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“Civil 3D was our solution. Across our industry it’s the number one product, so everyone in the company needed to be current.”

— Leo Smith
IT Administrator
McGill Associates

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From multiple software versions to one

McGill Associates implements and trains associates on AutoCAD Civil 3D with help from Advanced Solutions



McGill Project: Reems Creek Country Club, Asheville, NC

Company Overview

McGill Associates, a professional services organization, was established in 1984 and has offices in Asheville, Hickory and Pinehurst, North Carolina; Knoxville, Tennessee. The firm employs a staff of 118 professional and support personnel who provide civil, environmental and electrical engineering; landscape architecture; planning; and public finance services to clients in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Virginia. “What sets us apart from other firms is our ability to help municipalities with their financing,” says Leo Smith, IT Administrator at McGill. Managing grant applications is an added tool for the company, which places a premium on maintaining partnerships with all existing clients.

Business Problem/Compelling Event

Efficiency is a key success marker for any growing company. Imagine a firm that has grown from a single office to six with no consistency in the version of Autodesk software used by its engineers. As confusing and inefficient as it sounds, McGill Associates faced this situation daily. As the company grew and work between employees and offices increased, it became evident that McGill had a problem on its hands. “At the time we were running Civil 3D 2007 up to 2010. When we started working more between offices, some even in the same building, we began to run into

efficiency issues,” says Smith. Faced with options of continued operational issues or a total software revamp, the company decided on the latter, setting a hard deadline for every AutoCAD Civil 3D user in the company to be trained and running on the 2010 version. “Civil 3D was our solution. Across our industry it’s the number one product, so everyone in the company needed to be current.”

The Solution

Armed with the decision to move all users to the new software, McGill enlisted Advanced Solutions to implement the solution. “It was not economically feasible to add a CAD manager to our staff, so we decided to outsource the work to Advanced Solutions,” says Smith. An intense, two to three week software implementation program was followed by a deadline-driven four to five months of training.

Once all software was fully implemented, Advanced Solutions commenced a training program customized to McGill’s typical workflow. “We sent a site plan from McGill data sets, and the training was built around that.” The training included a brief AutoCAD update detailing the features of AutoCAD 2010, followed by a full examination of Civil 3D 2010 – the main thrust of the training. The detailed customization provided by Advanced Solutions helped bring an element of familiarity to software training experience.

Meeting deadlines and staying on budget with AutoCAD and Civil 3D.

Performance

Despite undertaking a company-wide software overhaul, McGill set a strict deadline for project completion. There were a number of components to the project, particularly considering the multiple offices that needed to receive training, and “the project had to be completed on time,” says Smith.

Coordinating schedules between employees in all six offices and the four offices selected as training sites proved to be one of the biggest hurdles to overcome, but Smith commends Advanced Solutions for the work that went in to managing the process. The Advanced Solutions team was personable and professional. All users now run on the same software version, and Advanced Solutions adhered to the project guidelines, completing the time-sensitive software implementation and training within deadline and budget.

Results & Benefits

McGill has experienced increased efficiency since upgrading its Autodesk software and training with Advanced Solutions. “Before you would send a file to a person in a different office and the surface models wouldn’t work, or the profiles wouldn’t work. The person receiving the files would have to redo the work to get it to work in their software version.” McGill Associates saves between 8 and 24 hours per project, and can attribute those time savings to having all employees using the same software.

Beyond the software and initial training, McGill has been impressed with the level of support the company receives from Advanced Solutions. “We use Advanced Solutions technical support a fair amount,” says Smith. One reason McGill decided to work with Advanced Solutions was because of the large technical support team. Advanced Solutions’ dedicated

HelpDesk was a far cry from the one individual McGill had grown accustomed to utilizing. “With our previous reseller, if you had a question you had to schedule an appointment recalls Smith, which proved problematic when the issue at hand was time-sensitive. “Now if someone calls me with a CADD question that I can’t answer, I tell them to call Advanced Solutions. The technical support team is backed up by several engineers, and I’ve heard nothing but great feedback,” Smith notes.

Final Thoughts

McGill Associates plans to stick with Autodesk and AutoCAD Civil 3D for the long haul and upgrade their software with every other new release. Since the initial upgrade the company has moved to Autodesk Infrastructure Design Suite 2012, a more cost effective option that had not previously been made known to the company. “Advanced Solutions provides more information than other resellers and recommends the best solution for our workflow. We’re not using the entire suite now, but it will be a big thing for us down the road,” Smith says. Plans are in the works for an upgrade to the 2013 software.

Advanced Solutions has become part of McGill’s long term IT plan. “We will use Advanced Solutions for training each time we upgrade our software,” Smith says. As a result of the training and support received on this project, Smith has recommended Advanced Solutions to similarly situated companies, making particular note of the expertise of Advanced Solutions’ technical support and engineering teams.