

Getting Specified and Purchased in Today's Digital Economy

Webinar Participants:

Webinar Host: Kip Rapp - CEO Concora

Guest Speaker: Charlie McCorvey – Executive VP McCorvey Sheet Metal Work

Guest Speaker: Kevin Harris – Director Sales & Marketing AGS Stainless, Inc.

Guest Speaker: Zoltan Toth – Key Account Success Manager Graphisoft

Kip:

Well, hello, everyone. Looks like we're at the 1:00 PM Eastern Time. I want to thank everyone for joining today. Really excited about what we're doing today. My name is Kip Rapp and I'm the CEO at Concora, and I'm really excited for what we're about to share. We have some amazing people on the panel today and just some background on what we're trying to do, we are all very passionate about building materials and the construction community. And I've known some people here on the panel for years, I've known others for several months, and we're just happy to share. I've been doing podcasts and surveys across both the building material and design community, and just notice how education is missing from this industry and being able to share best practices across the design community from the designers, the architects and contractors.

It's something that we want to do. And I thought, well, let's get the best people that we know in a meeting now it's very conversational, and we picked a few topics that might be on everyone's minds. And we want to do every other month or so, and looking forward to attendees giving us ideas so we can really just share, it could be sales, marketing, building materials, sustainability, and anything that might be important. And what I've realized talking to, I would say literally 100s of people in both the design community and the building materials, that everyone has the same challenges, objectives, we all want to sell our great products, and we all want to be able to work in the commercial space and develop relationships with architects, engineers, and contractors. And hopefully if you learn anything today, that would be awesome.

Feel free to ask any questions. We want to leave some time at the end. So if you have anything, easy or hard questions, we'll try to get to those. But with that, what we want to do with this round table is that we'll introduce our panelists one at a time. We'll go over a topic between three main things. It's going to be working with architects, engineers, and designers. And this is mostly commercial focused. The second topic will be around websites and digital strategy.

And the third topic will be around technologies and investing in being able to, it could be pre-fabrication, it could be software, it could be something else, but the importance of technology with what you do as a building material company. So with that, what I'm going to do is I'm going to un-share the screen and then I'll introduce our first panelist, Kevin. And from there, I've known Kevin for, gosh, just over a year now. So Kevin, if you want to just quickly introduce yourself, who you are and what you do.

Kevin Harris:

Yeah. Thanks Kip, excited to be here. As you mentioned my name is Kevin Harris. I'm the Director of Sales and Marketing for AGS Stainless. Working with architects, engineers, and contractors is a big part of what we do as a railing manufacturer. So I've spent the last nine years I've been with AGS, really trying to dial that process in how to be a better partner for the professionals that we work with.

Kip:

Great. Thanks Kevin. And I know we've talked before Kevin and you're heavily involved with the AIA. You work with 1,000s of architects, engineers, and contractors. And let's say again, we're trying to build better relationships. And it's obviously about our potential customers, which are the AEC, the architects, engineers, and contractors. Let's say you're a new building material company, or even an existing one. How can you get your message out there that really promotes being specified more by the design community?

Kevin Harris:

So one of the things that I really appreciate about the title you selected for this discussion was that, it wasn't just about getting specified, that's the first part. You want to be specified. But you want to actually wind up in the job. And that getting purchased part is also something that you have to dial in. So the very first thing I would recommend is that you create a continuing add credit. Of course, that allows a professional to receive continuing add credit for taking the time out of their schedule to learn about what you have to offer. So most professionals need some kind of ongoing education and you being able to provide that, it can be a win-win. They want to know about new products. They want to know about products that have unique solutions, and you want them to find out about your product.

So that'd be my first suggestion. If you haven't done it yet, create continuing add credit, and then take the steps to get your credit certified by either the AIA or NARI or the NAHB or something, so that they will help you so that it's not just all

sales, the content that you create should be solution-based. And that's what professionals want to hear. They'll give you a chance to talk about the name of your company, but you want to make it solutions based. Then the other thing I would really recommend is that you think more along the lines of building a relationship, a strategic partnership, more than just trying to sell something. When the professional engages with you, it doesn't matter whether or not that initially turns into a sale or not, what does matter is that you begin the process of the relationship. And if you do that, you'll have greater success.

