

Intranet and Internet Uptake and Usage within UK Building Surveying Practices. A user based evaluation of advantages and disadvantages

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ABSTRACT

The 'single most important technological discovery since the birth of the p.c.', (Gates, 1996). The swift increase in Internet utilisation within businesses and surveying has changed working methods within UK based Surveying practices. User numbers expanded rapidly since the early 1990's and estimates place a figure of 150 million internet users globally (www.Yahoo.com, 2000). Sloan and Kee Low (2000) established that 'e-commerce' is a revolutionary way of trading and conducting business activities. There are opportunities for surveying practices including, reducing communication time, increasing revenues from new and existing sources, enhanced client satisfaction and competitive advantage (Cronin, 1996). Others (Dixon, 1998) perceive threats, such as 'disintermediation', to the traditional role of the surveyor.

This research examined the levels of internet and intranet access within the UK Building and Quantity Surveying practices and corporate firms to establish how the internet has affected working methods and client requirements. The research method comprised a qualitative approach using an email and postal questionnaire survey of a random sample of practices. The questionnaire findings formed the basis of semi structured interviews conducted with senior management of large practices to gain a deeper understanding of the issues identified within the survey.

Data analysis revealed the traditional role of the surveyor as a broker of information may be under threat in the long term. Generally levels of internet access in the sample exceed that of general business levels (Dti, 2000) with the largest growth pre 1997. The perceived advantages and barriers to Intranet and Internet usage were identified by the research.

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