

CS322762

## Women in BIM: A panel discussion on the importance of Diversity in the Construction Technology Space

**@WomeninBIM**

**#WIBAU2019**

[info@womeninbim.org](mailto:info@womeninbim.org)

[www.womeninbim.org](http://www.womeninbim.org)

**Nicole De Cicco**

Digital Node

[ndc@digital-node.com](mailto:ndc@digital-node.com)

**Rebecca De Cicco**

Digital Node

[rdc@digital-node.com](mailto:rdc@digital-node.com)

### Learning Objectives

- To learn about the importance of Women in BIM as a not for profit group.
- Skills shortages which exist across the Construction industry and how Women in BIM can address these.
- How to resolve the Diversity challenges and ways to grow a larger representation of women in BIM related roles.
- Common challenges Women in BIM face in our daily roles and how to address these as a methodology.

### Description

This session will be a panel discussion from Women in BIM members from all over the world discussing the impacts of diversity and inclusion in the construction industry. The questions will be focused on how the impacts of BIM have affected the industry globally and how we can address these issues of skills shortages by retaining and supporting diverse groups such as women.

Our class is also aimed to bring together our global community of Women in BIM members which we have now grown to over 800 people across the globe. We hope these numbers will continue to grow and begin to support how some of the above issues can be addressed. The intention of this class is to ensure topics touch on some of the challenges the industry faces in order to grow skills and resources around us and to share this knowledge across groups and people.

The panel is intended to be an open discussion from key representatives from our global database in order to document and share with our members some of the key considerations to address in our work and across our businesses to enable diversity.

## **Speaker(s)**

### **Introduction – Women in BIM**

#### **Nicole De Cicco - Marketing & Communications at Digital Node**

[ndc@digital-node.com](mailto:ndc@digital-node.com)

Twitter: @nicdecicco

*Nicole De Cicco began working for Digital Node in March 2018 as the Marketing, Communications & Events Manager. Her role includes taking care of all admin & accounts, managing social media platforms including LinkedIn & Twitter for Digital Node & our non for profit groups @BIM\_S\_A & @WomeninBIM. Nicole has attended many events globally with Rebecca De Cicco, director of Digital Node, to support her knowledge and skills in the BIM space. Nicole's aspirations for Digital Node are to help Rebecca grow the company globally and to learn more about the BIM space and all its advantages. Nicole joined the Women in BIM core team in 2018 and coordinates and runs all the marketing and communications for the group. She is also very passionate about diversity in the workplace and addressing skills shortage in the Construction Industry.*

### **Facilitator - Women in BIM Panel**

#### **Rebecca De Cicco - Director of Digital Node/Chair of Women in BIM**

[rdc@digital-node.com](mailto:rdc@digital-node.com)

Twitter: @becdecicco @digital\_node

*Rebecca is the founder and chair of Women in BIM and acts as the global lead supporting the incentive. Her role is to enable the global community by ensuring that key objectives, aims and solutions are enabled to support Women in BIM all over the world. As the core team reside in the UK Rebecca acts to support the group in this region specifically yet her role extends broader as she is now based in Australia and her aim is to grow the group in this region of the world. The key reasoning behind the creation of Women in BIM was to attract, retain and support Women in BIM all over the world to address our current skills shortages as well as the lack of expertise in this space. Rebecca also recognised the need to draw attention and partner with industry events in order to support identification of speakers to enable more diversity in the public space.*

### **Kate Morrical Towne - Digital Design Manager at Silman**

[towne@silman.com](mailto:towne@silman.com)

Twitter: @KateMTowne

*Silman is a structural engineering firm with offices in New York, Boston, Washington, DC, and Ann Arbor. As the Digital Design Manager, Kate is responsible for coordinating procedures and standards for software used in the design process, whether CAD, BIM, or design/analysis programs. Before rejoining Silman in 2012 (where she also worked from 2003 to 2008), Kate was a Technical Marketing*

*Manager for Autodesk, Inc. There, she worked on the AutoCAD software family of products, specifically AutoCAD LT software. She has over 15 years' experience with Autodesk products, served on AUGI's Board of Directors from 2013 to 2018 (including as President 2017-2018), and has presented at numerous technical events, including Revit DC, BILT North America, Midwest University, and several Autodesk University conferences.*

**Purvi Gandhi Irwin - Practice Manager, Architecture at CADD Microsystems**  
[purvi.irwin@caddmicrosystems.com](mailto:purvi.irwin@caddmicrosystems.com)

Twitter: @BIMchiq

*Purvi supports professionals across all disciplines with BIM technologies, which includes teaching Revit, creating content, developing workflows and standards, troubleshooting issues, and finding creative solutions to both design and modeling problems. She has 15+ years of experience, most spent as a preservation project architect, where she specialized in using innovative technologies to facilitate the documentation and rehabilitation of institutional buildings, and 11+ years of Revit experience working with existing buildings (most historic), from conceptual design, through construction administration and project close-out. Purvi is a board member on the Alexandria Board of Architectural Review in Alexandria, VA.*

