

Central intelligence

Compton Darlington, business development director of FSI (FM Solutions), believes that growing demand for efficiency and faster information makes the deployment of web-based CAFM a necessity for the modern business



Compton Darlington expects to see the power of the internet making itself felt in seamless, integrated CAFM solutions

IT in the workplace is commonplace.

Indeed, who can imagine a time without IT for the production, manipulation and storage of information, not to mention the methods to communicate and disseminate this business information? IT is integral to the strategy of an organisation, and understanding how IT aligns itself in an organisation is key to leveraging the maximum from these systems.

IT is an effective tool which allows organisations to stretch the normal lines of business with their customers, and to remove the boundaries between customer service and internal processes. Globally, you will find examples of organisations innovating to minimise costs while all the time offering an improved service to their customers.

The facilities management industry is no different, and CAFM systems have not only become the glue that binds an array of business information, but also provide an enhanced experience to the customer. The power of CAFM to provide exacting information as to how an organisation or service contract is performing is such that strategic business decisions and corporate strategies can be influenced based directly on this information.

CAFM has emerged as a core business tool, the result of which is an increase in the profile of FM in organisations, but in a supportive role rather than as an obtrusive practice. Business users have access to FM functions at the touch of a button or the click of a mouse.

Central to the CAFM system is the managed helpdesk, which gives both service providers and end users complete responsibility for performance management throughout their supply chain: contractors can be managed, tasks can be automatically allocated to relevant resources for action, customers can be kept informed of the progress of their tasks, and performance reports can be distributed to management, all the while with an audit trail for every process running in the background.

Customers and service providers should expect their CAFM system to work hard for them. The industry has evolved past the

deployment of systems at local level: CAFM should provide a joined-up view of FM in their organisation, regionally, nationally and globally, and CAFM should be deployable across boundaries and borders without any effect on performance.

A CAFM solution should not stand still, nor should it work in isolation: the best-of-breed business applications in use should be integrated to provide added value to customers and service providers. There is a need for business applications to not just sit in isolation, but to work together seamlessly with other products. From the space-planning system for floor plans and hot-desking availability to the finance package for invoicing and beyond, business applications should be integrated with the CAFM system to provide true interoperability. A CAFM solution cannot just be a good product in its own right.

WEB-BASED CAFM

We are all living in a virtual yet joined-up world, which can sometimes make us lose sight of the planning and processes involved to make things happen. Whether we like it or not, this seamless integration of products is here and should therefore not be seen as a nice-to-have, but instead the expected norm.

For a truly centralised CAFM deployment, however, look no further than a web-based CAFM solution. FM can be extended across borders, providing a single, integrated view



Developments in web-based IT and CAFM solutions will allow FMs to fully utilise the power of the internet, the result of which will be improved building efficiency

of activities across an entire portfolio, accessed through a single, standard web browser. By leveraging the web, web-based CAFM solutions make critical operational data available on demand to users wherever they are based.

Web-based CAFM solutions open the doors for easier, lower-cost IT maintenance, not to mention the consolidation of system infrastructure, thereby reducing expenditure costs. Web-based CAFM solutions enable the transfer of critical operations to other global locations without being dependent on significant staffing from that location.

To further reduce IT expenditure and maintenance costs, organisations can choose the outsourcing or software as a service (SAAS) route. SAAS is a software distribution model allowing organisations to fully utilise IT products without disruption to day-to-day operations, while maintaining control of FM costs.

Typically, IT products are hosted over the web by an application service provider in a secure environment, accessible by the end users back at base.

SAAS removes the need to install and run these IT products on networks at base, therefore removing software maintenance, ongoing operation and support resources, and the need for capital investment in server hardware. In summary, SAAS provides a simple pay-as-you-go solution offering a cost-effective delivery of IT products.

Web-based solutions and the SAAS model lend weight to the increase in demand for

FURTHER INFORMATION

FSI (FM Solutions) is the developer of the Concept Evolution fully web-enabled CAFM solution, used by organisations of every size around the world.

www.fsi.co.uk

remote working. Mobile data solutions connect field engineers to the core of the business via a mobile device. Engineers can spend less time in the office and more time in the field completing essential tasks, while keeping IT products back at base up to date, regardless of location.

In the 21st century the power of the web is much more than sending e-mails, chatting to 'friends' on social networking sites and performing web searches. Developments in web-based IT and CAFM solutions will allow FM professionals to fully utilise the power of the internet, the result of which will be an improvement in building efficiency and faster delivery of information.

The more we have, the more we will want: modern working practices will dictate that greater efficiencies and improved productivity, delivered instantly over the web, will soon become de facto practice **FMX**