

Dubai Airport Freezone



Background

Established in 1996 in the vicinity of Dubai International Airport, Dubai Airport Freezone is one of the fastest growing commercial hub and the gateway for a large number of major international companies and investors seeking business opportunity in the Middle East, Asian sub-continent, Africa and Europe.

Located uniquely adjacent to Dubai International Airport, the Freezone has become an attractive platform with all the benefits of access to a network of 90 airlines serving 136 destinations around the globe.

It provides a comprehensive range of import and export facilities for its tenants, including cargo and storage services, logistical support, security, housekeeping and buildings maintenance.

This complex estate, which includes commercial office buildings as well as warehouses, is home to a rich asset register of more than 20,000 items: an HVAC system, six chillers, 9,000 tons, not to mention electrical distribution boards and pumps, each one vital in maintaining an air-conditioned environment for the tenants and their goods.

By 2010, DAFZA's infrastructure was so advanced that it decided to embark on an automated facilities management strategy to streamline and automate its processes, and integrate them with its core business systems and database. After studying the CAFM market in detail, it put the project out to tender and chose FSI's Concept Evolution™ as the platform most closely aligned with its objectives.

"The integration capability of the system was a critical factor for us," says Faisal AbdulRahim Al Belooshi, Director, Interiors and Facilities Management at DAFZA. "We already had our own tenants' portal (Tas'heel), which translates as 'facilitate', as well as two BMS systems (Siemens and TAC), Oracle Financials and Active Directory.

We got to make sure that the CAFM system would integrate with all of them – and deliver the functionality we were looking for – quickly. On that basis, we decided that Concept Evolution™ was the most suitable platform for us as a commercial organisation."

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The Challenge

The timeline for the project, which began in October 2010, was tight. It was scheduled to go live by February 2011, giving FSI just 150 days to meet the challenges of integration and service delivery. In addition, processes for key and tenant management had to be identified and incorporated in the system, and the 20,000 assets had to be surveyed and bar-coded – a task that was outsourced to local facilities management service provider Mace Macro.

“Our biggest challenge was to minimise the risk of co-ordinating between two people – DAFZA and FSI – in scoping the project,” says Faisal. “We did this by focusing on two main elements: the asset register and the software.”

Clear communication was essential when it came to surveying the buildings, tagging the assets and giving access to the contractors for input, to make sure that the system was accurately populated and reflected everyone’s requirements in terms of KPIs, transparency and automation.

“The relationship between the different parties involved was an important factor,” says Faisal. “We had to make sure there was a close relationship so that any obstacles could be solved easily and there was complete clarity about the asset tagging. Flexibility and collaboration were more important to achieving our target than contractual matters. Implementing such a system is a big task because there are so many features to be established.”

“The aim was to have one source of record for all the data,” says Faisal. “We have a facilities management team of just 20 people, who are responsible for supervising and managing contractors – and we use KPIs to help monitor the contractors’ performance and response to customer helpdesk calls.”

“We wanted our CAFM system to shorten the whole process but in order to do that, it had to incorporate a lot of activities, including stores maintenance – which is vital in terms of managing inventory and authorising the release of material – a database to register and document all corrective and planned maintenance for every asset, and an easy way to reference jobs and assets so that when we receive any request from a customer, we can see the history at a glance. In fact, the goal was to have a summary of all the major assets on the system in time for going live.”

The Benefits

One of the most important post-implementation benefits is DAFZA’s ability to serve customers better, particularly when it comes to responding quickly to queries and complaints.

“Concept Evolution™ makes it easy to identify issues as they arise,” says Faisal. “For example, if a tenant is dissatisfied, we can instantly see the history of a job. Requests for materials can be raised faster, and overall the reports generated by the system are accurate compared with our previous manual process.”

The help desk runs more efficiently thanks to automation and the underlying workflow technology, which integrates Concept™ with DAFZA’s core business systems.

Contractors also benefit from having access to a system that contains the history of the equipment they are charged with maintaining and repairing, and are no longer reliant on manually completed paper files for information that might previously have been incomplete.

“The KPIs specified in the system help us to make sure a contractor is achieving a certain level of service,” says Faisal. “We can see instantly how they are performing. We make sure that they are properly trained in the system – a service that we provide ourselves.”

“Previously, requests were sent out manually in response to a call to the help desk. Now, the help desk simply enters the customer or tenant’s request and it is automatically assigned to the contractor.”

Faisal says that based on this experience, the key to a successful CAFM system project is to analyse the precise needs of the business before you start. The project must also be scheduled properly so that the system can be commissioned in a well-planned and realistic manner. And it’s important that the people assigned to the project management team have the tools to ensure that all the goals are realised on time.

He says the good working relationship between FSI and DAFZA was also essential in helping to overcome the challenges of the project.

“They gave us the support and information we need to get the most out of the system,” says Faisal. “They were with us all the way, and were particularly impressive in their ability to work with other system vendors on integration: they bring a lot of knowledge and experience to the table.”

“This is just the beginning for us. It will take a few years of us working with Concept Evolution™ day by day to realise what else we can do with the system.”

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