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Modular interior construction - has its time arrived?

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How we build commercial interiors hasn't seen much change - innovation is slow to take place in the construction industry. The introduction of LEED has caused us to rethink our procurement strategies and decision making. And BIM is beginning to add technology to our processes - both valuable innovations.

Modular construction has been vying for a place in our industry for years. Exterior modular products and building components can be found in both commercial and residential projects around the world. But for interior construction, we are still building standard drywall the same way. And the landfills are filling up, despite LEED and waste management plans.

Perhaps IAQ will pave the way. Reducing VOC emitting materials has created a wide range of new "green" products and construction materials. However has it really gone far enough?

What have the Europeans learned about interior build out that we haven't? Using access floor as a technology platform (whether or not you incorporate under floor air), demountable walls, modular wiring, and wireless lighting controls, a range of products is currently available to assist with this transition.

But we are slow to change. Without mandated regulation, we want to do what's most cost effective. Can modular products really cost the same as conventional construction?

Currently, there are limited distribution channels for modular products. But alternatives are beginning to emerge, with interesting results. These avenues maintain the construction process, integrating these products in new and innovative ways. They can even compete with the cost of conventional construction. Maybe the time is now for modular interior construction to come into its own.

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