

Construction CIOs

DATA IS THE FUEL THAT DRIVES THE GROWTH ENGINE IN AEC FIRMS

ARE YOU RUNNING ON EMPTY?

Whether you are in Business Development (BD), Marketing or Project Management at an AEC firm, you know that data plays a critical role in everything you do in order to get your job done.





THE DIRE NEED FOR DATA

BUSINESS DEVELOPERS NEED COMPREHENSIVE COMPANY AND CONTACT DATA FOR ALL OF THE DEALS AND POTENTIAL DEALS THEY MAY BE PURSUING.

They need to understand the various types of relationships that exist in the construction ecosystem (partners, sub-contractors, past competitors, etc.). They and their management require visibility into the project pipeline to help shape strategic direction and understand the resources needed for potential projects.

Marketers need much of the same data but may use it differently. They need to understand past

projects, markets served, personnel involved, project certifications and other factors to form winning proposals for future projects.

Project managers, while not directly responsible for bringing in new projects, contribute to improving the data health of the firm. They see and hear about potential new projects or opportunities that come up in the course of executing existing projects. These insights are extremely valuable to both the BD and Marketing teams.

Drilling for Oil

So, we've established that data around projects, customers, partners is important. But, what's the problem?



The problem is that the data necessary to do an effective job is both everywhere and nowhere at the same time. What does that mean? Think about the concept of drilling for oil. You know the oil is out there, you just need to find it in order to make use of it. Finding it requires countless hours of research and science, and then storing it becomes another project in itself.

The data necessary to win more business in the AEC industry is somewhat like this. The information is out there, it's just hard to find and impossible to manage in one place.

While much of the data these teams need may be stored in some kind of database, it's not easily accessible or organized in a format for the teams who need the data. The other problem is that many departments, teams or individuals have created their own mini data repositories. This might be adequate for a few individuals, but it doesn't help the organization as a whole and it's scalable.

To top it off, adding in all of the stories, anecdotes and personal "Rolodex" notes that do not even exist in an electronic format becomes nearly impossible when there is no single place to store this data. Some of the richest data in your firm may be in someone's personal notebook or held in their fuzzy memory.

The Data Refinery

Leading firms have been discovering new technology options to help them consolidate this “oilfield” of data into a single repository or platform. This common repository can be thought of as “the single source of truth,” especially for the BD and Marketing teams working hard to win new business.

You’ve probably heard of a software application called a CRM, or Customer Relationship Management. The idea of a CRM is to solve for the problem we’ve been discussing – putting all of the firm’s customer-related information into a single system that can be searched, updated and reported on. There are many varieties of CRM software in the market today – from simple to use software that can be used by an individual to versions used by small businesses with basic needs and minimal budgets.

There are also CRM products that are part of much bigger suites of software that might include applications for Finance, HR, Supply Chain, Service Management or Production. Most CRM solutions were conceived to help companies selling a product keep track of their customers so they can sell more products.

As construction related industry firms began trying out CRM systems to track their customers, they began to notice some basic shortcomings. Most CRM systems are focused on tracking the relationships around selling one or a handful of

products. The company using the CRM has a product or a set of products and they want to sell those products to as many people as possible. Traditional CRM systems are great for this. However, most commercial AEC firms are not typically selling a standard product over and over again.

AEC firms are selling Projects made up of services, materials, vendors, labor, equipment, certifications, approvals and compliance requirements each of which is very specific to a given project. The ability to win new project business is highly influenced based on past project experience.

Many of the AEC firms who have attempted to use a generic “product-based” CRM system have struggled. The fundamental software architecture of these product-based CRM systems are a challenge to project-based AEC businesses. As a result, many of these firms are either spending enormous budgets configuring the system for project-based sales, or they are left with utilizing only a fraction of the platform...poorly.



THE FUEL FOR AEC FIRMS

In order for an AEC firm to run at its highest performing level, they need the right fuel to drive business growth.

There are three primary ingredients in this fuel required to drive maximum performance.



Ingredient #1

Project-Based CRM

The core concept behind a CRM still applies to AEC firms, it just needs to be designed from the ground up with the AEC firm in mind.

This means orienting customer relationship information around projects – past, present and future. It means having an understanding of the teams, partners and resources required to execute a complex project.

It means using language familiar to the AEC firm including standard industry-specific workflows and field names. It means being built with standard reports and dashboards specific to the AEC industry.

All of this pre-configured functionality results in a lower cost to acquire and higher rate of adoption for end-users.

