



Choosing the right BIM content creation and publishing solution: a guide for building product manufacturers

The building design process is changing rapidly as more architects, engineers, owners, and contractors adopt BIM applications. For building product manufacturers, this transformation can lead to new opportunities for business growth, allowing you to market products in new ways. But to do so effectively, you must choose the best partner to help you navigate the process.

What is BIM?

Building Information Modeling (BIM) has revolutionized the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industries. BIM is a process that begins by creating an intelligent 3D design model; that model is then used to collaborate across building disciplines, facilitating coordination, simulation, and visualization. Using BIM throughout a building's design process allows the designer to design and construct a building virtually, before ground is broken. BIM allows designers to work collaboratively, refining the interdisciplinary complexities of a building's structure, building systems, and aesthetic design far earlier in the design process than with non-BIM methods.

A shift in project delivery methodology is driving the evolution of BIM. As buildings become more complex, and as client expectations increase and timelines and budgets tighten, the traditional design-bid-build process is rapidly being replaced by a more holistic delivery method in which architects, engineers, and designers work together throughout all of a project's design phases. Using online and cloud-based design and collaboration software, communication is improved, build times are accelerated, and unforeseen and costly onsite changes are dramatically reduced.

A new way to purchase building products

Today, more than 70 percent of building designs are created using BIM tools¹—a number that is expected to grow in coming years. What this means for manufacturers: The traditional product-specification practice of providing three-part specs is transitioning to the BIM project as a resource for specification data.

BIM has not only changed the way buildings are designed; it has transformed the entire purchasing process. And your products have new avenues for specification placement—by being virtually “designed” into a building early in the design process.

Architects, engineers, owners, and contractors now research product information from online content services, through which they can quickly discover, preview, and download BIM models and specifications for easy placement in their BIM projects.

To successfully market products in a BIM world, manufacturers must make intelligent, data-rich 3D BIM models of their products available to AEC professionals in an external BIM content library, using the industry's most standard file formats. By making this investment, manufacturers can integrate their products—and their companies' brands—directly into current and prospective clients' building models.

Selecting a BIM content creation and publishing solution

Making design files available on BIM content websites can broaden your market reach, generate new revenue opportunities, and enhance your chances for gaining important design wins.

But first, there is the somewhat daunting task of creating new, BIM-compliant material for your products, then finding a BIM content website to host them. Finding the right vendor to help you with this process is critical to success—and can make or break your go-to-market BIM strategy. Here are some key factors to consider when looking for a partner to help with your BIM marketing efforts.

BIM content standards

You'll want to make sure that your BIM content provider will deliver a high-quality product. The stakes are high; content quality is directly linked to integration into AEC firms' standard content libraries. Poorly developed content could potentially damage your company's brand value.

Having your content created correctly, professionally, and according to industry standards should be your number-one priority. Quality content provides a consistent user experience and ensures reliability throughout a project.

Ask potential vendors:

- What content standards do you use to ensure quality before offering BIM content for AEC firms' use?

Ease of content creation

Many manufacturers use outside firms to create their BIM material, freeing up in-house resources for core business activities. Selecting a firm to develop your BIM content is a big decision—and an even bigger investment.

Creating your BIM content correctly, professionally, and according to industry standards is critically important. Thoroughly research potential vendors to ensure that the firm you select has extensive experience creating high-quality, fully compliant BIM content, and can guarantee its work.

The firm you select should be involved throughout the BIM content creation process, with professional, efficient account management. The right firm will work with you to determine your BIM needs and objectives, and advise you through every step required to convert your product information into BIM-ready product models that architects and engineers can trust.

Finally, make sure that your BIM models are owned by you, not by the content creator you've hired. You can then get more from your investment by reusing the models in other marketing initiatives, including on your own website. Owning the content also gives you the right to remove it when it becomes outdated.

Ask potential vendors:

- Can you explain your content creation process and the account service provided at each step of the process?
- Will the content be created to industry standards and fully compliant with the sites of all major BIM publishing providers?
- Will I own the content that you create for me?

Content maintenance

Once your content is hosted on a BIM website, it must be kept up to date.

