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The Big 5

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THE BIG 5

Driving the future

Set to open this month (November 26 to 29), the region's largest construction showcase has not only expanded in scope but is now a platform that is providing an insight into what is shaking up the construction industry today, highlighting the need for a technological disruption.

November 2018



The Big 5, the largest construction event in the Middle East, is out to demonstrate that it is a showcase for the full spectrum of the construction sector – from heavy construction equipment and concrete technology to HVACR and solar energy. Far more than that, it is now aiming at being the facilitator for technological disruption

The Big 5 2018 will shine the spotlight on technology.

in the industry with new concepts such as its Live Innovation Zone and Start-up City.

In line with its theme 'Shaping the Future of Construction', this time the focus is on technology and innovation as the mega construction event brings the products and services of some 2,500 exhibitors under one roof in Dubai, UAE, this month.

According to dmg events, the event organiser, the 39th edition will bring the most innovative solutions and latest technologies from around the world to the Dubai World Trade Centre from November 26 to 29.

Josine Heijmans, portfolio director at dmg events, says: "The construction sector is widely considered a late adopter of technology. The construction industry's investments in this field are still extremely low compared to other major industries. Yet, now more than ever, technology and innovation are crucial to remain competitive."

On November 26, the event's first FutureTech Construction Summit themed 'Empowering Innovation in the Construction Ecosystem' will be held.

Hosting speakers from Virgin Hyperloop One, Microsoft, Saudi Aramco, Faithful+Gould, ASGC, Aecom, Dubai Silicon Oasis Authority, Meraas and Mont Hill, the summit will discuss how construction professionals can achieve higher productivity, greater sustainability and enhanced affordability with the help of technology.

Herbert Fuchs, chief information officer at ASGC, and a panellist at the summit, explains: "Technology has a significant role to play in the transformation of the construction industry. While other industries are charging ahead quickly with innovation, the construction industry has been long overdue for a technological overhaul.

"The biggest hurdle to overcome isn't technology or a lack of ideas and innovation; the challenges are within the companies themselves."

According to Fuchs, construction companies that have significant investments in employees and equipment often fear change, as this latter could translate into job loss or insufficient profit margins in return for the high initial investments.



Middle East Concrete will feature workshops on the latest industry trends.

"The current sense of traditionalism must be addressed. My belief is that companies must take calculated risks in order to adopt a technology-savvy approach to business that keeps up with the digitalised world we are competing in. Changing culture may not be easy, but it is essential to keep abreast of changing times."

Looking at the future, Fuchs expects digital to change many business models in the industry while driving down cost, increasing productivity of labour and staff as well as improving utilisation of assets and equipment to a high degree.

"The technologies that are set to transform the construction industry echo those that are making an impact across all sectors at present, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), 3D scanning and printing, and so on," Fuchs adds.

Another speaker at the FutureTech Construction Summit, Prakash Senghani, Digital Project Delivery Lead Construction Services at Aecom agrees: "As an industry, we need to embrace technology and digital to counter some of the well-documented issues around health and safety, quality and productivity."

Digitisation of paper-based processes is the number one priority for Senghani today. "The inefficiencies inherent in moving paper around, the lack of real traceability and accountability, as well as the inability to query and analyse the data sitting in paper-based systems is a huge opportunity and one which is relatively straight forward," he explains.

Looking at the future, Senghani also expects a broader use of automation in construction. "The application of AI and machine learning to automate monotonous tasks as well as automation utilising robotics are both aspects that will change the way we design, manage, construct and operate assets in the built environment," he says.

Live Innovation Zone

The Big 5 2018 will also introduce the brand new Live Innovation Zone, hosting a selection of the most innovative products that are shaking up the construction industry today, along with The Big 5's Start-Up City, presenting the next construction tech disruptors.

Prominent industry experts from organisations of the calibre of Expo 2020, BuroHappold, and Aecom will select the most innovative products and start-ups to be hosted at The Big 5 this year, as part of the show's recently established advisory panel.

Senghani comments: "Disruption is happening all around us, in every industry, but the construction sector does not seem to be progressing as quickly even if we can see increased digitisation in our industry in countries such as the US.

“Start-ups with a focus on developing new tech-based solutions for the construction industry are therefore not only important, but vital: creative ideas and innovative approaches have the potential to change the industry for the better.”

According to Senghani, The Big 5's focus on start-ups is extremely important as “start-ups are lean and agile; they are generally more adept and willing to take on risks, which the incumbent, often large, organisations are not.”

He says: “Start-ups have a pivotal role to play in the digitisation of an industry that is in need of a technological shake-up.”

Start-up City

The Big 5 Start-up City will gather the next construction tech disruptors, a selection of rising stars that will soon make an impact in the field. In order to support these innovative entrepreneurs, The Big 5 will offer a prize to the most innovative start-up, which will be selected by a panel of judges through an exciting competition.

Visitors at The Big 5 2018 will also be able to discover new products and solutions presented at interactive live demonstrations. A permanent display of all the most innovative products at The Big 5 will also offer a glimpse of what is shaking up the construction industry today.

Heijmans says: “I am extremely proud of the new features we're bringing to The Big 5 to drive this much needed change. In 2018, the brightest ideas, minds and initiatives from around the globe will foster innovation and disruption of the status quo of the construction industry at the show.”

Karim Helal, co-founder and CEO of Protenders, Gold sponsor of The Big 5, comments: “The Big 5 has consistently been the must-attend construction event in the region because of the high calibre of construction expertise and networking opportunities it offers with international, regional and local companies all in one place.”

This year, over 2,500 construction companies will take part in the exhibition, clustered in five dedicated sectors: MEP services, Building Interiors and Finishes, Building Envelope and Special Construction, Construction Tools and Building Materials, and Construction Technology and Innovation.

Co-located with The Big 5 are The Big 5 Solar, Urban Design and Landscaping Expo, HVACR Expo, Middle East Concrete and The Big 5 Heavy, creating one mega construction event.

The event will host over 100 educational sessions, including free-to-attend CPD (Continuing Professional Development)-certified talks on architecture, BIM (building information modelling), project management and design, the 'How To Do Business in the UAE' Seminar in collaboration with Dubai South Business Park, and the first 'Women in Construction' Seminar and Awards.



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