

The **Truth** about CAD Management

*The #1 skill you need to master, that you didn't learn
behind your CAD station!*



Paul Munford

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The Truth about CAD Management

The #1 skill you need to master to be a successful CAD Manager, that you didn't learn behind your CAD station!

Paul Munford
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The Truth about CAD Management



The CAD Setter Out is a blog dedicated to sharing tips and tricks for creating technical drawings using CAD.

I firmly believe that creating drawings with your CAD software should be intuitive and fun. I don't want your CAD software to negatively affect your creativity or productivity.

The focus is on creating shop drawings for the construction industry (because that's what I do) using AutoCAD and Autodesk Inventor (because that's what I use).

You are all welcome :D

*Paul Munford
@Cadsetterout*

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The Truth about CAD Management

Preface

In 2012 I gave up my job after 8 years as a drafter in the construction Industry. I packed up the family home and left London for a small market town on the South Coast of the UK.

Why?

To take on my dream job as a CAD manager of course!

But I was surprised. It was hard. I learned a lot. I learned it quickly. But the number one skill I am learning to develop has nothing to do with CAD...

This book is the result of my first two years experience and insight as a CAD manager.

I'm writing it for you because I want share these insights, in the hope that they will make your role as a CAD Manager less stressful and more productive.

My ambition is to help you to focus on the areas of your work that you really enjoy and (of course) those that add value to your company.

Questions or comments? Please email me:

Paul@Cadsetterout.com

Please feel free to pass this book onto a friend.



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CAD management, what's so hard about it?

I'll bet that you got to be the CAD Manager by being the best. The best drafter, the fastest drafter, the most knowledgeable about drawing specifically and CAD generally in your company.

Of course many of us are the de facto CAD Manager simply *because* of our knowledge and enthusiasm, without any of the perks!

So you've applied the same diligence to managing CAD at your company.

Your network is well maintained, your hardware runs smoothly. You persuaded your boss to buy your software on subscription - even your plotter rarely jams!

So why isn't it working?

Your 40 page CAD standard goes unread, people use the wrong templates, your custom tools are ignored or forgotten.

The problem here is not CAD management... *It's people management.*

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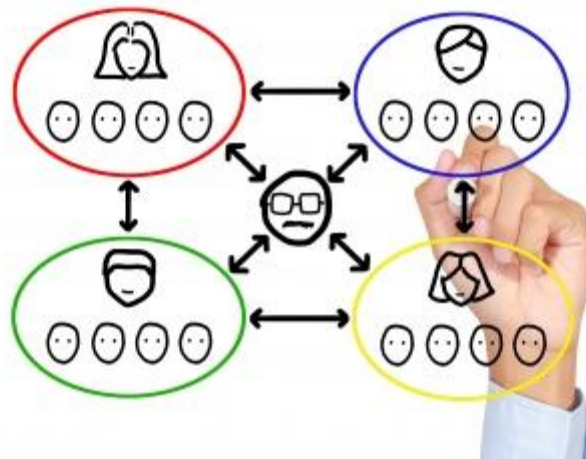


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Stuck in the middle with you

The CAD Manager's life isn't an easy one. The CAD department isn't a profit centre. Every time you go to your boss to get a budget approved you have to promise greater productivity in return.

You are constantly being squeezed between the people that use your drawings (and want drawings of the highest quality) and the people that pay for your drawings (and want drawings for the lowest cost).

Perhaps, even your drafting team don't appreciate you and don't give you the backup you need when the deadlines are looming and the quality of the output needs to be maintained.

We no longer live in a hierarchical society. We no longer have a 'rank' inside our company to help us enforce our decisions. Many of us work in matrix managed companies with multiple bosses demanding our time and energy.

The people that could make the biggest difference to our CAD management workload (Architects, Engineers, Project Managers) are not our direct reports.

Today's workplace is all about negotiation.

We can't tell people what to do, we have to ask. And even if we ask nicely, they might not listen!

Communication is key, and the key component of communication is *Trust*.

If people don't trust you and trust your motivation, they won't listen to your message. They won't do as you ask and they won't support your initiatives.

The number one lesson I've learned in my first two years as a CAD manager is that gaining trust has to be my priority if I want to make a difference.