One thing that I really recommend is just doing your research. Not every architect is going to be interested in your product. Some architects are early adopters, some are not. And joining the associations like the NHB, the AIA, you'll start to work with these groups and they will help you to identify the market that you're after. So those are a few couple of suggestions, but then on the purchase thing, it's very important to be able to defend your spec. And so that's something that I highly recommend, being able to talk to the contractors, being able to talk to the engineers, helping them appreciate why your product is the best solution. So you can't just get spec, you have to be able to defend your spec.

Kip:

Oh, that's awesome, Kevin. Thanks for sharing on that. And I really do appreciate it because that does come up quite a bit with, it's not just the spec, it's the language, the relationship, working with not only the architect, engineer, and contractor, and then being a problem solver collaborator. So thanks for sharing there. And I'd like to introduce Charlie McCorvey, our second panelist from McCorvey Sheet Metal Works. So Charlie, could you quickly introduce yourself and what you do.

Charlie McCorvey:

Yes. I'm Charlie McCorvey, the Executive Vice President of McCorvey Sheet Metal. We fabricate and detail and install sheet metal duct work. And Kip, I think you'll jinx me with the neighbor cutting his lawn thing, because right when we started, the lawnmowers went on next door. So if you hear that in the background, I apologize.

Kip:

No. I can't hear it. So I think we're good. So, no problem. Well, thanks for introducing yourself Charlie. I did a podcast with Charlie, is about a month or two ago. You're your fourth or fifth generation?

Charlie McCorvey:

The fourth generation. My great grandfather started it in 1925.

Kip:

Yeah. There's like 1% people that are fourth generation. So I applied your dedication to the family business and Charlie's an awesome guy. So as Kevin talked about working with architects and across the AC community, you certainly work more with the engineers, with your duct work products, and you certainly understand based on what you do with your products, what's important. So can you walk us through, what's important with the engineer as far as the engineering products and what you do?

Charlie McCorvey:

Yes, absolutely. So one of the things that really sets us apart that I know the engineers always truly appreciate from us is the quality of the duct work that we are fabricating and installing. It's just because we make our duct work more stringent than SMACNA actually asked for. We like to do heavier gauges so that it will make the delivery across the country. And that quality just when it shows up and it's not dinged up and it goes up in the air, it can look like that beautiful duct work there behind you in exposed areas. They always really appreciate that. And that's the feedback we get from them all the time. That McCorvey makes a quality product.

We've also really invested heavily in our machinery. A lot of competitors will they'll spot weld their fittings and stuff that you make. And they'll just kind of spot weld in different places and then kind of seal the inside. Whereas we still spot weld it to get going, but we invested in some seam welders back in the 80s, they're old, but they still run great. And actually put a continual weld along those seams so that we hold our CFM better and pass our tests and the building can heat or cool as it pleases. And again, that's another thing that the engineers and architects and everyone, their eyes always pop up when they hear about us continually welding our seams, as opposed to just tacking and sealing. So we like to promote that.

Kip:

No, that's awesome. And I really appreciate you sharing how you're investing to make the product higher quality, more durable sustainability, and just the things that are needed by your engineering community. And as we talk later, it is

about investing and have all thoughtful approach if it's in the building material, that technology, or just logistics. So thanks for sharing that.

Charlie McCorvey:

Absolutely.

Kip:

Yeah. Thank you. And Zoltan. So Zoltan is our loan design person on the panel who, I've known him for years, awesome guy. And Zoltan, do you want to introduce yourself and talk a little about what you do.

Zoltan Toth:

Thank you Kip. My name is Zoltan Toth, signing in from Sunny, Philadelphia. I'm a key account manager for Graphisoft, and we make BIM software for the ACO industry. We are also part of this bigger company called Nemetschek. The Nemetschek group has 16 brands like the Rothfuss, Bluebeam, RISA, Cinema 4D, Solibri, I'm sure you heard about some of these. And all of us believe in open workflows and we are committed to providing best in class software solutions to the industry. My personal background is in architecture and I spent about 10 years in the industry before I joined Graphisoft. And in the last 10 years, I worked with 100s of architectural and other design firms, both commercial and residential on implementing BIM in their office. And I just wanted to say, I'm super excited to be here today. And thank you so much for having me on this panel.

Kip:

Yeah. Well thank you for joining. And being from the design side and the architectural side and being an architect and working with architects every day, could you give us your opinion, as an architect, what's important to you when you are specifying products or looking for your projects?

