Embrace of Technology in Construction Swings With Ages and Attitudes, Survey Finds

A survey conducted by a committee of young professionals in the Construction Users Roundtable offers a profile of technology use, adoption and attitudes across four age groups in the industry, suggesting strong engagement among the youngest but also the oldest, with a sag in the middle.

The results of the 30-question survey, conducted by CURT's Young Professionals Committee, are being analyzed. A report will be available on the CURT website soon, but a peek at the data is provocative.

Of 304 respondents, the largest number, 110 (36%) came from the cohort 51 years old or older. The second largest came from the youngest cohort, under 30 years of age,

which had 93 responses (31%). The responses dropped off sharply for the two decadal cohorts in between, with 52 from the 31- to 40-year-olds (17%) and 49 from the 41- to 50-year-olds (16%).

Respondents included 136 contractors, 62 owners, 18 consultants, 18 people from engineering firms and five from architectural firms.

Almost a third said their primary workspace was "in the field." The highest percentage, 41%, fell in the youngest group and gradually dropped to 23% for the oldest. More than half of all respondents said they work at least two hours a day on e-mail, with 36 spending four to six hours at it daily.

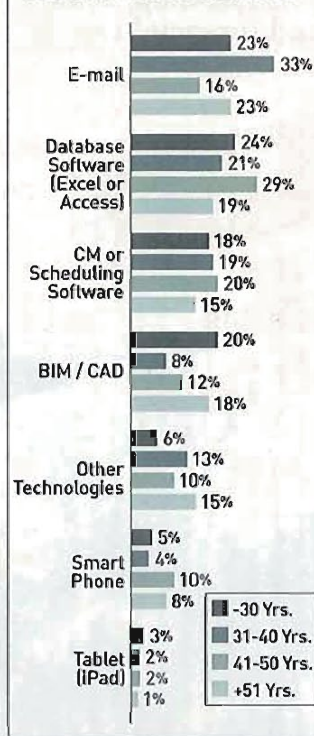When asked about the transition of baby boomers

into retirement, 118 said they are "excited—it's my time to shine," while 116 said they were nervous about what will happen to the industry.

Respondents also were asked to name the most important technology tool for their company (see chart). While many named specific tools as their first and second picks, several noted that their firm benefits most from systems that integrate many technological aids.

Asked if tablets and iPads are toys or tools, 59% said tools, 35% said it is too soon to tell, and 6% declared them toys. The highest "toy" count was in the 31- to 40-year-old age group, at 15%. The youngest and oldest came in at 4% and 6%, respectively. ∎

By Tom Sawyer

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TECHNOLOGY TOOL IN YOUR COMPANY?

- E-mail: 23%, 33%, 16%, 23%
- Database Software (Excel or Access): 24%, 21%, 29%, 19%
- CM or Scheduling Software: 18%, 19%, 20%, 15%
- BIM / CAD: 20%, 8%, 12%, 18%
- Other Technologies: 6%, 13%, 10%, 15%
- Smart Phone: 5%, 4%, 10%, 8%
- Tablet (iPad): 3%, 2%, 2%, 1%

Legend: -30 Yrs., 31-40 Yrs., 41-50 Yrs., +51 Yrs.

USGBC Introduces a Suite of Green Applications

Going live on Nov. 22, the U.S. Green Building Council's new App Lab features an initial eight computer applications that aim to support the green building movement.

USGBC's third-party LEED automation partners developed and contributed each application in this new searchable database.

Making the application mobile is a sensible course to follow, says one of the partners. "As the need becomes more mobile, so will our product," predicts Dave Weinerth, executive vice president of business development at SClenergy, San Francisco. Other automation partners agree, although only one app is currently available in Apple's App Store.

The council says the potential number of

apps in the lab is unlimited because any LEED automation partner is welcome to contribute.

"One idea behind the App Lab is to ease the burden of LEED documentation," says Barry Abramson, senior vice president of engineering at SClenergy. The company has developed one of the debut apps, SClwatch, a cloud-based tool that automates the LEED commissioning process daily.

"Our product has been available for some time," says Weinerth. "The new capability is that it helps automate LEED reporting."

Most partnering apps have been around for awhile, but the App Lab connects them all.

"Ongoing commissioning is one of the most difficult and important LEED credits to

achieve," says Abramson. "Our goal is to alleviate some of the burden of documentation and focus on the core issues of making buildings sustainable."

Another app, LoraxPro Mobile, gives users access to its LEED software, which helps simplify certification.

Another app, the Indie Energy Network, provides access to its open platform of real-time building analytics and data as well as energy apps.

According to the USGBC, more than 43,000 projects in 50 states and 120 countries are participating in the commercial and institutional LEED rating systems. ∎

By Luke Abaffy