Trust in me

'Some of your colleagues will trust you some of the time, and some of your colleagues will trust you all of the time, but you'll never have all of your colleagues trusting you all of the time!'

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Why trust is an important communication skill

Did you ever get the impression that someone wasn't listening to you? Perhaps what you said and what they heard aren't even similar?

Why is that person translating what you are saying into something else inside their heads?

This doesn't happen when you speak to your buddies. Or your Mum! So why does it happen at work?

The next time you have a conversation with someone *you don't trust*, try and observe your own behavior. Are you really listening to what they have to say? Or are you wondering what they really mean?

We all tell ourselves stories in our heads about the interactions that we have with people. When you don't trust someone you come away from a conversation with a story about what they really meant that makes sense to you.

Maybe you've come back few weeks later to find that you've both done what you *thought* you'd agreed, but neither party has done what was *actually needed*...

When people don't trust you they amended or add to your instructions inside their heads in order to come up with a set of instructions that make sense to them.

They will go away and tell themselves the story of your conversation until they believe it, and will then be downright affronted when you tell them that they misunderstood!

In order for people to listen to you carefully, understand your intent (not just your words) and follow your instructions, you need to cultivate trust.

'Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships'.

[Stephen Covey - Author of 'The seven habits of highly effective people'](#)



Image courtesy of Master isolated images FreeDigitalPhotos.net

What can you do to improve trust?

Creating an environment of trust isn't easy. It takes time and nurturing and there will be many slips along the way.

The sad truth is that you won't be trusted by everyone all the time. The conflicting pressures of CAD management mean that it's really hard not to let someone down at some point.

The trick is for them to trust that *you didn't mean to let them down*. You can build on that.

Walking the walk

The first step in creating an environment of trust is to demonstrate that *YOU are trustworthy.*

This hardest part of being a manager at every level is the fact that you are always being observed. People look to you to set an example of how to behave in your office.

It's tough, but you always have to be prepared to show that you can be trusted.

- Be dependable - *Do what you say you will do.*
- Make yourself available - *Volunteer to help.*
- Be open to change - *Be open to ideas from others.*
- No double standards - *No talking behind others backs.*

Remember that Trust isn't about being liked. Your colleagues don't have to like you, or agree with you in order to trust you.

'The toughest thing about the power of trust is that it's very difficult to build and very easy to destroy.

The essence of trust building is to emphasize the similarities between you and the customer'.

Thomas J. Watson - chairman and CEO of IBM 1914 – 1956

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Trust in your motivation

In order to trust in you, your colleagues need to *trust your motivation*.

Do you know anyone at work that walks the walk and talks the talk, but who is always schmoozing up to the boss for their next promotion?

You know what their motivation is, and it's at odds to their message. You simply don't trust that they will do what they say.

Let me ask you this - *what is your motivation as a CAD Manager? Why did you take the job on? What keeps you going? What do you need from others to succeed?*

Don't assume that everyone in your workplace knows the answers to these questions. Think it through, write it down, even print it off as your own little mission statement and put it on the wall by your desk.

It can be pretty simple - here's mine:

'To create the right environment for great CAD to happen'

(You can use it too if you want!)

Trust in their motivation?

Now that people understand where *you* are coming from, it's time to understand what motivates *them*.

Why not start with your boss?

What made them want to manage your company? What makes them come to work skipping and singing? What makes them leave work under a black cloud?

If you can answer these questions you can demonstrate mutual purpose. You can find areas that you both agree on and work on those to build trust.

Take the time to do this with all your colleagues, both direct and indirect reports.

You might find that the very fact that you took the time to ask what motivates them has a really positive effect on your working relationship - even if you don't find out anything new.

I'm so convinced in the power of asking questions, that I would even recommend that you approach your customers in the same way.

Don't simply ask what they want, find out what makes them happy - and take careful notes!



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Image courtesy of floating lemons FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Define your mutual goals

It's a simple thing to assume that you and your colleagues are all working toward the same goals. In fact it's a bad idea to assume anything!

Even if you produce your best ever work, if it isn't what your colleagues are expecting they will feel let down and you will lose their trust.