Zoltan Toth:

Yeah. So I think what I'm going to say ties in really well with what Kevin and Charlie said. So I think number one, is this kind of idea of a social mission or a higher goal that architects and designers are typically committed to. Right? That can range from just wanting to be the best designer and the next celebrity architect let's say in the world, to just simply making the world a better place. Right? The more sustainable place or more beautiful place.

And let me just tie it back in with what Charlie said about quality, right? And innovation that can really contribute to creating those beautiful spaces and tying with the architectural firm's higher goal. So architects, you have to know that they will take projects on at the loss even, if that project supports this goal and they're looking for partners.

And that is something that Kevin mentioned. That I think this kind of partnership and demonstrating that partnership that you understand them, if it's an innovator from. Right? And you are an innovator from, we could call it, I guess, a cultural fit, between your brand and a design firm's brand. Now we mentioned interpersonal relationships, I think continuing education credits, and lunch & learns are a great way to educate clients. Because I feel that knowledge is basically as important as the product. How we use that product, and also develop this personal relationship. And then the third pillar I would say is understanding the design professional's workflow is mostly digital. And providing a mature digital strategy that supports that workflow and makes my life easier basically. Right?

So I just want to add that, which is not the case on this panel, but the more commoditized the product, like the sheetrock, the more important that this digital experience becomes around it.

Kip:

Now, thanks for sharing. And I really appreciate the social side because I've talked to a few other folks like that and obviously the functional and the aesthetic requirement of the product is important, but then you have lots of architects that have a mission or a unique mark and objective and they do care about what you stand for as a company, sustainability, definition. So thanks for sharing that Zoltan.

Zoltan Toth:

Thank you.

Kip:

So onto the next topic, so as we talked about engaging a little bit with the design community as a building material manufacturer, we want to talk a little about digital strategy, your website, and Zoltan alluded to this a little more. Just like any other industry, digital transformation is affecting building materials. I know we're laggards, just in front of the agriculture industry, but we're still improving. And COVID obviously has accelerated that as everyone knows, for the last year you're indoors and you can't talk to face to face, and hopefully that brings some really good business practice.

So Kevin, as you know, COVID, you want to be successful, could you walk us through what's important with the digital strategy in your website?

Kevin Harris:

Definitely Kip. I'm glad that you brought this topic up. A couple of things. I wrote down four notes that I thought if I were starting out today with a product, I wanted to really get it in front of the people that I was interested in working with. I would say that you want to share your information digitally. A lot of architects and engineers now, don't go get a big book out anymore and flip through this big book with all these pages, looking for a product, they go on the internet. So one way or another, they're searching out on the internet for products, and they're going to have an opportunity to learn about you before they ever talk to you. So if you're not getting your content exposed through the internet, you may never really get to talk to those people.

So creating meaningful content and making sure it's on your website, making sure it's easy for the design professional to get to the professional's part of your website. So that they're not spending a lot of time trying to find the technical drawings, it should be really easy to get to the technical part of your website. And then one thing that I recommend is, again, going back to doing your research, not every single architect is going to be a prospect for your client. So why waste their time? And why waste your time? Do your research and find out, does this firm specify my solution frequently? If they do, it doesn't matter who they're working with. We're assuming you have a great product; they just need the education. If they do specify that type of a product, they're a great candidate for you to get to know, and over the course of time, for you to be able to share content.

So we're really big on content relationship management software. So I encourage you to take in the lead, you figure out who you want to work with, and then make sure you get them into your CRM solution. And then periodically every month, send them some quality content where they start to think of you as a subject matter expert, not sales stuff, quality content. And then what happens is over a period of months, they get to know you, to know what you're talking about is spot on, and then they just call you up. And they go, hey, I got a project. I need your help.

Kip:

But I was just thanking you of your comments there because in my discussions, it's all about the customer, the empathy, the relationship and the language, just trying to be understanding of what they need, and not be, when you say sales, it's like pressure sales, it's like used car sales. It's not the best.

Right? No one wants to have that experience. So thank you for sharing. I'll make sure I'm not on mute anymore. So

Charlie, in our podcast, I know Kevin talked a little more about CRM in a website, and now you have certainly other things that you do and digital marketing from the website and social media. So we would love to hear your thoughts and what you guys did for your digital marketing practices.

Charlie McCorvey:

Yeah. One of the first things that we did very early on before it was really popular, was made really engaging videos. And before there was even drones just flying around there, we brought in these huge helicopters with cameras on them. They were just blowing dust off through our warehouse and stuff, but we decided on that route very early on just to have engaging videos, to get traffic into our website. And we started there and now we have gotten to where we have a custom website and really engaging moving gifts and banners and JPEGs. And I'm very proud of our R and D team, and our DevOps engineer who actually worked with me on custom writing and the website. And I think it's a beautiful thing.

