

Our prime focus is on interoperability



Gus Bergsma
vice president – RSO
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Gus Bergsma, vice president – Regional Sales Organization (RSO), Bentley Systems, Incorporated, previously co-founded RAM International Software Company, which primarily developed steel construction software tailor-made for the building sector. After 17 years of successful operation, the company was sold to Bentley Systems, Inc., where he assumed responsibility for sales of structural products for Bentley in North America. Today, as VP of Bentley's new RSO, he leads the teams responsible for regional sales, including a growing number of Bentley Channel Partners. In a free-wheeling chat, he discloses his action plans and the benefits of Bentley products for small and medium-size organizations as well as large enterprises.

Excerpts from the interview:

Q What is your take on the overall steel construction industry in India?

A The steel construction scenario in India is similar to that of Mexico's a few years ago. Organizations in Mexico worked with Bentley to introduce software into the workflows of their engineering teams that makes the design of steel buildings easier, faster, and more productive. Major efforts were needed to increase the market share of steel construction, which at the time was a mere five per cent of the entire construction industry. One of the main reasons for this disparity was the difference in the cost of labour and materials. In Mexico, steel was expensive and labour was not. To minimize the amount of steel required, they needed fully welded structures instead of those built with bolted members. In comparison, organizations in the U.S. were bolting structures together in the field and minimizing welds in structures as this was a more expensive procedure. The steel structures industry eventually optimized materials, but at the same time it optimized labour, and this drove down the overall cost of steel construction in America.

For the most part, steel is the most resilient to seismic activity. Since Mexico is highly prone to seismic events, the steel industry began to ship more of its product into the country. At the same time, more fabricators set up shop in Mexico and began competing against those designing and building concrete structures by showing owners the many different design options and advantages steel has to offer. Because they were using Bentley software for the steel designs, their output was fast and productive, and this gave the steel industry a huge advantage in Mexico. Today, a number of Mexico's monumental structures are built of steel due to optimized material and labour costs, as well as faster construction techniques. Basically, we are seeing reductions in the overall cost to construct steel structures.

We make software that provides multiple options through engineering calculations; quantity surveys; link with engineering drawings; work with detailing and CNC equipments. Basically, from a structural engineering model one can analyze design, link to drawings, shop-drawings, download data files for CNC drivers for fabrication, and these are the factors that make steel construction so competitive. Even though the cost of structural steel as a material could be significantly more than rebar and concrete, the speed of construction and

the ability of the engineer to optimize these designs – by looking at alternatives provided by Bentley products – will make the difference. Many markets have adopted these technologies and used them to drive new types of construction in building technology. I strongly believe that the Indian construction industry has started witnessing the changes and will follow suit in the coming years.

Q Could you brief us about the prime role of RSO?

A We divide our business into two types of accounts: large national and international corporate accounts, which would include large consultancies, municipalities, multidisciplinary engineering firms, and so on, and regional accounts, which include small or medium-size enterprises. As Bentley continued to expand its portfolio of software and services, we felt the need to establish an organization within the company that would be better able to focus on and serve, as a unified global team, small to medium-size existing accounts and prospective accounts. RSO is set up to reach out to more people in all the segments of the industry. We want to reach out to those organizations, determine what their needs, critical issues, and goals are, and then work with them to identify how our software and services can help address each of these.

Q According to you what will be the action plan of RSO in India?

A Bentley has been reaching out to small and medium-size enterprises in India and other parts of the world for quite some time. The goal with our new RSO is to better enable our inside sales, sales engineers, and Bentley Channel partners to further expand this outreach, using a unified approach, and to continue to build on our many successes to date. The regional software sales in India encompass about half of our entire product range, and we have been selling software to small and medium-size companies in the same ratio as corporate accounts. The bottom line is that we are successfully engaging small and medium-size companies in India who design, build, and operate infrastructure, and we want to add more people and channel partners to better support them.

Q In your new role what do you see as your biggest challenge?

A The biggest challenge to a sales team in an infrastructure software company is, of

course, to grow the business. Our goal is to reach out to more companies and potential users, identify their critical issues, and then determine which of our technologies and/or services can help them resolve those issues. And driving that forward with competition from all over the world is always challenging.

Q Which are the segments that you are focusing on an immediate basis in India?

A In India we do an enormous amount of business in software for structural engineering, and we are going to continue to serve our users with products such as STAADPro. However, we also have integrated technologies like ProSteel and Structural Modeler with STAADPro for the production of engineering drawings, documentation, and fabrication drawings. We will continue to work with our

foundation model through the integration with STAAD.Pro. Changes made in the STAAD.Pro model are tracked and can be merged automatically with the foundation model. Offerings like these that bring productivity up to the level it needs to be in today's competitive environment are sure to be identified by our users in India as value creative and, therefore, welcome additions to their portfolios.

Q How do Bentley's structural engineering products stand out vis-à-vis their competitors?

A We are focusing more on the interoperability and integrated model approach than our competitors. You might have a software program that can model a frame and analyze the frame, but we have one that can model and analyze the frame; design it in steel and concrete, and then compare the two; design the steel connections; design the foundation on

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STAADPro users and introduce them to ancillary products that can provide them with the integrated design of foundations, connections and drawings from a single model.

Q Do you think Indian companies are upgrading to newer technologies?

A In my experience in India, I have seen many organizations and infrastructure professionals that are quite open to newer, value creative technologies. Our Indian users appreciate new capabilities that can eliminate potential problems for them, save time, and make their jobs easier. Take, for example, Bentley's STAAD.foundation application. This offering has already created a lot of interest among our users in India, and I expect this to grow quickly as the software's benefits become more widely known. This is a comprehensive foundation design program that offers the ability to model complex or simple footings such as isolated footings, combined footings, strip footings, pile caps and mat foundations. It provides a streamlined workflow through its integration with STAAD.Pro and can also be used as a stand-alone program. Productivity is increased through the ability to utilize the structural model with the

which the frame sits; create drawings from that same data; and then integrate that data with a construction fabricator of rebar or steel and send it downstream. It is this degree of interoperability and integration that is the main differentiator of our products. With our products, you build a model and get drawings and BIM data from it for the same amount of effort that it takes to model a structure for structural analysis and design, which is a distinct advantage. At the end of the day, engineers produce calculations, drawings, and BIM data, and our job is not just to help them with the calculations part, but to also help them with the drawing part.

Q What are the medium to long-term plans of RSO?

A We want to reach out to the small and medium-size enterprises organizations around the globe, and introduce them to our comprehensive portfolio of technologies offering the capabilities they need to improve productivity and profitability. At the same time, we will continue to listen to and learn from them about their changing needs, so we can address any new issues in future software releases. ■