

Avitru created SpecBuilder Cloud, a software as a service (SaaS) cloud platform, to integrate seamlessly with MasterSpec. SpecBuilder Cloud offers new and convenient ways for firms to interface with MasterSpec and helps firms develop project specifications more efficiently.

SaaS cloud platforms offer versatility and collaborative opportunities. These third-party cloud platforms also help minimize IT infrastructure costs, which is a major benefit sought by companies worldwide. Cloud platform solutions are becoming increasingly popular across a multitude of industries, and to make the most of these advantages, Avitru developed SpecBuilder Cloud.

In this document, we will explore the features of SpecBuilder Cloud, and the ways in which it enhances the MasterSpec user experience.

What Is a Cloud Platform?

A cloud platform allows free sharing of information among personnel, regardless of their location. Your home office and an international office can simultaneously view, edit, and reference the same online document and see changes in real time.

Security

In addition to convenience, a cloud platform also offers security. A document can be made available to an unlimited number of people given permission to access it, while remaining entirely secure and inaccessible to anyone not invited to collaborate on it. Only those invited to view or edit a document in the cloud may do so.

Cloud platforms also automatically and frequently save changes in the cloud. When you work within a cloud platform, you must access all of your projects via a web browser - nothing is ever saved directly to a computer's hard drive. No need to download an app or your files, and there is no risk of losing your progress or your files should your computer crash or be misplaced.

Cost Efficiency

Cloud platforms mitigate or altogether eliminate in-house IT infrastructure costs, which is a major benefit of cloud usage.

Rather than allocating resources for an IT department to develop and maintain an internal server structure, firms can instead rely upon a third party for the upkeep of the cloud service. This frees companies to focus on their products and services, not IT, and can also provide existing IT personnel with the bandwidth to explore and support other arenas.

SpecBuilder Cloud Overview

SpecBuilder Cloud shares the same benefits as other SaaS cloud platforms, with features such as real-time collaboration, drag-and-drop editing, and split screen. SpecBuilder Cloud's purpose is to enhance a user's MasterSpec experience and to help specifiers complete specifications faster and more accurately.

You can log in to or sign up for SpecBuilder Cloud by clicking [here](#), or you can go to avitru.com, and click on the "Log In" button at the top of the page.

SpecBuilder Cloud allows you to integrate your custom Office Masters or specifications from other CSI-compliant systems into SpecBuilder Cloud projects. SpecBuilder Cloud will automatically identify errors in the CSI formatting for you to address. The Project Wizard within SpecBuilder Cloud offers assistance with this process for first-time project builders, or you can simply create the project on your own.

Here is a brief summary of the four stages of project completion in SpecBuilder Cloud, which provide a myriad of ways to streamline projects:

- 1) *Setup* - At this stage, you assign a project to a firm, name the project, and provide roles (detailed below) to the project team members.
- 2) *Assembly* - SpecBuilder Cloud allows you and your team to search MasterSpec for the exact specifications needed to complete your project. You can itemize your project into sections with different people devoted to each of the sections.
- 3) *Editing* - When the project is assembled, you can open the project for review. You can start to edit some sections of the project while other sections are still being assembled.
- 4) *Publishing* - When a project is ready to be published, SpecBuilder Cloud automatically generates a customizable table of contents along with a complete project manual.

Organization

One of the core tenants of any successful cloud platform is organization. Defined roles for administrators and users, combined with intuitive structure, are key to success.

With that in mind, SpecBuilder Cloud classifies users into five roles: two within the **Firm** level and three within the **Project** level.

Firm

- 1) *Firm Administrators* - This role is at the top of the hierarchy. As a Firm Administrator, you can create projects, add Firm Users, promote Firm Users to Firm Administrators, and more. As a security measure, however, you cannot demote other Firm Administrators.

- 2) *Firm Users* - All Firm Administrators are Firm Users, but not all Firm Users are Firm Administrators. You can create projects as a Firm User, of which you are Project Administrator, and can also add other types of users to those projects.

Project

- 1) *Project Administrators* - If you are a Project Administrator, you are either a Firm User or a Firm Administrator presiding over a specific project; likely one that you created. You can edit the project, and you can also add or remove Project Specifiers and Project Reviewers.
- 2) *Project Specifiers* - A Project Specifier is the type of collaborative role that is so well suited to the cloud. As a Project Specifier, you are only focused on those projects assigned to you by the Project Administrator, and you have free reign to add to, edit, and publish projects.
- 3) *Project Reviewers* - Once a section of a project is deemed ready by its Specifiers and Administrators, "Review Mode" gives Project Reviewers access to the section. As a Project Reviewer, you can add comments to a section or completed project, but you cannot edit the text itself. Possible Project Reviewers may include those outside of your firm, such as manufacturer representatives or consultants.

Acting in any one of these roles on one project does not guarantee that will be your role on every project. SpecBuilder Cloud's Dashboard helps you keep track of your role in each of your projects, and to which firm each project belongs. In SpecBuilder Cloud, all of your projects are neatly organized in one place.

This clearly delineated user structure allows each project team member to precisely know his or her role in the project. In the cloud, users can simultaneously collaborate on the same document from different locations, and the roles defined within SpecBuilder Cloud inherently limit the risk of those users accidentally performing improper actions.

Information Sharing

This is perhaps the greatest benefit to any cloud-based solution: the ability to share information instantly with project team members, as well as any consultants.