I'm secretly always going and looking at the competition to make sure that we're a little bit ahead just to be honest, but if you want to look professional and we've also been very blessed that our resume is so attractive. So when people go click on the projects that we've been a part of, as Zoltan was saying, creating wonderful, beautiful things, wonderful memories for families, we've been a part of a lot of those.

So just looking at our project resume, that's always impressive. And a selling point that our, our business development team, when they're getting in front of engineers, they like to show them that. Also our marketing communication manager, Reagan, she is so good about posting engaging posts, of course, on social media. Duct work is not the most intriguing thing for social media, if you will, but we try to engage with sending out stuff that's meaningful and really show that we're a family oriented company and Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram is what we're relying on for social media.

And then employee relations has been one of the biggest things that are driving factors to get all of our families involved and sending in pictures. Like right now, in fact, we still have an employee relations campaign going, where they're sending in pictures of all of their kids with hard hats that we made with our company's name on there. And the most likes is going to win a gift card. They have responded to that so much, people like posts and stuff about their kids and all, they've all been adorable and that's been really well. So ways of just again, showing that we're an honest family run company, but we're also big and proud of what we do and able to perform on huge projects across the country.

Kip:

Oh, thanks for sharing. Yeah. And I know that speaks to quite a few of the other things of people when they care about your culture. They want a partner that has great values, family. I love the project and the videos that you're talking

about because it's certainly, I know it was old tan can speak to that some, it's like sometimes people don't know how to use your product. Right? They need to know on your website, what are various ways? Why does it differentiate? And the videos are awesome to be able to show that in real time, so that thanks for sharing.

And Zoltan, so you as, let's say, a designer, right? And I'm sure like with other designers, at times you go there and you have good experiences with manufacturer's websites and digital strategy, and maybe not so good. So could you maybe walk us through your point of view, what you think is important for the architect engineer contractor?

Zoltan Toth:

Yes. So, let me take a step back on this one because I'd like to describe this project management triangle. Right? That you have a certain scope and you have time, money and quality. And traditionally we thought that we have to sacrifice at least one to deliver on the other two. And the digital world changed that and people started expecting all three at the same time. Right? In the digital world, everybody wants perfect, instant and for free. So why is that important? It's because most of the ACO's interactions with the manufacturers are in the digital domain. And COVID actually sped up this process and I just talk to people and it seems everybody orders their groceries to come to their house these days from an app that I'm not going to name here.

But I find it hard to imagine that we go back to the old ways because these new workflows, let's call them that, and technologies are so convenient. And this is if you will, kind of the silver lining for us tech people in this otherwise terrible pandemic. Now with architects, it was the same. COVID basically forced them to find ways to collaborate from their homes remotely and keep working. Right? And that pushed them to 100% digital workflow. There's just no way to send hand sketches around with carriers, USBs. Right? So I think that's a benefit to the industry. And there are other benefits like, architects and designers are not limited to local talent pools anymore. Right? They can hire the best talent from anywhere in the world. We have clients where they're located in New York city. Their employees scattered in the United States, Canada, Chile, Europe, and it's still one company they're working in real time. No problems.

So I think it's essential that manufacturers learn about these digital workflows and understand what the ACOs need like Kevin pointed it out. Right? It's know your customer. I think a big part of that is understanding their workflow and understanding, how can I help them? What kind of digital tools and assets can I provide them? And if I provide it, I have to provide it at just the right time in the process which will greatly depend on, maybe Kevin and Charlie can talk more about the specifics as it relates to their companies, but it will depend on whether it's a project design build, design assessed, right? Steam at risk, there will be big residential versus commercial.

There will be a big difference there. Now, one thing is for sure. Design professionals will come to your website first to find them. And you have to make it easy for them to find it. I think they come back, there's statistics on this, but close to 10 times over the course of one project or one product to get the information. Right? And they need more and more

detailed information as they go. And that kind of gets me to my next point, is that, what is the quality of that information? If they come and find up-to-date and accurate information, they will come back for more.