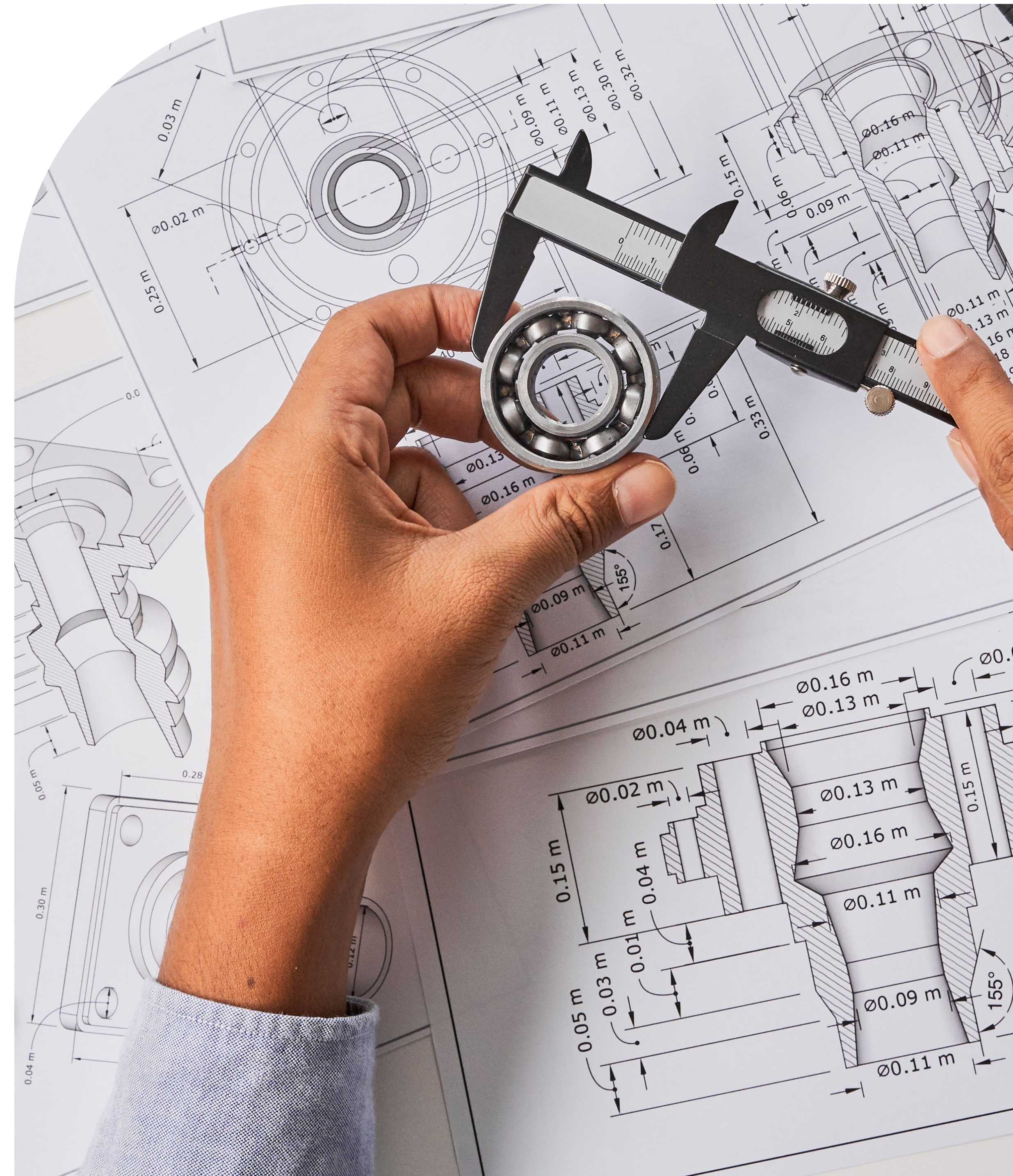
Ingredient #2

Integrated Proposal Automation

In addition to gaining access to core CRM data, the Marketers within AEC firms are tasked with creating pixel-perfect proposals used to win new business.

Those proposals often include required content that is very structured and must be 100% accurate. Proposal Specialists within AEC firms spend countless hours assembling and organizing data from throughout the firm to use in a written proposal. This manual and repetitive collection of information takes time away from the creation of truly differentiated winning proposals.

The right system will pull all of the necessary data together quickly from a single data repository. Additionally, tight integration with tools like Adobe InDesign and Microsoft Word allow the proposals content to come together quickly in a format designed specifically for your firm.





Ingredient #3

Financial System Integration

The final ingredient to a high performing BD and Marketing system is the ability to leverage data from existing financial systems.

Current and past-project information is typically captured in financial systems that track the project, the people and the resources used to execute the project. Much of this data stored in the financial system is of value to the BD and Marketing teams – but not all of it.

For example, the Proposal Specialist in Marketing does not need to know every invoice or expenditure down to the penny for a past project. But, they do

need to know an approximation of the financials that can be represented on a new opportunity proposal. This kind of summary view of project can be mapped from the financial system to the Business Development and Marketing system.

Past project data lives in the financial system and is updated by the project teams regularly. Gaining access to select data on current and past projects can be used to help win new projects.

Unanet CRM by Cosential: The Fuel for AEC BD and Marketing Teams

Just like a diesel engine couldn't run on traditional gasoline, your firm needs a solution that works for the AEC industry specifically if you want to see wide-spread adoption and successful use of your system.

Unanet CRM was built from the ground up specifically for the needs of commercial AEC firms.

Unanet CRM is powered with the knowledge and experience of over 20 years and over 1,000 customers.

With over 50 industry standard pre-built reports, we've unlocked the data that is important for your firm, and now it's just a matter of bringing your pre-existing data into one place.

Take the first step in the direction your firm needs and book a meeting with your team of experts today. They're waiting to hear from you and can't wait to show you Unanet CRM in action.

Meet your Team.