

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Olsson Associates Prepares for the Future with Improved Employee Development and Process Workflows



About the Firm

Founded in 1956, Olsson Associates is a nationally-recognized (**ENR #116**), employee-owned engineering and design firm with private and public consulting experience in the Midwest, Rocky Mountains, and the southwestern United States. Headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, the firm employs a staff of 1,000 across roughly 30 offices in seven states.



Beginning less than five years ago, the firm rapidly expanded from 650 to roughly 1,000 employees today through organic growth and acquisitions. Olsson knew that growing quickly can cause issues with underlying goals. “We pride ourselves in providing top quality projects for our clients. We aim to combine the best technology with employee investment to meet this goal,” said Justin Tallmon, Corporate CAD Manager.

Olsson Associates has long recognized that each employee embodies a commitment to quality through individual, team, and client partnership efforts. Olsson’s management team needed effective tools and processes to maintain the expected high quality of client projects and to bolster employee retention through effective staff development. Through IMAGINiT’s collaborative consulting, the Olsson team is now in a better position to handle continued expansion while maintaining high standards and improving the already stellar client experience.

The Approach

Olsson Associates has a decades-long history of partnering with IMAGINiT. After completing an IMAGINiT Civil 3D Health Check, a strategic road map was defined through collaborative efforts of both the IMAGINiT and Olsson staff. The prescription for improvements focused on Olsson’s processes, people, and technology used during a project. IMAGINiT’s Civil 3D Health Check services are designed to determine whether firms are maximizing their use of Autodesk® AutoCAD® Civil 3D® technology to its fullest extent. The outcomes of the Civil 3D Health Check defines specific recommendations related to software usage and process improvements, which can be made to increase team efficiency, productivity, and collaboration.

Technology Improvement

Olsson Associates had already implemented Civil 3D and were working well with it. The firm needed to take the programs to the next level with corporate templates, improved collaboration, and greater adoption of all tools among the new staff. Olsson Associates invested in new IT infrastructure as well as the underlying processes affecting employees.

During the initial assessment, Olsson found an immediate need for reality capture technology and has since implemented both the Leica Geosystems hardware as well as the processing software and office workflows necessary to take full advantage of the new capabilities.



Process Improvement

The Olsson and IMAGINiT teams devised enhancements to improve internal collaboration between disparate offices and teams enabling them to share project workload regardless of location or team. While Olsson's investments in IT infrastructure aided improved workflow, process changes, the development of universal company Civil 3D environment/template, as well as organization-specific education delivered by IMAGINiT were key elements in successful productivity improvements.

The solution recommendation also led to a consolidated CAD Standard for corporate use across all teams and offices. This standardization was accomplished through a series of focus groups IMAGINiT held with key staff in regional offices. Focus group participants represented a cross section of disciplines around the firm. Input from these interviews provided valuable input on what needed to be included in the CAD standard in order to make it operational to all groups.

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—Justin Tallmon
Corporate CAD Manager
Olsson Associates

"A standard is not a standard unless it's easy to use and EVERYONE agrees to use it," said Adam Bauer, Corporate CAD Manager. "The template makes the workflow simpler to use and allows our staff options while avoiding regional customization."

Another benefit of the focus groups was insight into the various ways teams use Civil 3D to complete projects. "The focus group discussions helped us see where employees could benefit from training or other forms of process workflow improvement," Tallmon said. Looking back on the experience, he noted, "from a technology standpoint, our efficiency increased and it was money well spent."

At the end of this phase Olsson Associates had:

- A clear and concise standard, regardless of office location
- Defined workflows for sharing project information
- Effective project collaboration between team members and offices
- A process to grow and simultaneously maintain the Olsson 'brand' and high quality of project deliverables clients expect

People Improvement

During the early stages of the Health Check, IMAGINiT created an online assessment that Olsson team members took to gauge their knowledge level. Using these results, IMAGINiT devised a purpose-built education plan for each discipline. With insight into their areas of strength and areas of improvement, a more productive use of training hours helped the Olsson teams make more efficient use of their primary design tool.

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The result of IMAGINiT's people-focused recommendations led to Olsson educating its 225 Civil 3D design staff over a seven-month period. The education plan was embedded into HR's employee development plans throughout the organization. This stage was dual-purpose as it served as a platform to introduce and cement into place the reformed corporate CAD standard, as well as the revised workflows to benefit the company and its project outcomes.

Summary

The positive effects of IMAGINiT's services engagement are still felt at Olsson Associates. "We still use the assessment tool almost daily with new hires," said Tallmon. The firm continues to utilize the focus groups to ensure teams throughout the various disciplines have a voice, so that communication and sharing of ideas continues. Monthly group meetings are held to discuss whether Civil 3D template modification is required and also how to communicate the change to users.

Working smarter and faster is essential, as Olsson Associates strives to double the firm's size over ten years from its current level to a projected 2,000 employees by 2024. Olsson Associates, in large part, is an industry leader due to its people. Olsson's executive management provided staunch support of this development initiative from the start. The HR training and staff development team, CAD management/IT team and the design staff all had a part in the successful outcome of the nearly year-long project with IMAGINiT. The investment by the organization in its people, processes, and improved workflows proves why the company wins local accolades in communities for "Best Places to Work" year after year.

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About IMAGINiT Technologies

IMAGINiT Technologies, a Rand Worldwide Company, is the world's largest provider of enterprise solutions to the engineering community, including the building, manufacturing, civil and mapping industries. With over 25 years of experience, and 45 offices throughout North America, we provide the expertise, training and support to help companies realize the full power of design technology, maximize ROI and gain competitive advantage.



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