It increases trust between them and you, and it will lead to customer loyalty basically. And I just wanted to point that one more thing. I went to Charlie's and Kevin's website. Kevin's website, I loved it, that it was super easy to find the technical assets, specs, CAD details and so on. And in Charlie, it's funny you obviously talked about the videos. I loved it that you show videos and you let people sneak peek behind the walls, and how the product is made, it's fantastic. I was totally geeking out about that. And I also love the aspect that you seem to focus on the architecture and put some really high profile of architectural projects and firms on the website. I love that.

Charlie McCorvey:

Thank you Zoltan. That means a lot.

Kip:

Thanks for sharing Zoltan. There were a few questions from the audience and this one's, I think, apropos to the content that you were mentioning in always think your website is a digital storefront. Right? So this gentleman based asking is, is it absolutely important to have instruction manuals for download? Is it necessary? He's saying, our products are a little more proprietary, so we don't want our competition to look at our stuff. And I would think that applies to, maybe it could be a proprietary specification, does anyone want to take a crack that as far as the balancing, maybe sensitive information versus what's needed to get specified and used?

Kevin Harris:

This is Kevin, I'll take a crack at it. I think that there's probably very little that the architects are not going to want to get to in order to include you in the spec document. So in your three-part spec document, you can structure the description in a way that doesn't give everything away, but they need information if they're going to call your project out. So I would say you got to get busy on trying to create phraseology that shows you can deliver in this particular area, but maybe doesn't reveal everything. But the architects are going to need the info in order to write you into the spec.

Kip:

Got it. So it sounds like, that it doesn't have to be super sensitive material to put on your website for an architect to specify your product.

Zoltan Toth:

Exactly.

Kevin Harris:

Yeah. So if what you're saying is we want to expose our product to the AEC community, the key is you want to make it really easy them to choose you because everybody has a lot of competition. I don't care what your product is and the architects or the specifiers, when they're researching to decide who they're going to pick, if it's difficult in any way to access the information on your site, or if you're not specific and they can go to your competitor and he's very specific, they're probably not going to be coming back to your site. So you want to get the info that they need to them, as easily as possible.

Kip:

Yeah. Good response, Kevin. Here's another question here that I thought was really interesting too, maybe I'll ask it to Charlie. I'll put you on the spot Charlie, I apologize.

Charlie McCorvey:

Right, then go.

Kip:

But you can pass, and we'll get his old ass there. So this person's asking how do you handle where customers don't recognize the value of extra quality in your product?

Charlie McCorvey:

Oh, wow. That's a great question. How do you handle when they don't? I don't know. I mean, we have gone so far as actually taking our product versus stuff that they have specified and just kind of letting them actually touch it and feel it and look at it and, this is what you're specifying and this is what we build, and allowing them to either say, it's okay to use our custom product that we have or if they say no, then we just use whatever their accessory or component they're specifying.

So I don't know if that answers the question or not, but I mean, that's how we have done it in the past. And it works nine times out of 10, whenever they can see it. And another thing is just inviting them to your manufacturing facility in your office, letting them walk around and see how professional we are, and the facility that we have and the equipment that we have, and they go, okay, I think you actually make a good quality product here. That really helps as well.

Kevin Harris:

I would second what Charlie said on both of those points. The factory tour is just very powerful. And if you're in a position to extend that to your prospects, I highly recommend it. When we make good use of product samples. So we're in the situation like Charlie explain, where we are fabricating to the highest standard in the industry. And unless you're in our industry of metal fabrication, you don't know that. So we want to get a sample of our product in your hand. And then we encourage people to get a sample from the other company you're thinking about. Just get their product sample, get our sample, put them side by side, and you're going to know right away which product that you want. So those two points that Charlie mentioned, I think samples and factory tour, are very important.

Kip:

Yeah. Well, thanks gentlemen for that question again, there's other questions. Well, we'll leave those to the end. If anyone has more questions, please type them in. If we can't get to your question, we will make sure we respond to your question in email and try to get you the best answers possible. So our last topic for today as we went through some comments on working with architects, building those relationships with the design community, the importance of your website and the digital strategy. And now the third topic about the importance of just technology in general. And it doesn't necessarily have to be website and marketing, but it could be manufacturing, it could be around just managing data in general, like a CRM. So, Kevin, again, I remember our podcast and you all had a really awesome thought and leadership of investing in technology earlier, so you could really make your product that much more of a differentiation, more cost benefits. If you do walk us through how you invested in technology to differentiate your product.