**Melissa Thiessens - Associate GSBS Architects BIM Manager**  
[mthiessens@gsbsarchitects.com](mailto:mthiessens@gsbsarchitects.com)

@MThiessens

*Melissa has been with GSBS Architects since 2005. She helped the firm transition from AutoCAD to Revit and has continued her role there as BIM Manager, continually looking for better ways to do things. She has taught classes at Salt Lake Community College, participated in Autodesk ITF events in Boston and Shanghai, and is on the BCS Committee.*

**Alexine Gordon-Stewart - Marketing Director at BIMTrack**  
[alexine.gs@bimtrack.co](mailto:alexine.gs@bimtrack.co)

Twitter: @AlexineGS

*With over 10 years of experience, Alexine understands the communication challenges facing GCs, owners, subcontractors, engineers and architects and is passionate about moving the bar forward and helping teams tackle the tough issues in their projects. Alexine is also a vocal supporter of diversity in our industry, particularly on Twitter and her twitter handle is noted above.*

## **Introduction – Who are Women in BIM?**

Women in BIM are a not-for-profit organisation supporting the future of a diverse and inclusive Construction Industry. Our industry globally is rife with problems, diversity being only one factor, but the industry is at a pivotal shift with BIM and Digital Construction methods dominating the construction industry landscape. Previously we have been an industry with no real innovation and at present across the globe there are many forward-thinking policies, technologies and people driving change to enable greater production and profitability in our sector.

Our industry lacks in terms of innovation and digital technology uptake. This coupled with the lack of a diverse workforce provides challenges to the future state of our industry. Skills shortages are at an all time high and the issue with the construction industry is that if we don't begin to implement digital change, our future is not a promising one.

Women in BIM are not focused on drawing attention to the issues women face in the construction industry. Rather this group was created to address the low representation of women in BIM related roles as well as wider industry issues such as BIM skills shortages and lack of experts in this field. The group was founded by Rebecca De Cicco in 2012 to recognise the low representation of women in BIM related roles as well as the low number of role models and young women entering the construction industry in general. With this in mind, she created a group via social media to engage the global construction industry and support the growth of women in these roles, support young women entering BIM related careers and highlight the strong female role models who exist in order to support these other objectives. The group has grown globally primarily via social media to over 800 members and continues to grow to support this incentive.

The core team resides in the UK where we partner with event organisers and host regular networking events to discuss how to implement change and raise awareness to the group and its key goals. Our team also includes a team of regional representatives from all over the world and we have approximately 20 men and women who align our objectives to supporting Women in BIM in their countries and cities of residence.

A key motivation of Women in BIM was to increase the representation of women speaking at BIM related conferences as well as drawing our members together to network and collaborate. This occurs predominantly in the United Kingdom but our aim is to enable this opportunity globally.

Women in BIM aims to grow and support the future of the construction industry and we hope to continue to grow numbers globally and share, network and support each other, regardless of where in the world we are.

## **Panel Summary**

This panel is intended to bring together our Women in BIM members from around the world to discuss the challenges we face and what initiatives can help to enable a more diverse industry. Alongside the need for greater support in the AEC space this session will discuss the major drivers behind Women in BIM as well as how as an industry we can continue to propel and administer change. Our panel will consist of members from different areas of the Construction industry and we will discuss how organisations can begin to support policies within their businesses to enable greater inclusion as well as how individually we can extend our reach as role models to continue to inspire future leaders.

The panel will discuss the following topics listed below. This session will be documented in order to share the information we collate to our wider network as research and development to allow our group to grow and enable lessons to be learnt across our community.

We also hope to crowd source particular questions and themes to be discussed on the panel using our hashtag #WIBAU2019. The intention is to focus on BIM and digital construction methodologies to enable an open discussion and debate on how this area of the industry can address diversity as a whole.

Some of the questions to the panel may include:

1. Promoting a career in construction technology is crucial to the future of our industry and the BIM/Digital Construction world. It is imperative that we address these issues and try to draw in a more diverse industry from the bottom up. How do we encourage young women to enter a career in BIM?
2. Having policies across a business to support diversity is one way to ensure that equal representation is achieved. What are other strategies companies have deployed to support Diversity?
3. Skills shortages are at an all time high in the BIM / Digital Space in Construction and these issues need to be addressed to support the future of our industry. Can the panel explain what they feel Women in BIM can achieve in terms of addressing these issues? *How can you, personally, effectuate change, both if you're a man or a woman? Mentoring, advocating, having each other's backs in meetings, championing personal development.*
4. Destructive behaviours are common in our industry. Behavioural and cultural issues are a big component to the implementation of BIM and Digital Engineering / Construction methods. The panel will discuss how BIM and construction technology has fundamentally changed the way we work and think and, in some ways, supports a more diverse way of thinking.
5. As an industry we are quite poor at providing flexible working conditions and it seems that the roles and responsibilities within construction related careers is rife with issues when it comes to flexible working. How can we change this mentality and support a future of the construction industry where hours are recorded for working rather than sitting at a desk?