ODELL

HOW FILE COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY ENABLES A CULTURE OF ONE

PROJECT PROFILE

⬡ **PEER SOFTWARE SOLUTION**

PeerLink ® for Global File Collaboration

⬡ **INDUSTRY**

Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC)

⬡ **APPLICATIONS**

Revit®, AutoCAD®, Civil 3D®, Adobe InDesign®, Adobe® PDF, Microsoft® Office, Navisworks®, Bluebeam®, Newforma and more.

⬡ **CUSTOMER'S PLATFORM**

Windows Server, NetApp cDOT storage system

⬡ **LOCATIONS**

5 locations in the United States and China

⬡ **SPECIAL NOTES**

Midsize firm with a hard-earned reputation for delivering world-class, high profile projects that utilizes technology to solve both productivity and cultural challenges as they grow and operate across multiple geographic locations.

Hospital in Tianjin, China. Source: Odell

INTRODUCTION

Founded in one of the fastest growing regions in the United States, Odell boasts a vast portfolio of innovative projects and a global client list that goes along with them. Driving the firm's growth is a triad of talent, technology and a "One Odell" corporate culture that emphasizes working as a team without geographic or technological barriers.

"Based on our portfolio, people think we are one of the largest firms in this part of the country," stated Megan Johnson, Director of BIM, Odell. "We believe that one member of the Odell staff can do what three can do in other firms, and still go home at the end of the day."

CHALLENGES

The simpler days of individual offices managing and delivering 100% of their own projects and hosting project files on a local server are history. Today, Odell is faced with managing projects and teams separated by distance and time zones. Additionally, the firm needed to be able to mix and match personnel as well as collaboration and data management capabilities based solely on project requirements - without location related concerns.

Solving the challenges of social collaboration for Odell's distributed teams was pretty straight forward thanks to proven video conferencing and online web collaboration platforms like GoToMeeting, but the firm's network and data management environment was a different story.

With servers and data storage at each location, decisions related to where shared project files will be housed and how

they will be accessed came down to factors like which site was closest to the project or had more project team members. This in turn led to numerous issues caused by a lack of data management standards, and forced remote project teams to access files via a slower corporate WAN connection.

"We tried a number of workarounds including breaking up large BIM models and storing them at different office locations based on work assignments, but this just added a lot of management overhead including continuously training users on how to work with a particular model," commented Johnson. "Each project was being managed differently and we were losing cycles trying to find and update the latest versions of project files stored across multiple servers 'daisy chained' throughout our network."

BB&T Park in Charlotte, North Carolina, Source: Odell

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SOLUTION

Since the root cause of Odell's challenges seemed to be related to their network and how data was managed, Odell focused on upgrading their storage platform and data management capabilities. After researching and analyzing a number of solutions including cloud-based offerings and hardware-based accelerators, Odell chose a combination of PeerLink by Peer Software for data management, and NetApp Clustered Data ONTAP (cDOT) storage systems that supported both on-premises and hybrid cloud storage.

PeerLink is a software-based file sharing and collaboration solution that maintains replicas of shared project files in real-time on servers at each branch office for fast access while working in concert with leading productivity and design applications to maintain file version integrity.

"We really wanted a best-of-breed platform to secure and manage all of the data we use to run our business," said Johnson. "The other solutions we evaluated either didn't feel ready, were too expensive, and seemed like an overlay of more technology and consequently more effort to maintain and fix if there is a problem. We felt comfortable with Peer's expertise in managing complex BIM files like those generated by Revit, and their tight integration with NetApp."

Top: BOK Center, Oklahoma; below: Hospital in Beijing, China. Source: Odell

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RESULTS

With the PeerLink system, the firm was now able to extend their One Odell concept to daily operations by consolidating data storage onto NetApp filers enabling shared files to be accessed locally without having to traverse the WAN and pull files from another location. No matter which office a user is at, project files appear to be in same place.

In addition to improving file collaboration performance for traditional CAD/BIM solutions, Odell discovered other collaboration and replication related use cases for Adobe InDesign, Microsoft Office and Newforma, a project information management system.

"PeerLink has given us tremendous flexibility and enabled us to manage our resources with more fluidity by removing location as a consideration for where we store data and how we assign team members to a project," added Johnson. "Good technology gets out of the way and allows good design to flourish."

BB&T Park in Charlotte, North Carolina, Source: Odell

WHAT'S NEXT

Technology will play a key role as Odell continues to expand into new geographic regions, including China where the firm's expertise in hospital and healthcare facility design is in demand. PeerLink's ability to interface with cloud technology from Microsoft Azure enables the firm to quickly ramp up infrastructure for new offices and outposts on an as needed basis, and fulfills a need for offsite disaster recovery with continuous data availability.

"Getting up and running had a few bumps in the road, but when you deploy new technology from multiple providers you quickly learn to appreciate a company like Peer that actually takes ownership of a problem and finds a solution instead of pointing fingers," commented Johnson. "Thanks to their great support team we have a system that exceeds our expectations, is very stable and positions us well for the future."

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