

*Appendix Forty – Advice from a Project
Management Software Expert*

Advice from a project management software expert – Barber 2016

BIM. Yes we are aware of this initiative. It is one of a set of such concepts that have been taken through to a form of 'Standards' definition over recent years - others have included Prince/Prince2, Quality (ISO 9000), Collaborative Working, et al. These projects aim at defining a framework of good practice that are then adopted by industry / suppliers and thereby bring all up to at least a minimum standard of operation. Government contracts are a great fan of these - in an attempt to improve the delivery of often large contracts and projects - most of which have been let to the contractor who submitted the lowest financial bid. And therein lies the conundrum.

Highways England (last week it was the Highways Agency) have a real problem in taking back Project Information from Contractor A who built / delivered a scheme or new length of highway, and then passing that information on to Contractor B who undertakes to maintain it (at minimum cost). Inevitably Contractor B complains that the information furnished by Contractor A is incomplete, unintelligible or just a non-indexed heap - or all three of these. A claim is therefore lodged against the client by Contractor B as a 'Compensation Event' to sort it out - according to their own needs.

So the client now sees 'BIM' as the solution to all such woes and has included this as a key requirement in all new contracts to be let. Unfortunately, the organisation fails to understand a couple of key elements to BIM:

First - that BIM is a 'methodology' not a set of procedural definitions laying out how to achieve the level of excellence required. In previous such initiatives this was not too much of an issue. So a Contractor developed and applied the necessary Quality Levels (ISO 9000) within their own organisation for their own work, got the certificate and met the necessary standard. But the standard adopted was not relevant or transferable to any subsequent or parallel Contractor. This is not so with BIM - the whole concept is to define a procedural outline that spans contractual handover. As such it is the ultimate owner (the overall client) that has to develop the BIM model that is to be adopted. In this instance this is something they have not done - nor seem prepared to do - and thus are expecting the award of a 'BIM Compliant Contract' to solve the necessary issues.

Second - That a Contractor has no interest in developing a solid BIM environment (essentially financially driven). Such things cost money - and once the current contract is finished with they have no interest in the information relating to scheme or construction just delivered.

I have heard about such scenarios. With no detailed level of expectation provided - contractor

considers that provided some sort of approved 'Document Numbering Convention' is adopted then the BIM requirement (as defined) will be met. So a log of document file names is the answer - and that can be run through Excel. Hmmmm.

That said of course this is a real issue. The A19 DBFO Contract that we work on was let in 1996 as a 30 year term - so about 11 years are left. The original Contract defined the necessary handover of information that was required at the conclusion of this extended term. 'Information will be provided on diskette, with a second copy of each diskette being provided in case of corruption of the first diskette. Copies of all documents will also be provided in paper form.' Some lack of foresight there - no concept of 10's of thousands of photographs taken on 12mp cameras, extensive video and potentially the terra-bytes of data associated with laser scans of the network that provide visual drive-throughs. This is going to be rather an interesting one - and an issue that quite rightly is being considered now. But ultimately the contractor will be seeking to achieve the (minimum) level of hand-over that meets the clients requirements as economically as possible - the contractor will have no vested interest in the information framework after handover of course. And should the client deem it appropriate to enhance the information model that is to be applied - then they are going to have to pay for any such variation to the original contract terms.

So - BIM is similar to the initiatives that went before it. Yes - defines appropriate standards - none of it particularly difficult and no rocket science - much of it common sense. But I feel that those organisations that rely on a good long term Information Management System will already have one - and will maintain/develop it to meet new needs. But using such a standard to 'impose' a level of competence on contractors / sub-contractors whilst not taking on the responsibility for the implementation itself - I do not see it working in that sort of environment at all.

I guess your guy on BIM may take a different line to mine in this area. And for the record - I would LOVE my clients to adopt a central information management approach - and use a database to support it. But they are not interested in following this path - so they use a basic 'folder hierarchy' that is not policed or maintained - and create lots of log records in disparate Excel workbooks. They find this approach so much easier to operate on a day to day basis - and have no consideration for information retrieval in the future.