

Interview with Kristin Moore of DIRTT

Kristin Moore is an industry veteran. Like many of her colleagues at **DIRTT Environmental Solutions**, she previously worked with founder **Mogens Smed** at **SMED International** and later joined DIRTT when Mr. Smed created the company and developed breakthrough software to specify, order and display the walls and their designs.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3...

**ASID Announces Its Awards Winners**

The **American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)** announced the six recipients of the annual **ASID Awards**. The awards honor the lifetime achievements of individuals and companies in the field of interior design. Sustainability was a common theme among every award winner.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 8...

**From Technology into Reality: Integrated Project Delivery**

The march of progress and technology has impacted architecture and design significantly in the last decade. Technology has influenced human behavior on a massive scale, and revisiting how complicated construction projects are executed is becoming a topic for debate in the design community.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 11...

**ci design Formed by Former Cubellis Principals**

John Larsen, Richard Rankin and **Christopher Ladd**, former executives of **Cubellis**, the Boston-based architecture firm that closed in late 2009, announced the formation of **ci design Inc.**

FULL STORY ON PAGE 14...

**Hum! Cognition - Memory: A Blue Horse Wearing Glasses?**

We've all seen the TV infomercials advertising numerous ways to improve memory using video games, CDs and workbooks, etc. The solution to increasing a person's memory is simple, but it's not something achieved overnight.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 15...



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THING HAS BEEN
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RIGHT KIND
OF ADVERTISING."
—MARK TWAIN

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Interview with Kristin Moore of DIRTT

by Brad Powell

Kristin Moore is an industry veteran. Like many of her colleagues at **DIRTT Environmental Solutions**, she previously worked with founder **Mogens Smed** at **SMED International** and later joined DIRTT when Mr. Smed created the company, a manufacturer of modular walls, which also developed breakthrough software to specify, order and display the walls and their designs. The software is now sold and distributed through **ICE Edge Business Solutions**.



Beginning in the customer service area at SMED, Ms. Moore moved into the distribution side after **Haworth** acquired SMED and provided it with the opportunity to leverage its distribution on Haworth's more extensive network. She led the effort to get Haworth dealers to accept the construction side of the business for which SMED was known. This business now forms an important part of Haworth's Architectural Products Division.

Today, she is one of the small handful of people familiar with all aspects of DIRTT products and ICE software, including **ICE**, **ICEvision** and **ICEberg**.

OI: You are charged with building the dealer channel for DIRTT, right?

KM: Yes. Developing a dealer network was an easy task because Mogen's reputation precedes him; when people heard he was returning to the business on the wall side, we received a lot of calls and were well-positioned to enlist fantastic partners.

I approached this task somewhat differently than you might expect. There has been tension in many manufacturer-dealer relationships. I wanted to ensure that we were all pulling together. We ask a lot of our distribution partners, but they realize nice profits at all times, and we have created many tools that make their lives easier. None of the DIRTT dealers pay for ICE software.

OI: Who does pay for it?

KM: ICE data includes data on products from several manufacturers, such as Knoll, Allsteel and others; their dealerships license ICE. ICE may also be used in other industries.

OI: And DIRTТ dealers license the data for their other products.

KM: Yes, they would get a special price for the furniture data, and not pay for the DIRTТ wall data.

We do a lot of hands-on work with our distribution partners. Within each dealership, there is one person, a champion, who deals with our walls; typically there are also a project manager and certified interior technicians, people with a high level of knowledge of working with walls. Our larger distribution partners also have in-house installation crews, trained by us in Calgary.

We also have a large group of technicians to supervise installations, par-

ticularly for a dealership's first project. It's a two-step training process: training in Calgary and certification after an in-the-field installation supervised by DIRTТ technicians.

OI: How many dealers do you have?

KM: We have presently 112 DIRTТ dealers throughout North America, in every state and province, with additional distribution partners in Mexico City and Bermuda.

OI: And that is a mix of aligned and non-aligned dealerships?

