

John Buck International (JBI)



The Situation

John Buck International (JBI) is a pioneering real estate services company in Abu Dhabi. It was the first organisation in the emirate to specialise in integrated commercial real estate development, leasing and management, offering clients an end-to-end fully tailored service portfolio, from the design stage to the handover and operation of the property.

The business was founded in 2007 as a joint venture between the Chicago-based John Buck Company and a branch of the regional business development and investment specialist Mubadala Development Company. From the start, its aim has been to deliver a fully integrated service solution combining the best of Facilities and Property Management practice.

JBI is committed to demonstrating the highest operational and safety standards, combined with full attention to customer satisfaction at every stage of the contract. Constant and interactive performance measurement is vital to the realisation of this vision. So when the company was building its own infrastructure to support service delivery of this quality, choosing the right enabling Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) platform was a priority.

The system would need to provide the framework for complete asset management, workflow and reporting requirements. And it would need to be the foundation for a best in class Help Desk, matching John Buck International's ideals for delivering highly responsive responses to work requests in the field, accessible to a team of remote engineers in real time, and replace the delays and shortcomings of traditional paper-based FM reporting with customised management reports that give the company an instant picture of its performance for every client.

In 2008, FSI's Concept™ 500 CAFM system was selected after an extensive evaluation process. "We took the decision primarily because of the good level of software support provided by FSI here in the UAE," explains Stephan Weber, director of Real Estate Services at JBI.

"This was a real advantage. Also, while we have a very good IT team on site, it was important that the software supplier could support us through the data importing process - which took some time. FSI had a very sound approach to the whole project."

The Challenge

The biggest challenge for the project team, according to Stephan, was acquiring data for sites that were still under construction, without which it would have been impossible to construct the PPM schedule that would define the Concept™ software implementation.

"Once we had got the data, it was relatively easy for FSI to import it into the system," he says, "But this was probably the first time such a project has been attempted on this scale, with this level of detailed data, in the UAE. It was really an educational process for everybody and we had to learn how to communicate the data in the right way."

Following this process, a range of KPIs were implemented in the system and linked through Concept™ to the company's Help Desk, enabling it to constantly steer them and monitor how effectively they were being adhered to. The system allocates a time for completion of a task once it has been raised by the Help Desk, and if this is not handled properly an alert is raised. It is then escalated internally - and subsequently, if need be, externally. "We employed a technician to work with FSI, and he became our internal knowledge centre for the software," says Stephan.

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“Part of the implementation process was to define how PPM is scheduled to support service delivery at our sites, and how the system generates reports. Also, our remote teams have PDA’s to interact with the system, so the devices had to be programmed and set up to work with Concept™ in the field. In all, implementation took six months to complete.

“The PDA is such a small device for a CAFM system of this scale and we had to educate the technicians in how to use them. Their feed back was used to customise the information to suit the device so that it could be fully interactive. There would be no sense in sending out 200 tasks to everybody on a Monday morning! The system allows us to be much more efficient in job allocation.”

The Benefits

Concept™ has initially supported Facilities and Property Management service delivery to six clients, including two major higher education building projects in Abu Dhabi: the - Zayed University, whose 28-building campus - “It’s like a small city!” says Stephan - is due to open in summer 2011; and the Paris-Sorbonne University in operation since September 2009.

“These sites are large and complex, covering hundreds of thousands of square metres,” says Stephan. “These universities are major PPP projects and that, in itself, means the generation of significant volumes of monthly and annual reports related to completion stages and service delivery.

“Concept™ 500 really structures the detail in the data, and that helps us tremendously in being able to generate reports for different parties - everyone from the developer to the financing banks. This scope in the system is very well handled. Ultimately, the data itself is always the same but all the individual report requirements are based on different objectives. The system is a tremendous benefit in helping us to meet them.”

Stephan says that since Concept™ went live, the routine and reactive maintenance elements of John Buck International’s services have been almost completely automated. Real-time report generation enables the company to react very quickly to any circumstance or eventuality. This has been a key benefit for the Help Desk.

“For the client, the Help Desk is just another number to call,” he says. “But for us, thanks to Concept™, the important information is locked in to the system. That makes it super-effective. It means that we can, at the end of the month, give our clients a good spread of the problems and issues that

have arisen, and how they were resolved. It also gives us a guideline to suggest changes for the future. None of this would be possible without the constant monitoring enabled by Concept™.”

The close relationship between John Buck International and FSI has also delivered benefits. FSI’s regional office is in Dubai – so as a supplier, it is practically on the doorstep when consultancy and support are required.

“That’s been very useful when there have been software glitches and for technical elements of the project, such as connecting the PDA’s to the system,” says Stephan. “We have a very constructive relationship and I think that is strengthened by the exchange of information. We’ve probably implemented Concept™ to a degree that nobody else has in the region, which means we can feed back our experiences in a very useful way and influence the development of the system.”

The Future

John Buck International is expecting to upgrade to Concept Evolution™ - FSI’s fully web-enabled platform - by the end of 2011.

“Our intention is to make the best possible use of the technology in relation to our understanding of our clients’ needs,” says Stephan.

“We want to make the most efficient use possible of every detail of the software to that end. Concept Evolution™ offers the potential for even more customisation: different fields for different types of user, for example.

“We’re also looking to create system champions who will have dedicated access to certain areas of the database for specific projects. It’s important that we can create hierarchical access without affecting the integrity of the database management, and I believe Concept Evolution™ will let us do that, structuring the data even better and providing enhanced accessibility.”

The new reporting facilities will also come into their own, reflecting John Buck International’s strategy of managing its data centrally and allowing different sites to generate and customise their own reports according to the differing requirements of clients. In other words, Concept™ will continue to provide a crucial element of a framework that allows the company to deliver its trademark complete service portfolio and meet its objectives of enhanced operational standards, the highest levels of safety and consistent customer satisfaction for its clients.

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