



Hobbs+Black to BIM During Landmark Project



The Organization

Founded in 1965, Hobbs+Black ranks among the top ten architectural firms in Michigan, with more than a hundred employees in its Ann Arbor headquarters and its full-service regional offices in Lansing, Michigan and Phoenix, Arizona.

The firm specializes in industrial, commercial and institutional work, and its impressive award-winning portfolio boasts some of the most distinctive projects in the region – hospitals, office buildings, hotels, multi-family housing, educational facilities, shopping centers, and religious facilities.

Hobbs+Black is equipped to offer a complete spectrum of architectural and interior design services, as well as mechanical, electrical and structural engineering. This remarkable and diverse experience gives the firm a wealth of knowledge and a pedigree of success in developing innovative solutions to complex, research-intensive, and time- and resource-constrained design challenges.

The Challenge

In 2010, Hobbs+Black were in the midst of a significant project – the Tucson Medical Center – and at the same time were migrating from their existing AutoCAD-based environment to a Building Information Modeling (BIM) platform.

Using a BIM process facilitates an improved way of working collaboratively, using a model created from coordinated design information. This enables earlier decision-making, better documentation, and the evaluation of alternatives using analysis before construction begins.

Through a BIM implementation, architects, engineers, builders, and owners can explore a project's key physical and functional characteristics digitally in a way never before possible – before a shovel breaks ground and when design changes and refinements can still be made with minimal operational or cost repercussions.

The result, quite simply, is better projects, completed faster and more cost-effectively.



The 760-bed Tucson Medical Center represented a five-year, multi-million-dollar endeavor, and was the second-largest project in Hobbs+Black's portfolio at the time. Not only a highly visible, flagship development for Hobbs+Black, the successful overhaul of this high-profile facility was vital to the health and well-being of the community.

"We knew BIM would be the future for the industry," says Brandon LaCourciere, BIM Manager at Hobbs+Black. "We'd already invested in Revit software, basic BIM training and hired a number of professionals, but we had deferred a complete transition. But, when the Tucson Medical Center

required the entire project to be delivered using BIM - and Level Three BIM at that - we just had to get it done and done right, the first time.”

Hobbs+Black was keenly aware of the cost and efficiency benefits of BIM, but it was also mindful of the pitfalls of a potentially-disruptive process change, including user learning curves and the potential for business and project distraction.

“It was absolutely essential to the firm and to our clients that our transition to BIM was seamless,” says LaCourciere.

The Solution

Hobbs+Black’s initial foray into BIM was in 2006, and was also impelled by the demands of a particular project. However, after that assignment was successfully completed, the internal momentum waned and full adoption was deferred.

Then the firm won the bid for the 2010 Tucson Medical Center project.

BIM was now a priority.

Understandably, many might balk at the idea of moving to BIM with a major project underway, but Hobbs+Black instead chose to embrace the opportunity and proactively position itself for the future. “It could be seen as the equivalent of changing the tires on the car while running the race, but the benefits were obvious and the project demanded it,” says Joe Eichenseer, Building Solutions Manager at Avatech [now IMAGINiT].

The firm had a longstanding and trusted partnership with Avatech Solutions [now IMAGINiT], and so naturally it was to Avatech [now IMAGINiT] they turned to support this critical transition. “We made a company-wide commitment to not do anything half-measured,” said Ellen Callahan, Vice-President, Marketing at Hobbs+Black. “Given our existing relationship, it was natural to have Avatech guide us through the process.”

Avatech [now IMAGINiT] customized training for each of the firm’s eight sector-specific design studios in Michigan and Arizona. Avatech [now IMAGINiT] set about working with Hobbs+Black to implement a full-scale rollout throughout the firm. “They got us in and swimming!” says Callahan. “We rolled out the program in a systemized fashion -- *and* did it on time.”

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— Ellen Callahan
VP Marketing, Hobbs+Black

The training protocol leveraged existing internal knowledge of BIM and enabled users to complete at least one structure in their particular field before ever touching a live project. The training solution combined lecture, “over-the-shoulder” and other tailored techniques, and was delivered with minimal disruption. “You can’t just pull out ten people at a time for training,” notes LaCourciere. “Avatech [now IMAGINiT] broke it up and delivered three half-day sessions per week over three weeks - so we could learn the platform and meet existing deadlines.”

“As a true business partner, Avatech [now IMAGINiT] not only supports us with their technological expertise, but also their industry insight and industry best practices,” says Callahan. Avatech [now IMAGINiT] helped the firm identify Revit ‘champions’ among their employees for areas such as architecture, mechanical, etc., enabling Hobbs+Black to continue the implementation across the company independently.

