**Software frees quantity surveyors to add (yet more) value**

Enthusiasts are seeing improvements in software as a sign that the days of the quantity surveyor are numbered. Nothing could be further from the truth.

*By*
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Software has disrupted many industry sectors, from travel to insurance, and from retail to real estate. In each case, we were informed excitedly that the new technology would side-line humans. And yet estate agents, insurance brokers and even brick-and-mortar retail stores all still continue to grow.

More accurately, those that have embraced the new technology have gone on to flourish. When it comes to quantity surveying we are seeing something like the same dynamic unfolding. An added element is that the profession is poorly understood by other players in the public and private sectors. Too often, quantity surveyors are seen simply as providers of Bills of Quantities and drafters of tender documents. In reality, a quantity surveyor has a much broader and more valuable role to play, especially in these days of mega-projects, strict regulation and, of course, unremitting cost pressure.

It is true that intelligent software can help automate and improve some of the more routine elements of the quantity surveyor's job, such as measurement and the collation of documents. But to see the role of the software in this light only, or even to see it to some extent replacing a quantity surveyor, is to miss the point entirely. Rather, the software should be seen as providing quantity surveyors with the space to provide the services that have, over time, come to define their real contribution to any project.

This contribution includes the ability to determine the viability of a project from the outset, or to see the project holistically, in order to assist the owner to balance the architect's vision with the realities of meeting cost targets that will ensure that planned returns are realized. This contribution continues, not only during the actual construction phase but throughout the entire life cycle of the building. I always think of the quantity surveyor's role as one of creating a value proposition that extends from the design phase, through the construction phase and then ultimately throughout the life of the building management phase. Software alone, would be hard pressed to provide all these vital service solutions to clients.

In addition, the quantity surveyor is able to take the basic data and calculations produced by the software as the basis for exercising his or her judgement—not, as many would have one believe, to bypass it. Software cannot take into consideration many of the long-term questions that are of increasing importance to those who fund large projects, and those who will use them. For example, what are the benefits of spending more during the construction phase in order to reduce costs over the life of the project? How can certain needs such as air conditioning be met in a way that it is environmentally responsible without compromising operational efficiency—or commercial viability?

These, and similar questions, need the expert judgement of an experienced professional to resolve, not the wired-in certainties of a piece of software. By fulfilling this role, the quantity surveyor protects the interests of the client, including those who will use the finished product, and the broader community at large.