



Measuring Success

David Chadwick reports how CAD Limited is assisting McDonald's to meet the Governments unrealistic licensing deadlines

I don't know whether to laugh or cry! Here is a wonderful story, with lashings of pathos, incompetence, craziness and, at the heart of it, an eminently sensible proposal to make our lives that little bit safer. You've probably picked up hints from the press, and may or may not have understood the full implications - not for yourself, of course, but for a very large number of companies in the victualling and licensing trade.

From the 6th of August, every company that provides food and drink beyond 11pm in the evening has to have a digital copy of its plans registered with the local planning department to support the new licensing requirements. Failure to do so will result in an immediate revocation of the old licence, and the need to submit a fresh planning application (with the appropriate plans, of course). Oh yes. For those laggards who can't meet the deadline, there is a second, limited, shot at the barrel on November the 24th - but with the backlog of applications that will be jamming every authorities planning departments by that time, the likelihood of it being

processed is small to nil.

The local council will, thereafter, send one of its zealous minions out onto the dark streets after the strict 11pm deadline, to close any establishment that cannot produce a current licence.

What a crazy and immense task the Government has set itself, or rather its servants. And not only for themselves - for there are many thousands of such eateries out there and precious few of them have electronic plans drawn up. As a result they will be forced to employ the services of architects and surveyors to do a rush job for them - not that there are legions of these sitting around on their backsides waiting for such a lucrative opportunity to arise.

The reasoning behind the new licensing laws may be quite sensible. In the event of a major incident at any of these establishments, the instant availability of detailed layouts of the premises will be invaluable to fire and the other emergency services. The ultimate aim is to provide the plans on handheld computers or in the cabs of the fire tenders, so that the rescue team can plot their way into a building

whilst still on their way to it. Some American response teams are even considering personal displays inside their headgear. All an outcome of 9/11, where it is reputed that paper plans were being rushed to the towers whilst the firemen were attempting to enter the building.

Quicker off the mark than most, following the decision by the Government to impose their strict deadlines, was McDonald's, the well known fast food chain, who have 300 directly owned outlets in the UK and a large number of franchises. McDonald's tend to stay open from 6.00 am to 2.00 am the following morning, and as you may well already know, are pretty busy throughout much of that period! The possibility that that they could lose licences in some of the premises would make a considerable impact on their income. McDonald's were quoted 3 man days from architect/surveyor combinations to measure each outlets and produce the requisite drawings - a couple of people taking a day to do the measuring, and one person an extra day to convert them to drawings.

They didn't take that route. They were fortunate to talk to Michael Axon of CAD Limited, who was able to do the same job much quicker, and cheaper, using laser based surveying equipment feeding data directly into a panel computer loaded with GiveMePower's SiteMaster software - which allowed

him to do the measurements and create the drawings on the spot - and then feed them directly back to McDonald's representatives the same day using Bluetooth based email technology.

The average time taken for each survey dropped to between 4 and 6 hours, and the data was even capable of being emailed back to Michael's office, fed into Nemetschek's Allplan 3D modelling software, to produce an accurate 3D model of the outlet within minutes of the completion of the survey!

This dramatic improvement in surveying time and cost came in spite of additional features within McDonald's that had to be included to assist firemen unravelling their hoses within the premises - 90% of the tables and chairs inside the public areas are bolted down.

Using CAD Limited's laser based equipment has another tremendous advantage. The surveying has to be done unobtrusively, without disturbing the punters - an impossible task if you are manipulating traditional surveying equipment and tripods around the congested floorspace. Hygiene comes into it as well, as the food preparation area has also to be covered. Michael was able to complete surveys of these areas without impinging on food preparation surfaces or falling into a vat of boiling liquid. The handheld Disto laser measuring device being used can also be mounted on a monopole, so that areas that are difficult to access - such as lofty roof spaces - could be scanned at will, and with ease.

The completed electronic drawings were emailed directly to McDonald's lawyers offices using Bluetooth, and despatched onwards to the planning departments of the local authorities.

SURVEYING EQUIPMENT

CAD Limited supply the equipment being used to conduct the surveys, whilst MATL undertake the on site surveying. The equipment being used comprises a Bluetooth enabled Disto from Leica, the only tool that provides both highly accurate laser measuring and wireless data transmission, and

which can communicate directly with the Skeye pad, a multifunctional Handheld PC, with a 206 MHz StrongArm microprocessor, 64MB RAM, 32 MB Flash and a touch-sensitive 8.4" DSTN-display - a device that bridges the gap between a PDA and Notebook.

The Skeye Pad runs GiveMePower's SiteMaster, developed by GiveMePower GmbH with the assistance of CAD Limited, which can convert the data from the laser measuring device to CAD drawings capable of being converted into full 3D rendered walkthroughs once transmitted back to the office - within minutes! Accompanying this is a range of ancillary equipment - such as the telescopic monopole that can extend the reach of the Disto to inaccessible spots.

The system is sold as a complete bundle, including the software - the LaZerCAD Bundle! An important thing to note about the software is that it will run, uniquely, on three separate platforms; Pocket PC, Windows CE and Windows XP. The equipment also includes flash memory cards to hold data, which can be used to load DWG data directly into Macintosh computers, even though they don't, currently, run GiveMePower software.

The system on the Skeye Pad will not just be collecting and using new survey data. Some McDonald's outlets already have electronic drawings relating to sites where refurbishments have taken place. These drawings can be pre-loaded and modified during the survey, and then emailed as up-to-date drawings.

A DIFFERENCE AT MCDONALD'S

McDonald's are obviously well in control of the situation - in spite of the incompetence shown by the Government in allowing such a chaotic situation to develop. The fact that CAD Limited will have to motor to cover all that it has to before the 6th of August is not the fault of the food chain.

The chain impressed Michael in other ways, as well. Like me, he had a knee-jerk reaction to the name, and was reluctant to enter, or to allow his

children to eat there.

Having seen how they operate at first hand he has changed his views entirely. First shock was the choice of food, evolving from limp burgers into a wide range of healthy foods, such as salads, fruit and a deli bar - his first choice for lunch during his strictly limited breaks.

The second shock was the utter emphasis on cleanliness - not just a swab down at the end of the day, but constant scrubbing, polishing and cleaning, and regular handwashing by the staff. The biggest impression, though came from the teamwork amongst the staff, symptomatic of the excellent working conditions, and illustrated by their persistent and unflinching politeness, helpfulness and cheerfulness at every location visited.

CONCLUSION

Time saved by using CAD Limited equipment or services: considerable. Money lost by missing the August 6th, and ultimately the 24th of November deadlines: also considerable. Opportunity for architects and surveyors to update their working practices and get stuck in to a real opportunity: undoubted! **CU**

CAD Limited - Epworth Branch
3 Fountain Court, Epworth, Doncaster,
DN9 1EG, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1427 873163 . Fax: +44
(0)1427 873491
E-mail: sales@cad.ltd.uk -
techsupport@cad.ltd.uk
Web: www.cad.ltd.co.uk
www.matl.net
www.lazercad.com

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