As a Firm User, if you have a specialized need on a project, you can assign specific team members to that task as Project Specifiers or Project Reviewers. In doing so, you ensure that they only deal with the parts of the project that are relevant to them.

Putting the System to Work

Setup

As a Firm Administrator, you might create a new firm within SpecBuilder Cloud, or you may add another project to an existing firm. Using the “General Information” tab, you will fill in the basics about your project and assign roles to each member of your team.

Users in the “Setup” phase can also make decisions regarding the project defaults, such as the default units of measurement for the project. In this phase, you also select preferences for section formatting. This includes options like headers and footers, numbers, spacing, font, and colors.

Assembling

SpecBuilder Cloud interfaces with the MasterSpec package you have purchased for your firm. During assembly, all sections of your MasterSpec package, as well as many manufacturer basis of design documents, are available, so you can search for the document you need for your project. Select the sections that you require and bring in any sections from your other projects that may be useful.

When these sections are compiled, SpecBuilder Cloud will configure them into standard CSI format and will mark any and all deviations for you to address. This ensures that your specifications will conform to CSI formatting, and errors are not possible.

Editing

After assembling the project specification sections, you and your team can edit the raw sections to reflect the exact needs of your project. You can edit by simply deleting or adding new text. All changes will be color coded in the specification according to the selected color of the user who made them. For example, if text is removed by a user marked green, a green line appears to strike out the deleted text. Color-coded edits will remain visible unless the “Hide Changes” option is selected.

This editing feature is essential when working in a cloud space so that every user is aware of what other users are doing. If you choose to do so, you can show changes all the way through your project, and even publish with select editing notes visible.

There are also several tools designed to optimize editing in your project. They are listed as vertical tabs on the right-hand side of SpecBuilder Cloud.

- 1) *The Q&A System* - Working across as many sections as needed at any given time, SpecBuilder Cloud provides targeted questions designed to remove extraneous

specifications from the project. For instance, for a project involving steel joist framing, SpecBuilder Cloud will ask for the type of primer required for the joist. Once a Project Specifier inputs this information, all of the other primer types will be automatically eliminated from the document.

- 2) *Split Screen* - This function allows users to view different parts of a section at once. If you need to reference an item in Part 1 of a section while you edit Part 3, this tool makes it possible.
- 3) *Related Content* - Whether it's an Office Master, content from another project, or a specification imported from another system, this tool lets you drag and drop information from a previous specification into your current project.
- 4) *Tasks* - You can view your list of project action items in this tab. Like the Summary page and the Edit page, each task is hyperlinked to its location in the project. This redundancy increases the ease of access to the information you need to complete your tasks as efficiently as possible.
- 5) *Supporting Documents* - This tab houses all of the MasterSpec Supporting Documents you require for your project.
- 6) *Project Criteria* - This tab allows you to make changes across sections based on chosen criteria for the project, including sustainable certification requirements.

SpecBuilder Cloud helps editors make and track changes easily. It also makes information easily accessible to the editors who require it. Along with the tabs listed here, information on manufacturers and the sustainability of parts is also available via hyperlink within the project.

Reviewing

The relationship between the reviewing and editing process is fluid in SpecBuilder Cloud. You can easily transfer a project from "Edit Mode" to "Review Mode" and vice versa. However, as noted earlier, Project Reviewers can only see documents in Review Mode. They can add or answer comments, but they cannot make changes to the document itself. Feedback is often essential to a successful project. SpecBuilder Cloud makes giving feedback easy, and eliminates confusion about which topics are under review.

Multiple users can review a specification simultaneously, like every other step in SpecBuilder Cloud. The collaborative nature of SpecBuilder Cloud allows for a Project Reviewer to post a comment one moment and for a Project Specifier to see and address it the next moment. The result is a seamless collaboration among team members to deal with even the smallest details of a project quickly and precisely.

Project Summaries

At any point during the process of completing your SpecBuilder Cloud project, the Summary page is available. It lists the project participants and their roles within the project, and contains the "Project at a Glance" feature.

“Project at a Glance” has two tabs, “Editing” and “Review”. Any section with actionable items is listed under the appropriate tab. If there are Q&A notes on a section, they will be displayed here. Similarly, if a Project Reviewer leaves four comments on a section in “Review Mode,” then you will see that four comments have been added, and where in the project section they are located.

Publishing

In SpecBuilder Cloud, you can publish entire projects upon their completion, or publish individual sections. If you publish a single section, the title of the published document will be that of the section. Publishing more than one section will cause the generated document to bear the title of the entire project. When you publish a document, you have the option to export it as a PDF or a Microsoft Word document, or you can print it.

SpecBuilder Cloud allows you to structure the table of contents for your project however you choose. It also provides cover pages for sections, if you select that option. You can publish your project with notes included, whether they be editing notes, project notes, notes from a Project Reviewer, or Office Master notes. You also have the option to show deleted content.

If you are publishing a fully complete document created in SpecBuilder Cloud, you can hide all of these options and generate a clean, CSI-formatted project file.

A New Way to Interface with MasterSpec

The nature of the cloud platform brings project team members together and allows them to collaborate from anywhere, at any time. If they have access to a web browser, they can work within SpecBuilder Cloud. The features of this system minimize the time-consuming work involved in assembling, organizing, and consolidating your project, as well as any confusion that may arise during the editing and review phases of the project.

Combined with the cost benefit related to reducing or eliminating the need for IT infrastructure, across the board, SpecBuilder Cloud can help reduce stress on projects and increase project team efficiency and productivity.