Kevin Harris:

Sure. Well, with a railing fabrication, most of the local metal fabricators would be using CNC equipment. So a few years back, we invested in the next generation equipment, which is fiber laser tube machinery. And that machinery took us to an accuracy level of four, 1,000s of an inch in the fabrication of our product. And that's just huge. That's a big investment. That equipment is five figure equipment. But why did we do? It's because we know that we create a product that's at the highest standard of the industry, and now the industry has moved. The technology has moved. So we either have a choice of staying with the old technology and slowly getting past or staying current, so that we continue to have a product that really is head and shoulders above our competitors.

Kevin Harris:

Because you can reduce job site waste, improve product quality. All those things are very important to architects, Zoltan pointed out earlier. So we've aligned our fabrication process with best of breed processes and ideals. So that when we're talking to the design professionals and we're talking about how we do what we do, our philosophy will line up with their philosophy. So we're saying, look, we're focused on reducing job site waste. We're focused on improving quality. We're working to bring a cost down. Those are all things that are going to resonate with the people that we want to partner with

Kip:

Now. That's great. And I really applaud the ability to invest early to make it easier for the actual customer and the design community and the building owner to have a better quality product, a safer product, in some cases, a more inexpensive product. So thanks for sharing that, a sustainable product. I wanted to field a question from the audience here to maybe to Zoltan. It's quite a common question too. So thanks for the person asking this. So this person is saying Zoltan. They deal with many architects and some are hard to meet or get ahold of, and after many attempts, do you have any suggestions. Maybe applies to not only architects, but engineers, contractors, building owners, any ideas Zoltan on how to be able to have relationships where you're talking to these people, they're not ignoring you and things like that.

Zoltan Toth:

Yeah. So first of all, I feel your pain. I can see both sides of this because I worked for a software company now, and obviously we try to sell our software as well. And it did happen to me that, we were going into a meeting, I guess in Newark, New Jersey. And when they heard that it's salespeople, they literally ran away from us at this architectural firm and locked the door. So yeah, no, I can relate to that.

But I think the kind of the key is in that cultural fit and knowing your customers and who you are, and is there a good cultural fit with that design company? Just coming back to the previous question, how do you communicate that? And what if people just can't get the quality of your product?

And I understand that there's a component of digital versus physical mock up in that, right? Which is a very valid question, but there is also kind of I think a deeper question there, which is not everybody's interested in better quality. There are firms who are more focused on efficiency, for example, and making more money. Right? And at the minimum passable quality. Right? So that would be a bad cultural fit, I think so. If you can identify those good fits, I think that will help you, and then, this is my personal opinion, what worked in my experience. The other thing is, I try to be helpful to my clients in every interaction. And I think Kevin mentioned that briefly. Right? That basically you have to be helpful to them every time you talked to them a little bit, you have to give them some insight, a little bit of knowledge, something that will make them want to come back for more.

Kip:

Yeah. Thanks Zoltan. Thanks for answering that question. I liked a lot of these questions too. Maybe this one for Kevin is, because you're talking about AIA, and this person I can feel for them. They presented to dozens of AIA lunch & learns, but it's something that the role has shifted. And I know COVID has made that tough and virtual lunch & learns, but how has the internet, I mean, is this an obsolete thing nowadays, face to face, lunch & learns? Are we just doing it incorrectly? I know COVID has been some impact, but any thoughts to share on that?

Kevin Harris:

Yeah. I don't think it's obsolete, up until COVID it was very difficult for product manufacturers to do their continuing add credits virtually, because architects really weren't in favor of it. They would much rather do a face-to-face meeting and have you come to their office. That's one of the frustrations that smaller firms express is, the product rep won't come to the smaller two, three, four, five person offices. They're going to go to the firm that's got 30 architects or 50 architects. And that's just kind of how it's been. But now because of COVID, everybody had to do virtual. So people are starting to see that, you know what, I can get a quality delivery of content virtually, and that was great for the manufacturers, because we don't have to pay for lunch. So this is a win-win thing here, that I think we'll continue on.

But the thing I feel is the absolute most important, is your content has to be meaningful. People don't want to sit around for an hour or 45 minutes, plus 15 minutes of questions and answers. They don't want to just do that for sales units. If you have content that's meaningful, meaningful solutions. Who doesn't want to understand that better. So it's really important that you dial in your content so that the people who hear it, will tell other people, you know what? You

should listen to this program; you are going to learn a lot. And then your presentation is growing, not just because you're pitching it but other people are telling other people that that is content they should listen to.