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— Brandon LaCourciere
BIM Manager, Hobbs+Black

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All told, Avatech [now IMAGINiT] steered Hobbs+Black to a successful BIM implementation in less than five business days.

Significant Rewards

Additional Work with Tucson Medical Center

Hobbs+Black's successful transition to BIM during Phase One of the Tucson Medical Center helped earn them Phase Two. "The client is very positive about the experience, particularly the level of information they've received. Also, the mechanical engineering firm they assigned to work with us has been very complimentary about our ability to collaborate and with the level of detailed data they are receiving."

Significant Efficiencies

Hobbs and Black has realized efficiencies:

- ▶ Revision Notes - Prior to BIM, adding a revision note to a 100-page set would take about five hours. Now, with Revit, it can be done in roughly 45 seconds.
- ▶ Interference Protection - Prior to BIM, it could take a week to examine every sheet to ensure engineers had updated their plans to match their elevations, and then verify that everything was coordinated and aligned properly. Now, with the Revit collaborate tab, it takes just 35 seconds.

Enhanced Competitiveness

Clients are increasingly recognizing the enormous benefits of a BIM-enabled workflow, and firms that allow themselves to fall behind the curve sacrifice not only project efficiencies, but entire business opportunities.

Transitioning the firm to BIM with Avatech's [now IMAGINiT's] support has equipped Hobbs+Black with the cutting-edge tools, skills and workflows to market itself more compellingly in an increasingly competitive market.

"Now if a potential client asks 'do you use BIM?' we can say 'of course, and we're doing it at Level Three'," says Callahan. "This really helps position us as a leader in our field, and the Tucson Medical Center is an exceptional project to illustrate our experience and capabilities – and that means more business."

Enhanced Trusted Advisor Credibility

The transition to BIM has also strengthened Hobbs+Black's role as trusted advisor to its long-standing clients.

Some clients have been with Hobbs+Black since the firm opened its doors 45 years ago. "We're a relationship-driven firm and we strive to be the group that owners come to for an impartial assessment of what's right for them," says Callahan.

These clients trust the firm to stay abreast of industry best practices and process innovation, and the firm is now positioned to bring to these clients the benefits of cutting-edge, BIM-enabled workflow. "Now we can provide even greater value to existing and potential clients by confidently demonstrating to them how and why BIM can benefit their projects."



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New Revenue Streams

"When it came to our training, Avatech [now IMAGINiT] didn't just give us the fish - they taught us how to fish," says Callahan. "They helped make us supremely proficient content creators."

This competence has translated directly into new channels of revenue.

With the insight and skills provided by the Avatech [now IMAGINiT] training process, Hobbs+Black is frequently contracted by subcontractors and third party firms to consult, develop content, or counsel others as to template structures or schedules. "Avatech [now IMAGINiT] provided insight into things that a general user would never have even asked. We have that insight now, because of the way they implemented the program," says Callahan.

Recruitment and Retention of Key Talent

By working with Avatech [now IMAGINiT] and investing in the training and development of its own employees, Hobbs+Black believes they have built an employee base unlike any other architectural firm in Michigan.

"Our people are now ahead of the curve in almost every aspect of Revit documentation," says Brandon LaCourciere. "We are equipping our employees with cutting-edge skills and tools so that they are empowered to create their best work. Who wouldn't love that? We're thrilled to have created an environment where we can attract and retain the very best talent."

The Future

Hobbs+Black are currently working with Avatech [now IMAGINiT] to explore opportunities in facilities management to enable them to provide enhanced value to clients interested in asset management, thereby extending the value of their architecture work.

Their work with the Tucson Medical Center entails establishing a Revit project to manage the facilities upon completion, so Hobbs+Black are exploring additional programs to help facilitate that for HR, facilities managers, accounting, and others involved in asset tracking.

Hobbs+Black are excited about a future involving BIM and the opportunities it heralds for their clients and themselves, and their on-going partnership with Avatech [now IMAGINiT].

To learn more, call 1.800.356.9050.

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About Avatech Solutions / IMAGINiT Technologies

Avatech Solutions, now called IMAGINiT Technologies (imagineit.com), is a division of Rand Worldwide. IMAGINiT Technologies advances the way architects and engineers design, develop, and manage projects. Customers of this leading professional services and technology company include organizations in the building, infrastructure, manufacturing and facilities management industries. Fortune 500 and *Engineering News Record's* Top 100 organizations work with IMAGINiT Technologies to gain competitive advantages through expert technology consulting, implementation, training, and support services. As one of the world's largest integrators of Autodesk software, this team leverages unrivalled industry experience to design systems that accelerate innovation while improving project quality and profitability. For more information visit rand.com and imagineit.com.

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