, just in time to grab lunch.

All this work was done in your connected environment. No duplicate files emailed back and forth. Everything was created, submitted, and tracked with the software that manages all your data.

Everything runs smoothly and quickly.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THINGS

Your client fields a phone call from the contractor at 7:20 am telling them there's an existing concrete pipe right in the middle of where they're supposed to drill. They say they can skip the area and continue drilling, but they'll be finished with their work by the end of the day. If there's not a resolution to the issue, they will load up their equipment and move to the next job.

You know what the ramifications are in an environment not connected… remobilization costs!

The client tells the contractor to continue their work and send over an RFI. In the meantime, they'll get the designer (you) to look at the problem.

In the next few hours the client gets two more calls. One from the contractor saying the RFI is on the way. The other from you, saying a resolution is on the way.

The client forwards the RFI to you as you're wrapping up your revised drawings … perfect! You can log the RFI, link it to your revisions and issue your response -- all from your email.

The contractor has the information they need to continue their work without interruption, saving time and not incurring what could have been remobilization costs.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Now that you've seen how working in a connected environment can make things easier, you're probably thinking, "where do I start?" Good question. There are several things to take into consideration when moving over to a connected environment:

Is the software compatible with the "best-of-breed" software I'm already using?

Software companies are constantly customizing their products to be compatible with the applications engineers are using. Chances are, someone has already incorporated the tools you're using. You don't want to have to learn to use new CAD software just to make someone else's solution work.

If I don't like it, is the implementation of a software reversible?

If you start using software, and you find out it isn't what you expected, you want to be able to back out. Worst case scenario, you uninstall the software and you're back to where you were before.

You don't want to be stuck in an "unhappy marriage" with your software provider. You also should know the cost to get out if the marriage does not work out.

Can people outside my company work with me without having to learn a complicated system?

You work with a lot of clients and subcontractors. Forcing them to learn your system makes it harder for them to work with you. Seek a solution that makes it easy on them.

CONCLUSION

So, there you have it. You can see how a connected environment can save time and money, make your life easier and help alleviate potential risk. You know now what to start looking for to find the right fit for you.

Newforma provides project information management software for engineers, architects, contractors and owners. To learn more about how Newforma can help you, click https://www.newforma.com/products/project-center/.

Aaron Kivett spent nine years at BNIM Architects in Kansas City learning first-hand about information management in the design industry. He has spent the past nine years as Newforma's technical product manager, helping global Architecture, Engineering and Construction firms solve information management problems. He can be reached at akivett@newforma.com.

NEWFORMA