CM5690 Five Mistakes of a Rookie CAD Manager

Paul Munford – Halstock Cabinet makers

A couple of years ago I packed my family home into a U-Haul and left the bright lights of the United Kingdom's capital city for a little village on England's south coast.

Why? I had finally found the position I had been working so hard for: CAD manager. And you know what? It didn't work out quite how I expected.

Maybe I'm not yet experienced enough to tell you how to succeed as a CAD manager, but I can certainly help you to avoid the mistakes I made.

Come and join us for a lively session as we discuss how to put aside the CADing and Codeing, and we talk about what to do next.

Learning Objectives
At the end of this class, you will be able to:

- Learning Objective 1 Understand the hazards of working outside the CAD comfort zone

- Learning Objective 2 Understand what your commission is and how to communicate it

- Learning Objective 3 Discuss how to cope when you realize you're still not in charge

- Learning Objective 4 Discuss strategies for improving dialogue and negotiation skills

About the Speaker
Paul Munford is a laugher, dreamer, and bon vivant, and he is also a CAD geek and CAD manager at Halstock Cabinet Makers Ltd. in the United Kingdom.

Paul is a member of the British Standards Institute Committee for BS8888, the British standard for technical product documentation, and he specializes in using AutoCAD software and Inventor software to create cabinetry, millwork, and joinery shop drawings.

In his spare time, Paul nurtures the CAD Setter Out blog, and he has written for AUGIWorld magazine, DEVELOP3D, and Shaan Hurley's Between the Lines blog

Paul was a speaker at Autodesk University for the first time in 2012, and he says it's the most fun anyone can have with 150 other people in the room.

Paul@Cadsetterout.com

Introduction

In 2012 I sold my house, packed up my young family and moved from England's fair capital to a quiet market town on the south coast of the UK. Why? For my dream job as a CAD manager of course!

But it turns out, my dream job has been really hard work! The toughest part of the job has not been IT networks , CAD standards or pushing drawings out on time. And It hasn't been cash flow forecasts or departmental targets either.

The area that I've found the most personally challenging (and the most rewarding!) has been the people I work with...

I'm now two years in, and I'm not yet ready to tell you how you to become a successful CAD manager, but I'm happy to share a few of my mistakes with you in the hope that you can avoid finding yourself in the same position...

Contents

1. Are you trying and fix the problems of your last company, at your new company?

I left my previous company to become a bigger fish in a smaller pond, and yes - I had baggage.

What I've learned is that people can get really upset when you try and fix something that they didn't even perceive to be a problem. So, why not make this new job a fresh start, and a clean break from everything you knew before?

Don't fall into the trap of re-building your familiar old routines at your new company. Take the time to deeply understand the successes and problems of your current company before you look for solutions.

If you can genuinely and honestly apply a solution from your previous experience, great!

2. Are you trying to fix what isn't broken?

Many companies develop their own language and habits, as well as their more formal processes. But, however much it irks you, don't get sucked into debating internal semantics.

Don't be tempted to implement change just because of your personal preferences. If it stays in house, let people call it what they like.

I've learned to save my energy for the procedures and process that really need to comply with Industry standards, and those that involve collaboration with others outside of our company.

3. Do you understand your commission?

It took me some time to understand my commission at my new job. By 'commission,' I mean the strategic goals of the CAD manager, and how they align with the company's strategic goals.

I repeatedly interviewed the directors at my company, asking them awkward questions like 'What did you expect to get out of hiring a CAD manager' and 'What were you missing before you had a CAD manager'.

I eventually came up with some answers that satisfied my need to understand the company's business goals, and my part in them. What I've realised since, is that I took my foot off the gas too soon.

I've learned that It's not enough to understand what the company's Senior Management expect you to achieve - you need to make sure that everyone else also understands what the Senior Management are asking you to achieve!

If the people you work with at your company don't understand your role, you will certainly experience frustration and resentment in your dealings with colleagues inside and outside the CAD department. My advice is don't let this become a barrier. Ask your management team to help you communicate your commission early and often.

