Topic: AEC

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Business Advantage, a B2B research, business development and marketing consulting practice operating in the global IT, Digital and Telecommunications sectors.

3D AEC Intelligence Quest

The capabilities of AEC 3D modelling software have developed rapidly in recent years, but the view from industry observers is still that many potential customers remain unconvinced of the benefits of 3D and intelligent modelling.

To get a snapshot of the current experiences and attitudes of the AEC market to 3D, we interviewed managers with responsibility for CAD functions at 256 UK AEC sites.

3D Working

Nearly two out of five sites (39%) are using a 3D modelling package to some degree, leaving 61% still working exclusively with 2D CAD.
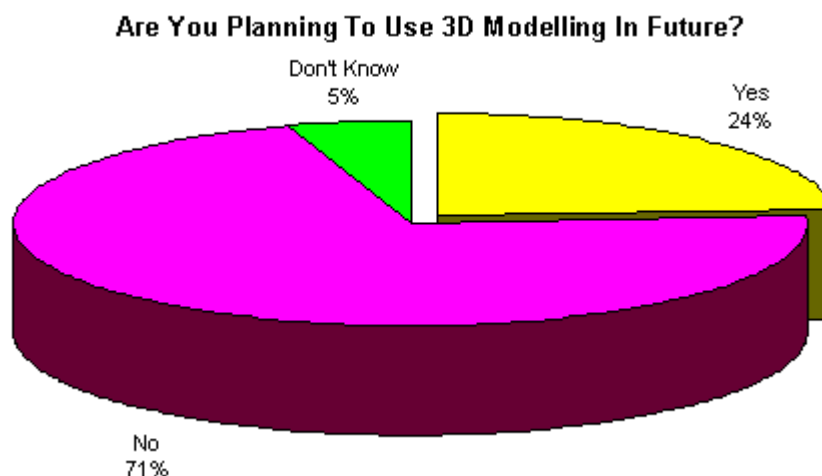
3D Uses

Of the 100 sites we interviewed who do use 3D modelling software, half said they use it to produce single building models (SBM) - representing nearly one in five of the overall sample. Managers were given a simple definition of the SBM (the design of entire buildings/structures in a single 3D model). While this allows for a broad interpretation of this concept, it's still interesting that as many as a half of sites with 3D modelling packages say they are using the software for its intended purpose - more than industry observers have predicted.

The number of sites that use 3D modelling software but not for single building models was too small (51 sites) for further analysis. For the record though, the visualisation of developments for marketing or approval purposes was the most commonly cited use of 3D among this group.
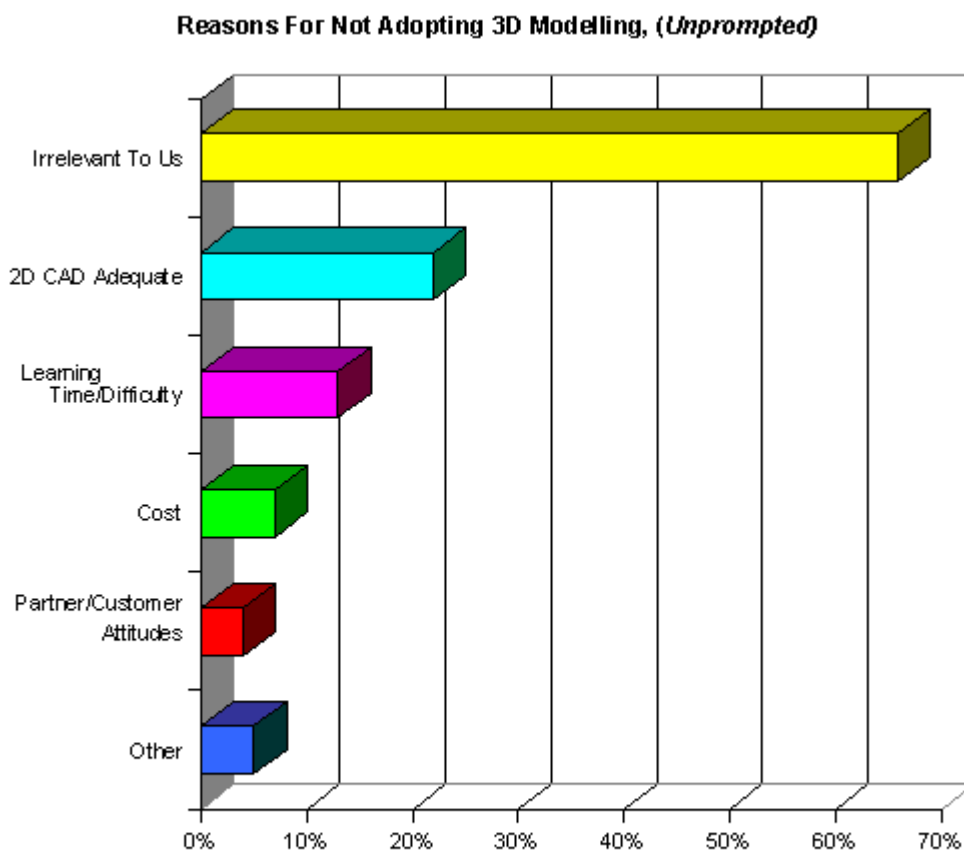
Future Plans

Of those *not* currently using a 3D modelling tool, nearly a quarter (24%) said they are planning to do so in future. Again, the size of this group (38 sites) from our sample was too small for further analysis; but it's interesting to note that half of them said they planned to use this software for single building models. Two out of five of those planning to use 3D think they will do so within a year.

Are You Planning To Use 3D Modelling In Future?

Don't Know
5%

Yes
24%

No
71%

This leaves a disappointingly high 71% of sites not using 3D who have no plans to do so in the future.

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Modelling Obstacles

When offered no prompting for possible reasons behind their decision, two thirds of the sites with no plans to move to 3D modelling said that the technology is not relevant to their needs. Nearly two thirds feel that 2D is adequate for their needs, and 13% were concerned about the difficulty of learning a new tool and/or the time involved.

Reasons For Not Adopting 3D Modelling, (Unprompted)

When asked to identify reasons for not adopting 3D from a list of potential factors, 70% said simply that it's not relevant to their needs; a half said that 2D was adequate for their needs (clearly there is a large overlap between these two groups); a fifth identified issues around the time/difficulty involved in training, and one in ten identified cost as a factor.

Conclusion

In addition to the slow take-up of 3D in the AEC industry, the feeling has persisted that even those who are investing in modelling-enabled CAD software are not really using the technology they possess. The fact that at least half of those who have a 3D CAD package are not fully using the technology at their disposal is a further drag on the overall pace of acceptance of the SBM concept.

While the vendors race ahead with further refinements to their offerings, three quarters of those sites working in 2D say they have no plans to change. Asking people why they don't plan to adopt a particular type of technology isn't always going to elicit a totally honest answer - how many people will admit they fear change for example? This will no doubt be a factor among the group who say that intelligent/3D modelling is not relevant to their needs, but clearly there is also low awareness of the potential benefits of this way of working. Vendors have expended a lot of effort in pushing the advanced intelligent capabilities in their products, bypassing the much more straightforward question in many users' minds - why should I work in 3D?

If you want sales leads for companies interested in moving to 3D modelling, find out how our telemarketing services can deliver them.

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