

As far as the staff is concerned, seeing new faces, interacting with multinationals, understanding requirements of various situations, planning activities, appropriate execution, quick response, reviewing the actions, and enforcing corrective measures must be spontaneous and self-energised.



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←
Spanner in the works
Melding the IT and FM departments

ROBERT STRINGER

Working for IT? The clash of FM and IT services



Introducing a successful CMMS/CAFM software solution may mean that IT doesn't get it all their way. Despite FMs being the experts in their field, many IT departments believe they know better. When purchasing and implementing a facilities and maintenance management solution you would expect IT to support FM, but this seems to be rarely the case. All too often, the IT team has its own criteria when choosing a software provider that has very little to do with what it will deliver for the operational FM.

FMs have very specific requirements and there are very specific pieces of software that have evolved to meet these requirements. Many ERP solutions can be developed to include some of the requirements of FM but there are drawbacks to this approach.

Modifications will undoubtedly take a great deal of time and rarely deliver the full functionality of a best-of-breed solution; ad-

ditionally maintaining what is essentially a bespoke system has overheads which are often not properly considered. Best-of-breed CAFM solutions are constantly evolving to encompass new deployments in the industry as well as following best practice. Users generally receive the benefits of enhancements made for the supplier's other clients as well as enhancements made to meet legislation or the demands of user group forums.

Simply emulating existing procedures or trying to replace paper or Excel workbooks with electronic forms in an extension to an ERP solution ultimately offers little benefit and will leave the FM team frustrated. Likewise, investing in the most expensive or complex solution can be flawed if requirements are not addressed. Investing in a household name may be the easy option, but this often demonstrates a lack of a real understanding of the requirements.

With the fast pace of technological advancement, the expectations of FMs and the end client are advancing. FM departments simply would not be able to meet customer expectations without the involvement of IT. Web deployment, mobile solutions and integration with other business solutions pose challenges requiring IT input and expertise.

The current trend towards the use of cloud-based solutions can place further emphasis on the reluctance of IT departments to be engaged. When there is no hardware, software or databases to manage, IT could rightly be concerned about the need to provide resources to manage the solution.

There are many arguments for and against cloud-based solutions and these, together

with the ERP debate, should be established at the start of any procurement process.

In any case, the arguments from IT need to be rational and business-based, not protectionist. Engaging with IT to help with delivery of a comprehensive CMMS/CAFM solution is a must. CAFM now touches all areas of a business and must be fully integrated to ensure maximum benefit for its users and the business as a whole. IT needs to take a holistic view of the business and understand the unique requirements of various business elements, and offer solutions.

Many IT departments fear bringing in a solution they do not fully understand or one that does not secure the future of in-house resources. However, winning the hearts and mind of IT departments at the procurement stage of an implementation is essential in the success of a project. Not engaging with IT, or being dictated to by IT when implementing an FM solution will undoubtedly be a costly and time-consuming mistake that many businesses can ill afford to make. With the continuous drive for efficiency, implementing an unworkable solution that suits the IT department but not FM, or the business as a whole, is simply flawed. ■



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