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Ellerbe Becket

Autodesk Buzzsaw Used for State-of-the-Art Communications

Ellerbe Becket, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, provides integrated architectural, engineering, and construction services to clients worldwide. When working to meet the demanding timeline of a huge design and construction project in South America, the firm turned to Autodesk for help. Now, through online collaboration using **Autodesk® Buzzsaw™**, an extremely cumbersome management project may be significantly easier to direct, take less time, and cost less than it would have without the Autodesk® service.



In this industry, saving time cuts costs across the board. With Autodesk Buzzsaw, the entire process—from design through construction—moves at a quicker pace.

Mike Hnastchenko,
Director of Technology,
Ellerbe Becket

The Situation

Founded almost a century ago in St. Paul, Minnesota, the prestigious firm of Ellerbe Becket provides architectural and engineering services worldwide. According to Mike Hnastchenko, Ellerbe Becket's Director of Technology, "With new offices in Cairo, Dubai, Korea, and other commercial centers around the world, we are expanding aggressively into the international market. The Internet has provided a way for us to collaborate with our international offices and to execute projects anywhere in the world." To illustrate his point, Hnastchenko told us about the ways in which Ellerbe Becket has used the Internet to facilitate the design and construction of four state-of-the-art web-hosting facilities in South America.

The Challenge

The four facilities, located in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, are being built for a leading provider of Internet services in South America on a demanding timeline—only six months from the design phase to move-in. Originally the client requested that they use a file transfer protocol (FTP) site to post and exchange drawings and other critical project documents (FTP is a simple means of transferring files between individual users and an archive website). Unfortunately, FTP technology didn't allow for the level of control and collaboration the project needed. "With FTP sites," points out Hnastchenko, "there is no effective way to control who has access to information or to track activity. We had essentially no way of knowing who uploaded or downloaded what information when. In addition, there was no way to e-mail or disseminate critical information right from the site. While it was somewhat useful, we weren't using the power of the Internet to its best advantage."

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The Solution

Since Ellerbe Becket uses the Autodesk Buzzsaw application extensively—with more than 1,800 registered users on its many online project sites—the firm encouraged its client to switch the projects to Autodesk Buzzsaw. The client agreed and, according to Hnastchenko, “Autodesk Buzzsaw was readily accepted by the team members in South America.” Each of the web-hosting facilities’ Autodesk Buzzsaw sites has more than 60 members using it to exchange critical files and collaborate with project team members on a daily basis.

The Result: International Reach and Unprecedented Cost Savings

“In this industry, saving time cuts costs across the board, and, in the past, time management on international projects was more problematic. Five years ago, when the design industry didn’t have access to a web-based service like Autodesk

Buzzsaw, projects like these web-hosting facilities would have been extremely difficult to execute as efficiently and cost-effectively,” says Hnastchenko. “Our people would have had to spend more time in South America, and there would have been constant faxing back and forth for information and the constant potential for delays due to people not having critical information. For example, RFIs on international projects used to take as long as three or four days, but now we get most of those turned around in under a day. In addition to eliminating many of the costs associated with faxing, extended travel, document delivery, and international phone calls, Autodesk Buzzsaw allows the entire process from design to construction to move at a quicker pace.”

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