

Success stories - Barry Kok Architects

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– *Barry Kok*

Barry Kok Architects

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Design communicator

Information without context is useless unless there are appropriate processors of our modern existence to interpret and reveal the underlying core significance of the message. Architect Barry Kok nearly turned his back on what has become his greatest tool in communicating his imaginatively creative architectural concepts into functional structures.

When Revit Autodesk was launched in South Africa in 2002, Barry Kok was one of the first architects to introduce it into his design office. Within the same week, he was asking if he could return it.

Barry Kok laughs now as he recalls those events. "As a small business, I was one of the first to be able to see the huge potential of Revit as both an impressive design and presentation tool. I had many very unusual designs on the go at the time and, trying to extrapolate all that information within ACAD was making my drawings so complex even the engineer was battling to understand them. But suddenly with Revit in the office I found I had to redraw all my designs in Revit to be able to use them. I decided to cut my losses and just keep using ACAD as my work horse.

"That was until David Fryer of Cadplan convinced me to keep my Revit license but to go with the Revit Series version," said Barry. "It enabled me to share my drawings across both ACAD and Revit platforms, until I had found the confidence to start new projects in Revit. Working from this angle, I also found it helped me streamline my business strategy on how I executed projects within the office.

"The difference to my business productivity has been phenomenal - my concepts now make sense to everyone and if we change one view, all related views change. Gone are the days of forgetting to make changes and having contractors on site standing around while you try to fix it," recalls Barry. "Previously, if I had seven different projects on the go at the same time, I needed very patient clients and my money sat in the half built walls while I stressed over changing drawings. Now, not only am I allowed to be more creative in my designs, but

projects are completed in a third of the time, and the costly 'error factor' down the line has been removed."

Relaxing in his two storey home office in Parkview, Barry Kok could be described as creatively quirky. He is the first to admit that he puts out "strange work". In the past, his very different style and design concepts, while embodying amazingly creative and inspiring buildings often meant lots of unborn creations as ultimately they were difficult to communicate to the client for the necessary buy-in.

Barry explains: "Revit is a major advantage to me and my practice by helping me translate what exists in my head to the client. Many of my designs have never been experienced by the man in the street before and will never be completely understood unless they are shown as a model - in fact in the past, the only way I succeeded was to attempt to build a physical model. With Revit, I am now able to demonstrate to clients via Revit's 3D computer model, which is easily manipulated. Having the freedom to move the model around for the client while we discuss it together is amazing. Perhaps the single most important aspect of using Revit has been that relationship with the client, ultimately allowing me to continue to expand and develop very different types of designs for market."



In no matter of time

Running a private practice, Barry quickly learnt there was no room for production downtime.

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Barry's training ground was on Revit 6.1 when he first designed a Techno Centre in Khayelitsha - unfortunately never built because the client passed away.

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Working with a budget R4.5 million and 800 square metres of floor space, Barry used steel sheeting and framework, glass and concrete for the building consisting of ground plus two floors and with a large portion of the building being volume.

"The design concept was easy with Revit," explains Barry. "Within a day and half I had the building in its basic form. My first challenge was the curved forms. The building reflected a play between cubist forms and curved shapes. I intentionally married the two to create new and dynamic spaces on the interior. I didn't want people to be sitting within four walls and a ceiling when being exposed to new technology. Rather, I used insulated rhino board on the inside and cladding on the outside. The building then assumed a glass box which projected out of the building framework at the entrance, providing a friendly face to invite people in and allowing them to see the activity on the inside. In other areas I was scarce with windows to avoid glare within a computer environment, with the addition of perforated metal screens to shade the glass. Heat into the building was managed with a floating metal roof half way up the building that shaded the front from sun and rain. I also used three exterior panels on the administrative office, training room and stairs side which needed to be darker spaces. I had already built a physical model of the design, but I wanted to see if I could do these difficult forms in Revit. I did the initial design in Revit in a day and a half - today I could do it in three hours."

More currently Barry boasts of having the design of a six unit cluster scheme fully modeled in one day. "And believe me; I spend a lot less time convincing the clients about a design, gone are the misunderstandings of the past.

"Where Revit also really impressed me recently was with a coastal house design where I had a height restriction. I was over the height restriction on one section which I thought I could get away with. It turned out the council was adamant we had to change the roof. With Revit I found an easy solution, I simply turned the roof over 180 degrees so I had the inverted curved roof sitting on the glass curtain wall of the lounge. In ACAD the entire rework would have been a mission - with Revit it literally took one minute to swivel and invert the roof across all drawings; we created a jpeg of the revised design, emailed it to the client, and we got the go ahead right away."



Inspiration delivery

Barry says the reason he became an architect was simply because he wanted to build great buildings. "At one stage however I got disillusioned because people were not understanding

my ideas and what I wanted to achieve, so I started spending more time on industrial and furniture design. With Revit however, I am seeing people and the South African climate motivated by this change. As more people begin to understand my concepts, so they create an excitement - it has made me more committed to architecture once again."

"And the excitement level is definitely there," affirms Barry. "When I use Revit as a tool with a client for the first time and I take them on a walk through the internal space, the business man or home-owner is able to see the space as it actually and accurately exists, whether it's a view from a window, or his office layout. If he makes requests, I can make the changes in front of him.

"And for my part, Revit allows me to add the tricky detail, and it is no longer a battle to work it out... I now sleep at night."

Cadplan is the top accredited dealer of Autodesk Revit products in South Africa. A service-orientated technology partner, Cadplan provides service, sales, training and support to the architectural built industry on behalf of Autodesk South Africa. For further information contact Geraldine Ley on Tel: (011) 804 2425.