



Caspian Waterfront, Baku

## Futureproofing information

Andy Hudson, Director of global architects Chapman Taylor, explains to David Chadwick why the company is transitioning to Atvero's SharePoint-based PIM solution

Because everybody can now access data, there is no longer a need to share it," says Chapman Taylor Director Andy Hudson. This striking statement encapsulates the reasoning behind Chapman Taylor's recent decision to adopt Atvero's Project Information Management solution to more closely align to its worldwide network of studios.

I spoke to Andy, who is based at Chapman Taylor's London head studio, about the company's decision to use Atvero's application, which uses Microsoft's SharePoint Online to manage the information flow between its global studios. Andy gave me some background about the company first, to put its needs in perspective.

Chapman Taylor is a global practice of award-winning architects and masterplanners specialising in residential, retail, leisure, hospitality and office design, and the combination of these into sustainable, mixed-use environments. Their experienced teams provide a range of services across all these sectors, including interior design, architecture,

delivery, graphics, BIM and sustainability.

Established in 1959, the company has expanded from its London headquarters to operate from 16 design studios across Asia, Europe and the Middle East, successfully delivering over 2,000 projects across five continents. Their global team speaks 35 languages and includes over 45 nationalities. The mix of projects is fascinating, from theme-based shopping centres and large-scale masterplans in China and the Middle East to a 3,000m<sup>2</sup> covered ski slope and winter sports destination in the mountains of Norway.

With three studios in the UK and the rest spread across the globe, the tendency was to base project members within their country of operation, with all information pertaining to projects localised, independent and held in separate silos on local servers. The growing need to share expertise learned on different projects, however, brought about an increase in collaboration between the international studios, most of which was conducted through the extensive use of emails.

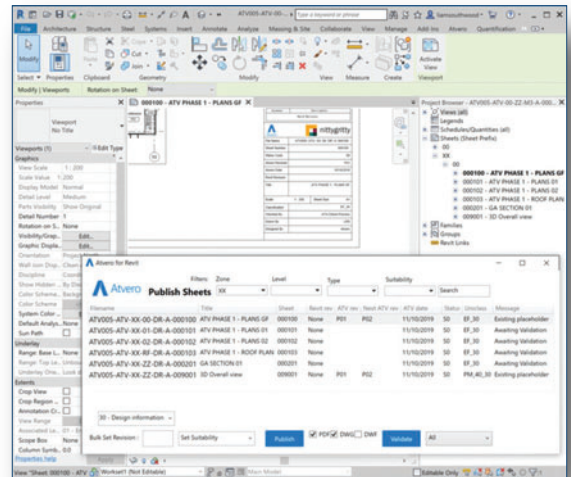
### CLOUD-BASED COLLABORATION

The rise of cloud services is changing all of that. Chapman Taylor felt it was time to move to a cloud-based application that would accommodate the project information, an accompanying image library and an electronic document management solution. With such a system in place, staff would be able to collaborate across studios, with each project member working from the same, single information source. This would remove duplication of data when information was previously shared between separate offices.

Chapman Taylor was already using Microsoft's Office 365 suite together with OneDrive, an undervalued piece of software that provides a comprehensive suite of tools to help people share data and collaborate. The company is now in the process of transitioning local information to its Chapman Taylor SharePoint tenancy with Atvero, bringing separate silos of information into one place, beginning with the UK business before rolling it out across the international network.



Salford Quays, Manchester



Exporting sheets from Revit in Atvero

## SHAREPOINT AND ATVERO

SharePoint is one of the most widely used of Microsoft's collaboration tools, allowing organisations to set up team sites where files, data, news and resources can be shared. With assistance from Atvero, Chapman Taylor intends to start uploading data to SharePoint from its on-premises document management system in the spring of next year, including information on current projects and around five million pieces of archived data.

This is where the expertise of Atvero will be most useful. Instead of transferring files and folders in a multitude of formats and with a variety of identifiers, Atvero will be 'tagging' the information as it is extracted and stored as metadata. This metadata can then be retrieved in whatever format is needed to link projects to every scrap of information related to it, extract lists of components or gather all emails relating to a particular project. With no hierarchical structure to struggle with, users will have the ability to select any of the information stored in the server and to present it in whatever format they require.

That information can range from Revit and Autodesk drawings and building models to Word documents, PDF files, or Excel spreadsheets. Atvero will help to configure output files above and beyond the library of prerecorded templates, but, as the application and Chapman Taylor's expertise with the software develops, this process will move in-house.

Anyone can dive into the metadata and set up a filter to find the information they

need - with the obvious permissions and exceptions, of course (financial and personal/sensitive will remain secure) - and present it in whatever format is most appropriate.

There is another benefit. Separate silos of information were created to accommodate the old software's limitations and the specific requirements of different companies working on particular projects. The data being held is therefore hostage to the future development of the software, and to the fortunes of the principal contractors managing it. Access to vitally important information about a project could be lost if it exists solely on the server of a minor subcontractor which ceases trading.

"Atvero's task", says Andy Hudson, "is to provide a non-folder-based system which can store 'tagged' data, reallocating it to make it more accessible. SharePoint provides a means of storing the information, but it is not a document management system. It is Atvero which provides the means of accessing that information."

## THE ATVERO DASHBOARD

The new system accommodates an old technique of Chapman Taylor's - allowing project or team members to log in to individual projects using separate emails for each project they are working on - and all projects are easily accessible, via thumbnails, on the homepage of the company's website.

One very valuable feature is the MyProjects page, which shows, in one

location, an overview of what is happening on a project, reminders, calendars, pending emails and news from each of the studios.

Chapman Taylor has always had an intranet to provide this information, but SharePoint is a more modern and accessible format. According to Andy Hudson, "It's so much easier to carry out diverse tasks with the new system, from setting up new projects to booking personal leave."

## A REVIT SOLUTION

Chapman Taylor uses Autodesk Revit as its major design software, assisted by various other Autodesk applications. Atvero is also focused primarily on Revit because of its prime position in the market, making it easier for Atvero to 'tag' data elements, create automatic naming systems and handle dates, revision and links between data elements. Templates for company-specific documents and reports and output requirements are being developed, with both Atvero and Chapman Taylor working on the 'mapping information' required.

The final output is usually in PDF format, although other formats, such as InDesign templates, can be used to assist users in transitioning to the new system. For issuing approvals and transmittals to clients, sometimes many columns' worth, Atvero can be used to filter and compress the data into manageable chunks.

The final words belong to Andy: "Atvero is allowing us to futureproof our data!"

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