I highly recommend that you set yourself up for success by making sure that your mutual goals are clear, achievable and time bound.

Make sure that you set the expectation on milestones and reporting, so that the team will all know if the plan is on track, without having to chase each other.

Above all, make sure that you've discussed the alternatives. How will you know if the project is *not* on track? At what point will you call in the cavalry?

The fact that you are involved with an unsuccessful project needn't lead to loss of trust if you are still able to deliver on the agreed emergency action plan.

You can't do it by yourself

You remember that 40 page CAD standard sitting languishing on your desk? Why do you think that people won't use it?

It's not because you wrote it poorly, or because it doesn't make sense. It's because they don't trust you. And they don't trust you because you didn't involve them.

Now- I don't mean design by committee here. I do mean defining your motivation and asking questions.

For example. If you hold a meeting with your CAD team to talk about CAD standards, we know that you won't ever get them all to agree on so much as a line type.

But if you start the meeting by explaining your motivation:

'Guys, we are working waaay to hard here. We need to find a way of making this easier on ourselves. Would having some CAD standards help us to work more efficiently?'

You might start with a general agreement that CAD standards are a good thing!

By continuing to ask what kind of things *could* be standardized, you'll begin to get their buy in, without actually talking about what the standard should be.

When you finally present your standards to meet the action items from your previous meeting, you'll have their attention because it is a project that they are now involved in. And because they were involved in the creation of the standard - they will be far more likely to follow it.



Image courtesy of renjith krishnanFreeDigitalPhotos.net

Trust - CAD management skill number one

I hope that you've found this insight interesting and enlightening. I also hope that I've given you a few practical examples of how to gain trust with your colleagues in order to get stuff done!

Do you have a great example of how you've gained trust at work? Do you have any strategies that you'd like to share? Please visit the Web page I've set up just for this book and leave a comment:

<http://www.cadsetterout.com/truth-cad-managment/>

Was it worth it?

Thanks very much for reading 'The Truth About CAD Management'.

Please show me how much you enjoyed it by making a donation, whatever you think it's worth. Just click.



About the Author

Paul Munford is the CAD/CAM Manager for Halstock Cabinet Makers in the UK.

After studying Theatre Production Design at College, Paul worked as a freelance Scenery Design and Builder for eight years.



Working as an Art director on Pop Videos, Adverts, Television shows, and Feature films, Paul gained a wide range of experience in scenery design including Presentation work, Graphic design and Drafting (by hand).

In a parallel career, Paul worked on the shop floor in Exhibition and Events, working his way up (literally) from guy-that-unloads-the-van, through Carpenter to Charge hand to Workshop manger to Project Manager.

All of this came to a head in 2004 when (with Mortgage, Marriage and the family life beckoning) Paul gave up the la vida loca and decided that it was time to grow up and get a proper job.

Paul decided to focus on the one skill that brought all his diverse experience together (technical drawing) and went to night school to learn this 'CAD' thing he'd heard so much about.

Little appreciating how few people there are in the job market with the desirable combination of experience in making, technical drawing and computing, Paul walked into his first salaried CAD Drafting position a few months later - and stepped into a whole new life...

You can read more about Paul's experiences at Cadsetterout.com

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Resources

What's that? You haven't had enough! If you are hungry for more information about CAD management (including technology AND people) I can recommend the following resources.

Robert Green Author of 'Expert CAD management'

<http://www.cad-manager.com/>

Mark Kiker

<http://www.caddmanager.com/>

Autodesk University (May require a free sign in)

<http://au.autodesk.com/au-online/classes-on-demand/search?full-text=cad+management>

CAD Manger's Facebook group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/121983004486191/>

Autodesk CAD Management forums

<http://forums.autodesk.com/t5/CAD-Managers/bd-p/112>

AUGI CAD Management forums

<http://forums.augi.com/forumdisplay.php?32-CAD-Management>



From the day I first set foot in the Drawing Office I wanted to become a CAD Manager. Over the intervening eight years I thought that I prepared myself for the role pretty thoroughly...

But I was surprised. It was hard. I learned a lot. I learned it quickly, and the number one skill I am learning to develop has nothing to do with CAD...