Kip:

Yeah. Thanks Kevin. And then another question here which I have a bias to this, but I failed it for the R team here is, and I hear this quite a bit. We have specifications, but I think it could apply to any content that you have, that's important to be published on master spec. And they're wondering, is that the only thing that I need to do? Is there other websites? What about my website? And when you have important content like three-part specs, is it just good enough to put on master spec or is there a best practice there? So anyone want to take a stab at that one?

Kevin Harris:

I would say that there are a lot of different platforms, but moving forward, you're going to want a platform that really allows you to showcase their content. There are a lot of firms, larger firms are really utilizing 3D modeling content. And even the smaller firms now are starting to use it more. So I would just make sure that it was easy for it to be recognized that our product, we have both 2D models, we have 3D models, we will get you our content in whatever format works best for you.

Kip:

Yeah. And I hear this a bit through the people that I talked to is that, it's great as a marketing channel and a marketing practice that have your content in various places and watering holes. But certainly I think the best practice is to make sure that your website is your digital storefront. And then whenever you have everywhere else, make sure it's on your own site, in a meaningful way.

So if it's specs, and then Kevin talked about 3D content because it is absolutely, I know Zoltan is going to be talking and Charlie's going to be talking about the actual 3D modeling and digital collaboration.

But I think about making sure that your storefront and your website is up to snuff. That's where architects are going and the reason they go to other places because they can't find it on your website. So I would say, focus on that and then focus on the distribution. So I want to get back to the agenda. We have really two more pieces and then we can fill the rest of the questions, and we can wrap up. So from there, Charlie, you also, I remember the stories about your investment into technology and you spoke to a little bit upfront of why you did that. Could you maybe go over the use of technology and why you thought that was valuable for your customers?

Charlie McCorvey:

Yeah. To be honest, we lucked into it as we kind of discussed. So back in the 70s, my grandfather realized that he knew nothing about estimating basically when he was trying to get work. But he knew how much he could manage and how much he could make the duct work for, but the variable was always the field labor. So he learned that if he drew it up and really put a lot effort in prefabrication and the duct work, just essentially it would go straight up in the air where it was supposed to go and fit in the space that it was supposed to fit in, that we could save a lot of money and where we were losing lots of money, which was in field labor. So we realized really early on, again, looked into it, that investing upfront was really key.

And then of course, solidworks and Navis and AutoCAD and Revit and everything now that's out there today started coming along, and we invest heavily in the best software that's out there. We train our detailers in it and spend a lot of time training our detailers so that they can coordinate with all the other trades, we really take our prefabrication efforts to the highest degree. And that has been an extremely successful model for us. I hear a lot of people talking about hiring out their AutoCAD needs to other firms across the seas and stuff. And we just firmly believe that we want that to be in-house. We got 50 detailers in house that we constantly are in front of training and explaining to them how important prefabrication is.

And we could not do that without the software that is out there today. And I'll go to MCA events and see the technology that's coming out. And as Zoltan was talking about that, technology is here to stay and we're embracing it and evolving as it goes. But I remember watching just a video where this guy put on these safety glasses and he could just see the 3D model in front of him. And he hadn't done sheetrock in five years or something. And so he was able to put up this room in half the amount of time that people were doing it off of drawings and off of their iPads with these glasses. And I was just like, when is that going to be available? And it excites me to know where technology is going. And construction is definitely behind technology-wise, but people are starting to see that we're embracing it and investing more time and effort into creating technology for construction. And it's a really exciting thing.

Kip:

Well, yeah. Thanks for sharing. And we have our last question and topic for today for Zoltan. And again, uses of technology. When I met Zoltan years ago, very passionate about them, I thought he married a BIM person. So I was like, oh, you should have BIM kids and all that. So, but Zoltan, if you could just share the importance of digital software and BIM specifically, why is it different today versus 20 years ago and 10 years ago.

Zoltan Toth:

Oh, excellent question. So yeah. So word is BIM. BIM is the process. Right? Then, originally 20 years ago, 30 years ago, it comes from the design phase of the project. And then now it's also obviously extended into the construction phase, the prefabrication, right? And then beyond that into the operation of the building, so covers the whole building life cycle. As far as programs, there is more than a 100 BIM programs, obviously the more popular ones that come up in the United States are Revit, ArchiCAD, vectorworks, Bentley, Tekla, and the list goes on for a long time.