KM: Yes, Allsteel, Knoll and Herman Miller constitute the biggest groups. More recently, we've had a number of Kimball dealers come on board and some general contractors.

OI: How profitable is selling walls, compared to furniture?

KM: Wall sales are very profitable, but their often a longer sell, especially if it's new construction where you're frequently involved even before the

We've put wall design back into the hands of the architects and designers.

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base building is built. It's not a harder sell, but it's a longer sell. When a distribution partner comes onboard I tell them to be prepared; it's going to take about a year to build momentum in your marketplace, and it's going to be busy for you because you're going to be out doing a ton of presentations and talking and educating about walls.

Our distribution partners have done a fantastic job of educating people, working closely with architects, designers, general contractors, brokers, real estate professionals, building owners. That's the first step.

OI: How enthusiastic are the dealerships about using ICE?

KM: I'd say 95-98% are very enthusiastic, but there is a small percentage where the design staff is not comfortable with the tool; that can lead to push-back. But all of our distribution partners do their own specifying and shop drawings.

The ICE technology can alleviate overhead for dealers because it enables them to specify quickly and accurately. Walls are harder to specify than panel systems. Historically, dealers had to rely on the wall manufacturer to do the specification. For example, at SMED International, we had a CAD department of forty people. With ICE, we only have two CAD people at DIRTТ, and the specification time is ten times faster.

The benefits are clear regarding the specification of our walls, but the same technology and savings can be applied to furniture specification. If you think about the economic times and what our distribution partners or any dealer is going through, the time and personnel savings are essential and can be achieved with a software tool that is intuitive and doesn't require a product expert; you just have to get the design intent down.

Draw a line and that's your wall, with all the parts and pieces and everything that you need. It's the same on the



DIRTT WALLS IN A PATIENT ROOM

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furniture side. With a system, just draw that 'I' line and everything is there. It really speeds up the time it takes to complete a layout.

OI: It is particularly interesting to see how the use of technology affects how people work, for example, reduced requirements of staff and the hassle of specification. What else?

KM: As I mentioned, you don't have to be a product expert to accurately and effectively specify with ICE technology. This is extremely important. Previously, the best specifier at a dealership was usually a senior person, someone with seven/ten years' experience. Now someone fresh out of college or design school can do that because of the intelligence built into ICE.

OI: You have general contractors distributing DIRT products?

KM: Yes. That's exciting. It's fun to see a big shift. When we began, we really wanted to get engaged with the GCs, which, traditionally, had been left out of the process by moveable wall manufacturers.

One of our earliest distribution partners, however, was Bonnets, a large general contractor in South Carolina we began working with in 2005. We've also done a lot of work with the subtrades. For example, we worked with **Mortensen** in Minneapolis on a smaller project, which immediately saw the benefits of using modular wall products. Mortensen now tries to include us on all their projects. We did its headquarters. Imagine, the largest purchaser of drywall in the State of Minnesota and has four floors of modular walls in its offices.

OI: Are you actively pursuing GCs?

KM: Yes, and it has been going pretty well, given the construction climate. Mid-sized firms realize that they have to be more strategic, and are looking for ways to become more competitive, yet deliver a quality building. For a construction bidder to remain cost-

competitive, yet still be able to deliver something that goes beyond the usual "typical," gives them an edge.

You have to be very aware of what's driving the project for the client, however. There's always going to be very vanilla projects where cost is the determining factor, and that may not be a project for us.

If, however, tax benefits are impor-

tant, there is an opportunity for DIRT. Education, of course, is key to changing behaviors. It has been very important to talk to the GCs and understand

their issues and take away some of their risk.

Managing people on a construction site, being able to

help hedge on the cost of materials are both very important concerns. For example, after **Hurricane Katrina** there

... the use of ICE technology dramatically collapses the whole project process, with related savings in time and cost



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was a 52% increase in materials cost that GCs had to deal with. But, with our modular walls, the price did not change; it hasn't in four years. That significantly reduces risk.

