

## Case Study



## Introducing CAD

### **The achievement**

Jerram Falkus Construction Limited is a family-owned business with a turnover of around £27 million, which has been operating in London and the Home Counties since 1884. In the last two years turnover in the joinery division of Jerram Falkus has more than doubled, partly as a result of introducing computer aided drafting (CAD) into the production process.

### **Key benefits**

- ★ More scope for tendering and winning work
- ★ Better integration with clients and designers
- ★ Speeding up the drawing process
- ★ Faster response to design changes
- ★ Enhanced company image
- ★ Cutting down waste



## The background

Prior to the autumn of 1999 Jerram Falkus had produced all its drawings by hand. However, Jonathan Leach, general manager of the joinery division was aware that designers increasingly wanted CAD-produced drawings – especially on large projects such as the £800,000 joinery contract recently carried out by the firm at Disney Imagineering's new European Headquarters in London. There were two primary reasons for investing in CAD: being able to transmit drawings electronically to the designers, and improving the perception of the firm among clients and their advisors.

Leach spent several years evaluating the benefits of investing in CAD. When a vacancy for a draughtsman came up in the division the firm decided the time was right to invest in a CAD system and to recruit a trained operator. The firm now has two CAD stations and all of the design staff have been fully trained in their use.

## The approach

The company chose AutoCAD LT on the basis of industry recommendation.

Leach has no doubt that the new CAD system has been a key factor in the growth of the business. 'It's bringing substantially more work into the company,' he admits. 'I have seen an increasing volume of tender documents that ask you to state what CAD system you've got and what version. I can only deduce from that you won't be considered if you don't have CAD'.

Investing in CAD has also brought benefits to the rest of the company. Jerram Falkus' IT Manager, Darren Smith, says: 'We are now able to receive drawings direct via e-mail from architects and engineers - no matter where they are based in the world - and open them in CAD. It has definitely given us an edge in terms of turning around information'.

Some of the firm's larger subcontractors also have AutoCAD, so there is potential for speeding up the entire process of information exchange throughout the supply chain. Smith says that the way the AutoCAD drawings are configured in layers means that he can receive the full

drawings from the designer and then remove some of the layers before passing them on to sub-contractors, showing only the information relevant to them.

Jerram Falkus carries out a substantial volume of design and build work and currently external consultants handle the design. They can now exchange information electronically and, in the future, the investment in CAD could result in more of this work being brought in house.

The CAD capability compliments the company's existing e-mail system, which is used to send and receive drawings, instructions and project information.

Jerram Falkus is preparing to spend £40,000 on a new plan printer that can store and manipulate drawings electronically, and also import and print e-mail drawings sent from anywhere in the world. All the data on this machine can be stored on CD so that the images can then be retrieved on any pc that has the correct software.

## Benefits achieved

- Time: The company is making considerable savings in time by drafting electronically
- Changes: New instructions from the client or designer can be accommodated quickly and easily
- Perception: The image of the company is enhanced among clients and construction professionals
- Winning work: The company can now compete for work that it could not have done before.
- Efficiency: Drawings and details can be generated as and when needed and are only printed when required for work on site or in the joinery shop. Maintenance manuals can be provided on disk.
- Productivity and performance can be enhanced by the electronic transfer of data

## Key lessons

- ★ Invest in CAD if and when your business needs it
- ★ Listen to your clients and take note of their requirements
- ★ Be prepared to invest money and time to get the right solution
- ★ Make sure you have staff adequately trained to use the system
- ★ Choose a system that meets your needs and is widely used in your sector of the industry

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