The opening standard for BIM is Industry Foundation Classes or IFC that allows all of these programs to communicate. Right? And that's kind of the common ground there. But the original idea coming again from the design side was that, if we build the project in the digital domain before we start construction, we can make good informed decisions early on, when changes are still cheap, and we can affect the project outcome more. Because the most expensive change that you have to make is the one at the job site. Right?

So this kind of Phil Bernstein from Autodesk talks about this example, it shows the pictures where is that the construction site. And it shows the ceiling and there's a HPAC duct running. And then the plumber comes in and they realize that where they're supposed to run the plumbing, they have this duct. Now they have to stop, bring the HPAC people back in, they take the duct off. Plumber comes back, runs the pipe, they leave. HPAC comes back, now they fix it and run the duct in the right place. Now they just delayed the project. Right? They wasted several peoples, maybe potentially days, it's painful to even describe. Right? And I compared that to a scenario where they find that problem in the design phase early on in the digital model. Right? Or even better, completely avoid those problems because they have access to each other models and they can federate the model and pull it together and avoid those problems. So that is really the original promise of BIM.

So this example is about geometry, but BIM, there is the I in the BIM, which is information. That's also very important that a BIM can include all of the nun geometric information or the [inaudible 00:52:31] data. Right? Product information, material, occupancy information, whatever you want to include in it. So it becomes this project, data reservoir for the whole building life cycle. And it allows for prefabrication like Charlie was describing, it enables and can be kind of the driver of VR and AR and all these different kind of new technologies. It puts the model on mobile devices. Right? That we don't have to print out a new set every single time. We can just take an iPad to the job site. And then also a very interesting use in the operation phase is this concept of digital twins, that is a digital model of the building that is maintained throughout DataRich digital model of the building that's maintained throughout the building life cycle.

So let me give you an example on that. With COVID, we had new restrictions on how many people we can have in an office. Right? So let's take an office building, how the circulation works in the building. People have to check in, take the temperature, they had to recalibrate the elevators, how many people can you have in the same elevator. So you can feed that into a digital model, run simulation, come up with the best solution and then roll that out. Right? You can get to the best solution before the implementation. And then speaking of COVID, big benefit to BIM is that it really is the

only technology that allows all the different stakeholders to collaborate in real time if they want to, in the same model remotely, there's just no other option.

Kip:

Great. Well, thanks Zoltan for sharing that. And I know, I want to be respectful for everyone's time today to keep this of an hour and really thankful for everyone joining. We want to do a lot more of these too. And if here people who get the recording, if you want to join the panel in the future, yeah, please contact us. That would be awesome. And if there's any topics that people want to talk about in the future, sustainability, digital marketing, sales strategy, whatever it is. Yeah. A lot of people have the same questions and challenges, and there's a lot of people that do it really well and there's a lot of people that are struggling. And in any way we can share, will be awesome. We went through some Q&A already, so I'll skip that.

I did want to talk two seconds about Concora. I mean, we are a passionate company about helping building material manufacturer, especially with commercial. And our goal is to help your website with those buyer journeys as everyone and Kevin's been saying, and Charlie have, bolted onto your website that enables commercial buyers to specify your products, project showcases, showing your technical content in less than 30 days and something that's transparent to your website. And what we know, again your website is your digital storefront, and some manufacturers, it's hard for them to invest in that, and it can take years or months and it's expensive. And that's what we can help offer them. More than happy to share case studies later and testimonials, and the nice thing about what we bring to the table is that we're able to provide you with the people visiting your storefront on your website so that your awesome sales team can follow up your distributors or whoever it is. Work with many customers in the industry and love across MEP and all these other wonderful companies.

If you want to reach out to me specifically, feel free. We do podcasts, we do webinars, we do blogs and articles. And so we're just here to try to help out. And also, I'll send this out to the panelist here and to the attendees. So Kevin's business card. Thank you again Kevin, for joining and your awesome stories. Charlie, again, thank you for joining and spending time, and Zoltan. And your wonderful perspective on the design side.

So we will send out a transcript or recording to everyone. I know there was some other questions that we'll be sure to answer. We'll have an expert who will give you a good answer for that. And again, if you want to collaborate with us, feel free to reach out to everyone here. Because I've known Kevin and Charlie over many months and really great guys, just to talk to. Right? So I'm sure they'd be more than happy to share their knowledge. So again, thanks everyone for joining our webinar panel today. And I'm looking forward to talking to everyone again in the future. See you guys.