

The new shift in construction technology is already here – like it or not

BY ERNEST GRANSON



For Kashish Madaan, who graduated in civil engineering in his home country of India in 2014, helping Bird Construction transition to a digital business model is particularly satisfying. He says his interest in digital construction started in India and he was able to break into that area after completing a BIM Management course at George Brown College in Toronto and working with a BIM consulting firm before being hired by Bird.

"I'm really passionate about this technology," he says, "and Bird is helping me to develop important skills in that area and to grow even more into that role."

Madaan does point out, that even though Bird sees digitization as the future in construction, not all contractors have the capability of providing that model yet. "There is slow improvement and more companies are hiring skilled people who can develop those models for them. But it won't happen overnight and it will be a gradual change."

That's the way Shawn Gray, founder and CEO of ConstructionIQ Advisory sees it. With nearly two decades of experience, the majority with global giant Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. and Lafarge Canada Inc., Gray says he spent a lot of time experimenting in the digital and AI space with those companies to discover the necessary ingredients to accelerate adoption of these new tools. With intimate involvement in such major

projects as the new Calgary International Airport runway and the Calgary Stoney Trail Ring Road, Gray was able to confirm the advantages of an integrated digital environment. But that involvement also revealed to Gray that it's the smaller, mid-sized companies that really need help.

"I realized that large, mega companies needed guidance to switch to digital solutions," Gray says, "but the most valuable solutions we brought in were those that actually helped the customers perform better, which allowed our internal business to perform better. With that realization, I decided to go on my own with the mission to identify the meaningful solutions for those smaller companies. ConstructionIQ Advisory develops initiatives and different partnerships so those firms can explore emerging technology with significantly less risk, time and cost. The lack of results experienced from previous technology investments is really the number one hesitation around new technology investment and adoption today, whether it's a large company or small company. It's vital to demonstrate the proof of value of different solutions through user-execution rather than hypotheticals. What I do is bridge the gap between the construction industry and local emerging innovators. Here in Alberta, there's been more investment made in construction technology than Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal. There are over sixty built-tech companies located in the prairie region, so we are able to knock on doors of these innovators and collaborate with them."

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