4. If I were King for the day

I'll bet we've all said 'If I was the Boss I'd...'. We all have frustrations at work that we'd love to change, if only we had the authority. I'll bet that, if you are determined to become a CAD manager, it's precisely because you feel driven to make these changes.

However, the truth is that it's not that simple. Modern companies no longer operate on a dictatorship system. Simply telling everyone else what to do just won't work!

If you want to make changes in the way the people at your company work, you will need to use honesty, objective facts and good old persuasion!

I've learned to involve my colleagues in the mission to understand what the real problems are in our workflow. I've learned to involve the same people in the search for solutions. And I've learned to collect data, monitor performance and report, report, report in order to objectively demonstrate that our solutions are working.

No-one likes being told what to do. Everyone feels the need to negotiate themselves the best position. It might seems like hard work to involve many different people in every decision, but you will reap the rewards later, as people willing comply to the system they helped build.

5. Some of the people will trust you some of the time...

Some of your colleagues will trust you some of the time, some of your colleagues will trust you all of the time, but never will all of your colleagues trust you all of the time...

As a CAD manager you are at the end of the design development supply chain. Many of the people who can make the design documentation process more efficient for your team won't be your direct reports.

These people will help you to achieve your goals - if they trust you and they trust your motives. Building trust is one of your most important non-billable activities.

I'm learning to take the time to understand my colleagues problems and frustrations. I'm taking the time to talk to them about the goals the company has set for me and for us, and I'm looking for mutually convenient ways of getting us all getting what we need.

Over to you

My first two years as a CAD manager have been the toughest, yet most rewarding two years of my career so far. How about you? Are you an inspiring young wannabe CAD manager?

Perhaps you've been through the mill and you have a few more lessons in CAD management you'd like to share with us?

Whoever you are. I wish you all the best in your CAD management endeavours.
Yours, Paul.

Images courtesy of cooldesign at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Do you have any advice for Rookie CAD managers? Please email me Paul@Cadsetterout.com and I'll add it to this handout!

Resources and Further reading
Read more about CAD management on the web

Find more CAD Management tips on my website:
http://cadsetterout.com/cad-management/

Robert Green - Author of 'Expert CAD Management':
http://www.cad-manager.com/

Mark Kiker - The CADD & Blm Manger:
http://www.caddmanager.com/

CAD management articles from CADalyst magazine:
http://www.cadalyst.com/management

Forums
Get help from the community

CAD Managers group on Facebook
http://www.cadalyst.com/management/cad-managers-unite-facebook-13280

AUGI (Autodesk User Group International)
http://forums.augi.com/forumdisplay.php?32-CAD-Management

Autodesk
http://forums.autodesk.com/t5/cad-managers/bd-p/112

CADtutor.com
http://www.cadtutor.net/forum/forumdisplay.php?43-CAD-Management

Recommended books
Study to become a better CAD Manager

Expert CAD Management
http://www.cad-manager.com/expert-cad-management-the-book

Getting to yes
http://www.amazon.com/Getting-Yes-Negotiating-agreement-without-ebook/dp/B008YUNDJS/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1416163384&sr=1-3&keywords=getting+to+yes

Seven habits of highly successful people
http://www.amazon.com/Habits-Highly-Effective-People-

Powerful/dp/1451639619/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1416163455&sr=8-1&keywords=seven+successful

Crucial Conversations
http://www.amazon.com/Crucial-Conversations-Talking-Stakes-Second/dp/0071771328/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1416163536&sr=8-1&keywords=Crucial+conversations

Dare to prepare
http://www.amazon.com/Dare-Prepare-How-Before-Begin/dp/0307451801/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1416163594&sr=8-2&keywords=dare+to+prepare

Good to great
http://www.amazon.com/Good-Great-Some-Companies-Others/dp/0066620996/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1416163689&sr=8-1&keywords=good+to+great

Total Quality project management for the Design firm
http://www.amazon.com/Total-Quality-Project-Management-Design/dp/0471307874/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1416163819&sr=8-1&keywords=total+quality+management+for+the+design+firm

Did I miss anything?
If you know of any great resources for CAD Managers - please email me and I will update this handout.

Thanks!

Paul@Cadsetterout.com