

# Sean Manzanares

Senior Manager Business Strategy & Marketing

Autodesk

Sean Manzanares has worked for over five years at Autodesk helping them find the best talent on the planet. As Senior Manager of Business Strategy and Marketing for North America, he currently manages a team that includes members from North America, and recently managed a diverse team including teammates from Japan, South Korea, and China. His role, which is based in the U.S., also had him travelling to Asia three to four times per year until a few months into the pandemic.

His cultural background has helped make hiring diverse candidates a normal occurrence for Autodesk.

“As a person of color myself, I wanted to make sure that I had an inclusive look at who the candidates are, and are they able to bring their unique perspective to Autodesk,” said Manzanares. “I was fortunate to look into the different cultures and the different types of people that we have throughout the world at Autodesk.” His global perspective comes from working in sales at various companies for over 25 years.

“Earlier on in my career, I had an opportunity to take an international position in Singapore where I was a technical director of 13 countries in the Asia Pacific region. At the time, I came from America, and you have your North American blinders on a lot of different things,” admitted Manzanares. “That’s when I got my first grasp of diversity. I really was dropped into this situation where I traveled the entire Asia Pacific region. I did that for about two and a half years, and I loved it.”

Years later when Manzanares arrived at Autodesk, they looked at his Asia-Pacific experience and decided that

it fit what they needed. What was only a North American role expanded to include Asia-Pacific. Of course, Manzanares could not resist.

Autodesk has over 9,000 employees worldwide, with offices in Boston, Portland, Barcelona, Montreal, Dublin, Singapore, and many other cities. It is a company that is experiencing the fruits of inclusion, and for two years has been training hiring managers about cultural diversity. Manzanares felt right at home.

Autodesk got involved with MxD when Manzanares looked at a map of the United States and noticed a void in the company’s global community. “We have a big flagship headquarters in San Francisco, we have one in Boston, but we didn’t have anything in the middle of the country,” he recalled. “The Midwest is rich with manufacturing companies and talent. So as a member of the industry strategy team, part of my job is to work with partners and associations, and that’s how I researched MxD.” Now in their fourth year as an industry partner, Autodesk opened a 1,000-square-foot Generative Design Field Lab at MxD so that customers can see what their software can create.

In a strange way, Manzanares being the one to lead Autodesk to partner with MxD is a poetic coincidence.



He grew up in Broomfield, Colorado, the proud son of a blue-collar dad who prioritized the trades route over a traditional path to college.

“In high school, as a sophomore, I was into drafting on a board using T-squares, triangles and circle templates on vellum,” he recalled. “In 11th grade, I opted to go to Boulder TEC (Boulder Technical Education Center). So, I would spend the mornings in classes at high school, and then I would take a 30-minute bus ride to the TEC Center to spend the afternoon learning design and drafting skills and eventually I was introduced to CAD (computer-aided design) in 1983.”

The skills that he learned at Boulder TEC happened at just the right time in the evolution of CAD. The State of Colorado gave the technical school a grant that allowed them to install one of the first mainframe Computervision CADD4 systems in the U.S. He was learning a skill that was about to grow in demand for numerous industries that were relying on hand-drawings. “In 1984, I literally graduated on a Saturday and on Monday I started working in industry, making \$12 an hour doing CAD work at Ball Aerospace,” he said.

A portion of the credits he earned at Boulder TEC were transferable to Front Range Community College where he earned an associate degree in Mechanical Design Drafting while he was working as a CAD designer. In 1992, he made the jump over from the industries that use CAD software, to the companies making the software. That is where he has been ever since.

“People always ask me; do you regret not having a bachelor’s degree? And I reply, yes, I do,” said Manzanares. “However, after 25-plus years working in the software industry, a four-year degree may not have helped me sell software or taught me how to build relationships. Building a career path launched by a two-year trade school has helped me build a once-in-a-lifetime career, allowing me to work at and with some of the world’s best companies.”