Autodesk University Round Table Summary

SESSION TITLE	**One Year Later: Migrating to Autodesk AutoCAD Map 3D Enterprise Electric**
SESSION ID	**GS1583-R**
SPEAKER	Andy Morsell, P.E. of Autodesk Global Services and John Keith of Independence Power & Light

MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Project Structures and Methodologies
2. Working with Consultants and Sub-Contractors
3. Establishing Leadership and Task Ownership
4. Testing and Acceptance of Project
5. After the Implementation

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

DISCUSSION POINT 1 - PROJECT STRUCTURES AND METHODOLOGIES

- A pilot project is very beneficial to help scope out a full project implementation.
- The waterfall project methodology can be limiting if the people creating the project requirements and specifications cannot first see the application. You don't know what you don't know.
- Attempting to adapt software tools to business processes may not always work best. Adapting processes to the available tools may be a better direction in your case.
- It can be difficult to integrate other utilities solutions into your own workplace so a full custom solution is often the best solution.
- Departmental data silos may be fairly closed making integrations with other systems a challenge.
- Data conversion from legacy systems can often be the largest hurdle on these types of projects.
- Internal cultural pushback on changes may be encountered. Upper management must champion the project to overcome these hurdles.
- A training plan is critical to the final project success.
- The success of the project directly correlates with the quality of the project plan.
- "Micro-successes" or small incremental milestone victories can help in a project success.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 - WORKING WITH CONSULTANTS AND SUB-CONTRACTORS

Autodesk University Round Table Summary

- Experiences with consultants run the gamut of "great experience" to "it was horrible".
- Do not enter into an agreement with a consultant without first knowing them as well as possible.
- Make sure that the project scope is clearly defined from the beginning.
- Frequent communication between all parties is critical.
- In-house technical expertise is good to have but these resources can often be overwhelmed by normal business demands.
- It is important to have very well defined roles and expertise requirements.
- Knowledge transfer at the end of the project is important.
- A clearly defined timeline with adjustments for scope creep, vacations, etc. is very important.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 - ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP AND TASK OWNERSHIP

- It is important that the project should not be run by "democracy" by too many users.
- Establish 2 to 3 employees as the key decision makers.
- Do not let the project lose focus and priority internally in light of other projects and normal day-to-day business.
- Make sure that all leaders are held accountable for decisions.

DISCUSSION POINT 4 - TESTING AND ACCEPTANCE OF PROJECT

- Using a formal defect tracking system, such as Oracle Test Manager as used by Autodesk Consulting, is important.
- Breaking up test phases into smaller increments can make testing easier and not so overwhelming to the test users.
- Involvement from other employees and users is helpful in testing, but too many can cause bureaucracy issues. Try to keep testers to one or two "power users" from each key user group.
- One point of contact for defect tracking is helpful.

DISCUSSION POINT 5 - AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION

- Do a project "post-mortem" to re-evaluate processes, bottlenecks, gaps, etc. to make sure your original goals were achieved and to determine what should be done differently in the future.
- Ad-hoc support with a consultant can be helpful after the project implementation is done.
- Ad-hoc support can make the best financial sense.
- Using support people already familiar with the project is the most efficient.
- Internal training materials need to be developed while the project roll-out is fresh in everyone's mind.
- Internal documentation of critical processes should be developed while the project roll-out is fresh in everyone's mind.

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SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP

- A good topic proposal for Autodesk University 2014: How to develop internal process training materials. Best use of templates, organization, shared file storage versus internal web-site, etc. This can be a generic class that applies to all industries and disciplines.
- Look at the different project methodologies, such as the Agile Method, to see if it might work well for your projects.