Another challenge is that cost or schedule overruns result in efforts to value-engineer the interiors. If we can provide a product and a service to help manage some of the costs and labor, avoid scheduling delays, and still deliver what the architect and designer envisioned, it's a win-win for everybody.

Of course, most projects we are involved with have a designer or architect as part of the client team. ICE is very helpful because it enables them to very quickly specify the space and create shop drawings, CAD drawings, and so on.

OI: Can GCs use ICE in connection with their bidding process?

KM: Absolutely. If a general contractor is a design-build firm, for example, and does its design in-house, we can definitely work with them on ICE.

And, as I indicated, we have a few GCs that are true distribution partners,

and the number of general contractors we work with as a sub-trade has grown exponentially. Other general contractors have trained their own and are doing the install.

[Image: Britannia Dermedics]

OI: Is the technology being used in the sales process, people sitting down with designers?

KM: I've seen meetings that some of our distribution partners have had with client groups, and it's interesting to see who is there. The teams have become much more dynamic, and the technology is definitely playing an important part. Often, the ICE specialist is there to show the "wow" factor immediately to the client, being able to display, at the click of a button, the design intent with the architect or designer sitting there.

One of the biggest things about ICE is that it enables our distribution partners to add value to the A & D community. But we've also had A & D firms that use ICE in-house, enabling them to work better collaboratively. Clients are demanding more for less and technology helps all of us, working

together, to deliver it.

OI: How does the A&D community access your technology?

KM: Any of our distribution partners can give an architect or designer collaborator access to ICE. We also call directly on the A & D community, and they are some of our biggest supporters.

OI: Why?

KM: We've put the power back in their hands. Too often, the wall sales experience has given the designer limited choices: these are the looks that you can have, pick one; these are the materials that you can use, pick one. There's your wall.

Now, designers can specify where they want their verticals and horizontals, how they want to structure their segments, as well as the materials they prefer. The result is their vision for the walls, not ours. That's what makes it so much fun to see DIRT walls in a project: every-one is totally different. There isn't one sort of look. The software enables architects and designers to do what they do so well.

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OI: At what point can something like this replace a mockup?

KM: It already has. Mockups are bad environmentally and economically.

Certainly the need for a mockup can be greatly reduced or eliminated when the technology enables designers and customers to instantly see a 3D graphic representation and fly through the space. Now, the renderings can be uploaded into ICEVision and taken to the next level of realism.

In a nutshell, the use of ICE technology dramatically collapses the whole project process, with related savings in time and cost, to say nothing of the wear-and-tear on professionals.

OI: How does this impact installation?

KM: Efficient and quick installa-

tion is a by-product of our design and engineering. Our products go up and break down very quickly because they are not parts and pieces. If you look at different wall types, there are demountable wall systems, and there are moveable wall systems.

OI: What's the difference?

KM: A demountable wall system is a step up from conventional construction, but still requires cutting things onsite and affixing things into the base building. Only 40-45% of materials are reusable, so there is a lot of debris, waste, and mess onsite. A moveable system such as DIRTT's walls has more of the product unitized, enabling a tilt-up construction for the interiors.

The timing for some of our installation case studies just blow expecta-

tations out of the water. When we develop our walls, we always have the technicians in mind. We are very sensitive to installation and other issues once the product is onsite. There is a minimal kit of parts and there are not thousands of small pieces to be assembled on site. ■

For more information, go to www.dirtt.net, www.ice-edge.com



MOCKUP

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMINAL

Ever wonder where the “mock” in mock-ups comes from? Could it be they mock us?

They certainly mock the environment. Their frivolous waste of energy and materials generally end up in the landfill after the competition (even the winners aren't spared). They mock the design team when the mock-ups all look the same because the manufacturers try to build them as cheaply as possible. They mock the client because that little demo invariably doesn't answer their big questions. And they mock the dealers and manufacturers because they have to pony up for them.

ICEvision
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