This report is intended to review the Building Documentation Industry’s opinion of the current state of software and support available on the market.
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Introduction

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

I am pleased to present to you the third issue of the USIBD’s Cornerstone Report. This issue of the Cornerstone Report is centered on the topic of Software. For those of you who participated in our survey and have been eagerly awaiting the results, we apologize for the delay. However, the wait is over.

Building documentation as a distinct industry is still at an early stage of growth. As the various stakeholders with an interest in building documentation come together and share their collective knowledge and experiences we all benefit.

This survey revealed that respondents were participating from a wide variety of regions throughout the United States. In addition, we saw a significant increase in participation from international respondents. Work seems to be spread evenly throughout the U.S. and the results show a ground swell of “early adopters” of technology. The vast majority of respondents work for, or run companies with a head count of less than 25. Over 90% of our respondents for this report are managers, executives or owners. Good news and bad news: Lots of opportunity for software developers to improve, however, currently there appears to be a fairly negative view of them from the industry.

We hope you will continue to participate in future Cornerstone Report surveys as well as invite your friends and colleagues to participate as well. On behalf of the USIBD’s Board of Directors and the Technology Committee, we hope you will enjoy this issue of the USIBD’S Cornerstone Report.

Sincerely,

John M. Russo, AIA
President, USIBD
Interpretation of Data

1) EXISTING SOFTWARE IS NOT MEETING THE INDUSTRY NEEDS!

- The industry is reporting that the available software solutions are by and far not meeting their needs. Most comments from respondents cite the lack of automation and the need to use multiple ‘niche’ software products as sources of frustration.

2) WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE.

- We see from the first response that most users are operating multiple ‘niche’ software products, it makes sense that interoperability is something to take seriously. However, 48% of respondents are completely dissatisfied with the ability for the platforms to communicate between each other. Only 3% of respondents are happy with the current state of interoperability.

3) WHERE DO WE GO TO TRAIN UP OUR SOFTWARE OPERATORS?

- Only 10% of the respondents are satisfied with the state of available training. There are a few common themes in the comments when it comes to training; those revolve around the utilization of in-house/OTJ (on the job) and independent 3rd party trainers.
4) ARE WE IMPLEMENTING COMMON STANDARDS WHEN DOCUMENTING BUILDINGS?

• No, but judging from the responses it’s complicated. Respondents site the various requirements/goals that are prevalent through each user group in A/E/C (and Owner). There is also concern that each client has a unique need that doesn’t always fit into a predetermined standard.

5) HOW MANY SOFTWARE PLATFORMS DOES IT TAKE?

• It’s apparent by the results that we’re not meeting all of our needs with a single software platform (only 1% are making that claim). So how many are we using? Most of us report to be using close to 4 different platforms to accomplish our deliverable goal. What’s also interesting is that we’re reporting to use close to 3 different manufacturers/developers for those 4 different platforms.

6) ARE WE CONVINCED THAT THE PRICE IS RIGHT?

• When asked if the “software pricing structure is in line with our expectations” we could all agree on one thing: nothing is cheaper than we expected it to be! Everyone was split fairly evenly between “in line with expectations” and “higher than expected”. Several commented that pricing is in-line with their expectations due to historical purchases but they don’t feel that the value derived is a true reflection of the asking price.
7) WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD THE MAINTENANCE PACKAGE?

- Most of us do and find value* in it. 40% see value every time and 54% recognize the value on occasion. The type of value is very different though; some see the value for access to the latest product upgrades at a discounted price, others want to ensure they are compatible with their clients. Several expressed concern that the support function leaves something to be desired and that the price structure for renewals is steep and out of line.

8) WHAT’S THE RATIO OF SOFTWARE OPERATOR TO LICENSES?

- 69% percent report to have a ratio of 2.5:1 (2-3 software licenses for every Software Operator), this can result in some trouble from an efficient equipment utilization standpoint. What’s even more concerning is that 20% of respondents have a ratio of at least 5:1!

9) ARE OUR CLIENTS PROPERLY EQUIPPED?

- When asked if our clients own the appropriate software to receive full value from the deliverable the response wasn’t great. 25% don’t feel that their clients are properly equipped to handle the product and 65% only feel that the client has the proper software on occasion.
10) ARE OUR CLIENTS PROPERLY TRAINED?

- Sometimes, but it seems that the responsibility of empowering the clients with ‘know-how’ is being accepted by the industry. Many respondents recognized a general lack of client knowledge but confirmed that they go out of their way to provide a training resource to help bridge the gap.

11) DO THE FREE/LOW COST VIEWERS WORK FOR OUR CLIENTS?

- The industry is leaning toward ‘yes’ when asked if the free viewer provide adequate function for clients. 90% respond that the free viewers work regularly or on occasion but the comments revile that we think the offerings could be better.

12) IS THE INDUSTRY SATISFIED WITH THE SUPPORT BEING PROVIDED FOR SOFTWARE?

- The majority of responses state that service is in-line with needs but it’s quickly noted that this is drastically different depending on the manufacturer/developer. 33% don’t feel that support is being provided in an acceptable manner and even more concerning is that no one responded that support exceeded expectations.

13) ARE MANUFACTURES PROVIDING HIGH LEVEL EXPERTS TO ADDRESS ISSUES?

- Similar to responses received when asked about support satisfaction, it’s noted that the opinions vary dramatically between manufacturers. Most of the response was positive, with 50% satisfied with the technical expertise and 10% impressed with the supports knowledge base. There is a substantial chuck of users who are disappointed in the technical level of support and commonly attribute it to lack of applied knowledge.
14) WHERE DO WE TURN FOR HELP?

- The result of the survey shows that the typical first stop to be independent online forums, however the comments reveal that a major source of help is among peers and competitors! Respondents site good relationships with competing firms as a reliable source of support. Less than 30% go to the manufacturer first.

15) ARE THERE QUALIFIED APPLICANTS TO FILL OPEN POSITIONS?

- The majority don’t feel that the available workforce is capable of providing immediate value to the team. Some feel like the workforce has some basic skills that help translate into specific functions. Many convey the need for sufficient internal training to develop the skill required and others simply look at the competition for employees! No one felt that there was a properly prepared workforce.

16) WHAT AGE GROUP IS FILLING THE RANKS OF SOFTWARE OPERATORS?

- Two major generations are staffing these roles, 35% of respondents state the typical age to be in the 20’s and 57% have a workforce in their 30’s.
17) ARE WE BEING ASKED FOR META DATA?

- 85% have never been asked or only asked occasionally. Even with this infrequent behavior, respondents are surprised at how often it is happening and recognize a growing interest in this capability. Most that commented state that this responsibility is being pushed to the trades or third party vendors due to the specific expertise that is often required.

18) IS THERE AN AWARENESS OF INDUSTRY RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

- Respondents are confident in the general knowledge of available resources with 79% reporting to have some awareness of what’s available. Specific callouts were made in comments and most are geared toward organizations that influence and develop guidelines (GSA, BIM Forum, UK BIM Mandate, COBie, etc.)

19) IS THERE AN APPETITE FOR SOFTWARE AS AN ONLINE SERVICE?

- Although 53% favor an online offering for software platforms, only 20% would support a full move to online service based offerings. This question garnered the most comments, there are plenty of opinions and the majority would strongly support the move if it reigned in the pricing structure. Others addressed the need for access when away from an internet connection, data security and concerns based on transfer rates when working with large data sets. Many see this as the future and are preparing themselves for the transition.
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