If an architect, engineer, or contractor downloads, designs, and specifies outdated content, it can lead to expensive project delays when new products must be sourced and replanned. Outdated content can also do damage to your brand's reputation.

Thoroughly research potential vendors about a maintenance program for your BIM material. Unfortunately, with some consultants, quality and service levels can drop after initial content creation when there is no longer a large financial incentive to provide them.

Watch for BIM hosting sites that claim to have massive numbers of product models; such sites often retain old and outdated product models simply to increase their numbers. These practices do a disservice to product manufacturers and their financial investment in quality BIM content.

When comparing BIM content hosting sites, look for a site that can handle multiple types of content, from 3D models to videos. A wide variety of supporting documentation can help architects, engineers, and designers learn more about your products and engage with your content. For example, supporting documents, such as installation drawings, help users detail a product in its built environment. Including finished sample renderings or photos showcases unique aspects of your products and the breadth of your product line. Marketing and instructional videos can further help users understand a product's unique design and features.

Ask potential vendors:

- What continuing content maintenance support will you provide?
- What user support can you offer my clients that use the BIM content hosted from your site?

Audience reach

One of the most important things to evaluate is the size of the audience a BIM hosting site can deliver. Just as important: Is it the right audience for your products?

When comparing the effectiveness of BIM hosting sites, be sure to ask the right questions, and take the following factors into consideration.

Ask potential vendors:

- **Unique visitors:** How many visitors does the site get?
- **Active visitors:** Are the users active? Do they come back often? Are they viewing multiple pages?
- **Visitor profiles:** Who are the people visiting the website? Do they represent the target audience you want to reach?
- **Download activities:** What downloads are visitors searching for? Are they searching for your product categories?

Integration with design software

When researching BIM hosting websites, choosing one integrated with leading BIM design tools ensures that your product information will be directly accessible from within the design applications used by the largest number of AEC professionals. You have the opportunity to target this audience as they work at their desktops. Early visibility makes it more likely that your products will be selected sooner in the design process.

Ask potential vendors:

- What design software integration do you provide?

Make your brand stand out

To get the most from your investment in BIM, look for a firm with a selection of marketing solutions; these can include custom banner ads, promotions and offers, and special events.

Look for a partner that will work with you to customize your product pages to match your brand's unique look and feel. A partner with extensive experience in BIM creation understands what users want and can help you make your product content more appealing and engaging to your chosen audience.

Ask potential vendors:

- Do you place your branding in my digital content?
- Can you create a unique web destination for my digital content?
- How can you help my listings stand out from those of competitors?
- What tools do you offer to help my company market its products?

Analytics

Your investment in an online BIM site will open up new marketing opportunities by making your products visible to AEC professionals responsible for specifying and recommending your products. Many vendors can go a step further and provide you with metrics that track content downloads by quantity, region, category, and other factors.

The best BIM content hosting sites will help you understand how your investment translates into additional sales by providing information on which products/categories are attracting interest in different regions and from different types of users. Advanced analytical tools should provide deeper insights into product performance across channels. The resulting data can help you fine-tune your marketing efforts and optimize ROI.

Ask potential vendors:

- What type of user and download analytics will I receive with your service?

Conclusion

Making your design files and product specifications available to millions of BIM users can broaden your market reach, generate new revenue opportunities, and enhance your chances of gaining important design wins. The adoption of BIM in the building ecosystem has created opportunities, enabling building product manufacturers to reach their target audiences at the right place—and the right time.

Finding the right BIM creation and publishing solution for your organization requires an intensive internal assessment of your business's marketing and sales goals, challenges, and needs. Choosing the right partner can result in greater long-term ROI and ongoing business growth; knowing what questions to ask can help make that choice a wise one.

Learn more

Autodesk® Seek is a web and in-app service that helps designers quickly discover, preview, and download your brand's high-quality 3D Building Information Modeling (BIM) models, 2D drawings, installation instructions, cut sheets, inspirational images, and product specifications. By promoting your products in Seek, you can easily reach your most qualified customers at the right time—during the design process.

To learn more about Autodesk Seek, visit www.autodesk.com/seek.

¹ McGraw-Hill Construction, [The Business Value of BIM in North America](#), 2013.

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