Building Online: How Architects Use Extranets for Online Collaboration

Traditionally, architects are a conservative bunch who fiercely guards “company secrets.” As a result, *best ready roof* the idea of using an extranet to share documents and collaborate with others has been totally alien.But tradition is rapidly changing. Increasingly, architectural firms are using extranets to share documents in a secure environment. Why? Because projects move faster, clients are happier, and everything from schedules and budgets to CAD drawings and renderings — is more accessible.An extranet allows engineers and construction companies to immediately access all pertinent information about a project. It eliminates the frustration of waiting until the architect decides to share his plans. Client relationships are enhanced through the faster and easier access to the vast volume of documents. Approvals are made more quickly, and the client has the comfort of knowing that they can review anything, at anytime. What is an Extranet?An extranet provides a secure workspace for clients, vendors and business partners. It is an area where all the pertinent information for a project can be made available to all of the parties involved in the project.Studies show that almost 50% of architectural firms have used an extranet. Some firms have resisted using the tool due to the high cost of implementation and maintenance. It is true that the cost of setting up an in-house extranet can be expensive. It requires the purchase of equipment and software, and hiring or training personnel to setup and maintain the system. However, hosted extranets have become a popular alternative to in-house solutions. They can be purchased for a monthly fee from an application service provider. This approach eliminates the need for hardware and software, and requires no internal **Ready Roof** staff to maintain the system. In fact, most hosting companies provide training for your staff.Today, as people become more accustomed to doing most of their business over the internet, clients are requiring that architectural firms use extranet technology. The good news is that extranets have become affordable. More importantly, they make the complex task of collaboration more efficient, enhancing the relationships with clients and partners, and accelerating project completion.

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