

Christine Broda:

SOUP TO NUTS ARCHITECTURE WITH DRAGON

“Architecture is like juggling hand grenades with a few pins removed,” architect Christine Broda observes with a laugh. “At any given time, I usually have three jobs in various stages of the design phase and three more under construction. I’m a single practitioner, so I have to do everything myself. I couldn’t keep up that pace without Dragon [NaturallySpeaking]. I do soup to nuts with it.”

Broda embarked on her architecture career during the days of ink drawings on mylar and vellum, but today she handles 3D design in the computer with Autodesk’s Revit software. “I’ve always embraced computers,” she says. “The computer lets me design with greater accuracy and knowledge. A lot more detail is required than in the past, thanks to changes in construction codes, contractor needs, and so forth. In addition, construction drawings are legal documents, so the inclusion of more detail lessens my potential legal liabilities.”

Dragon NaturallySpeaking integrates well with Revit, enabling Broda to simply speak her design details and notes. “I talk faster than I can type, so Dragon cuts my writing time in half, which allows me to include more information,” she explains. “I’ve seen drawings by other architects that have half the details I put in. A lot of what I do uses technical terms, but Dragon does a good job of picking up just about everything. If I say ‘half-inch,’ for example, it better come out right.”

She adds: “And by being more efficient and including more details, I save clients money because we can see and fix potential problems earlier in the process. It’s a lot easier to make a change in the computer than when a few guys are standing under a beam asking: ‘What do we do now?’ Eighty percent of construction costs are labor, so my clients can save a lot of money by ensuring those situations never happen.”

To get the big picture view while working on a design, Broda plugs her laptop into a 46-inch TV. “I can see the whole project at once, which lets me walk around and

dictate notes with my Bluetooth wireless headset,” she says. “And clients love it when they come by and see their buildings in 3D. Revit will even let me do a 3D walkthrough.”



Dragon Everywhere
Broda relies on Dragon beyond design work too, as part of her goal to put everything in the computer and cut down on paper cluttering her office. She dictates e-mails, memos, letters, meeting minutes,

proposals, and anything else that requires her to set down words, using Microsoft OneNote to keep all that information organized by project.

“Dragon works really well with OneNote,” Broda observes. “I put everything regarding clients in it: receipts, notes, meeting minutes, pictures, research materials, web site URLs, and so forth. Then I link things to Microsoft



NUANCE



DRAGON NATURALLY SPEAKING SUCCESS STORY

“I’m a **single practitioner**, so I have to do **everything** myself. I couldn’t keep up that pace without **Dragon** [NaturallySpeaking]. I do **soup to nuts** with it.”

Outlook and create calendar items and to-do lists, or I link them to Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and Microsoft Word documents.”

An architect’s information gathering needs never cease, so when she’s at job sites or traveling between them, Broda always carries her BlackBerry smartphone and its Dragon For E-Mail app in her pocket. “While driving, I often think of things I need to do for clients, such as follow-ups and to-do items,” she explains. “I dictate those things into my BlackBerry and email them to myself, so when I return to the office I can create task lists in Outlook.”

Broda notes that she used to have four people working for her, but Dragon has allowed her to become so efficient that she can handle the same volume of projects by herself. She notes: “A lot of other single practitioners I know don’t use computers for much beyond word processing or email, but the amount of detail required of architects is always increasing, and if they want to adhere to LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) standards for green buildings, they’ll need to do even more. Conforming to LEED standards means an even greater need for efficiency, not just in the materials we build with and the energy used in a building, but in the design, documentation and construction management processes too. Which brings me back to Dragon.”



NUANCE