

A helping hand:

How CAFM software is helping businesses take charge of their operations

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Multi-tasking will be a familiar skill of every facilities manager across the country. Yet given today's fast-paced and cost-conscious world, the FM landscape has changed rapidly with technology now integral to keeping business moving. One pair of hands is no longer enough. So how are CAFM systems really making a difference behind-the-scenes?

CAFM in practice

In today's workplace, facilities managers (FM) are a crucial link in the chain, playing a pivotal role in overseeing the 'silent' services and processes that work behind-the-scenes to keep organisations functioning. From hotels and hospitals to sports arenas, universities and logistics centres, FMs have wide ranging responsibilities that can span building and grounds maintenance, catering, health and safety, space planning, and procurement.

The role is often set against a challenging backdrop as businesses regularly look to review facilities expenditure, without wanting to compromise on quality. Of course, the task also becomes even more demanding when organisations have sites across multiple locations and countries.

This growing list of responsibilities and pressures is why many businesses turn to technology – specifically Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) software – to optimise the performance of the facilities function and help FMs do their job more effectively.

So how does it work in practice?

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CAFM solutions are used to manage and consolidate information across all aspects of facilities management. By having all the information about an estate in one place, facilities professionals are in a better position to make quicker, more informed decisions, as well as being able to be proactive when it comes to maintenance planning.

However, CAFM is more than just a planning tool. From providing data intelligence to define the right staffing levels, to optimising the performance of an organisation's assets, the use of CAFM can revolutionise how a facilities team works.

The last decade in particular has seen a significant development in the provision of CAFM. A constantly evolving set of requirements has seen suppliers create CAFM systems that combine multiple business functions – from property management and asset tracking, to help desk and compliance functionality. Of course, every business will have different needs and requirements, and an intelligent CAFM system will flex to those needs.

However, what real value will you get from it and how will it help you do your job more effectively? Here's a rundown of the five key benefits you can expect from a CAFM solution.

Improved planning

A CAFM solution provides a simple, efficient and reliable way to manage both reactive and planned maintenance across the entire facilities estate. The help desk functionality gives FMs complete visibility, and because all the information is in one place, it allows teams to make more informed decisions about resources and service contracts. It's also likely to create efficiencies by preventing spend on assets that are still under warranty and identifying potential cost effective replacement strategies.

You can expect to have a tighter grip on compliance and statutory regulations too. Automated alerts, reminders and live reports ensure key statutory maintenance is not missed as well as providing an absolute audit trail on all activities.

CAFM solutions will enable businesses to combine asset information with work plans and schedules. Reminders and automatic emails are sent when required, and the solution will provide a better resource scheduling process to ensure the right skills are available at the right time. Trend analysis on tasks such as meter readings also provide businesses with the data intelligence needed to make more informed decisions.

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Better visibility

If you are not currently using CAFM, it is likely that you are turning to different systems, manual processes and spreadsheets to help you keep on track of all facilities responsibilities and budgets. This is likely to become a bigger drain on time and money as your estate grows, or as you take on additional responsibilities and staff.

By using CAFM systems, FMs immediately gain better visibility of all facilities tasks, contractors or service providers, associated costs and assets from one central point.

The performance of contractors can be regularly monitored through live reporting on a dashboard against service level agreements and key performance indicators. This allows FMs to identify necessary adjustment of the service, and also provides data for any penalties for non-performance or rewards for exceptional performance.

Cost control functionality enables facilities professionals to easily track spend and gain a transparent view of the entire facilities expenditure. Invoices can be easily matched against specific purchase orders, with the ability to schedule financial reports quickly and easily.

As all facilities information is stored in one place, the task of managing stock levels will also become a far easier process. CAFM solutions give businesses better visibility of stock, providing real-time analysis of quantity and value, as well as the ability to trigger automatic reordering when required.

Teams can record every detail relating to stock, including preferred supplier, last supplier, last price paid, bin location, reorder quantity, restock level and part number. Stock control can even be integrated with the help desk, meaning items can be immediately allocated to planned and reactive work orders to save time and improve efficiency.

With improved visibility of the entire facilities estate, a CAFM solution will also provide more efficient asset tracking. It offers the capability to record, move and manage all asset data in a simple asset register, or as a tool to link with external asset data.

Easy integration

The ability to integrate CAFM systems into the wider business is key to ensuring a single-source of truth, simpler processes and the avoidance of duplicate data entry. For this reason, every CAFM solution should let you integrate various business functions within the same software.

This can be extremely useful when it comes to room booking functionality, and will give businesses a far more efficient booking process.

It will allow staff to generate and track unique booking references, check real-time availability to eliminate double bookings, create automatic work order tasks associated with each booking and allocate the correct booking charges. FMs will be able to identify which types of meeting facilities are most popular, what days and times are the busiest and which departments are using the rooms the most.

This enables the facilities team to optimise meeting room provision and provides data for future expansion or reduction. You can even manage and book car parking spaces with standard booking reports providing vital information to reception and security staff.

Improved utilisation of limited Space resources

FMs are under increasing pressure to provide far greater optimisation of space, but with limited resources. Efficient space management within a building can have a huge impact on income to the building owner, or can be a massive cost burden to the occupier. A good CAFM solution will help in both situations.

Facilities teams will be able to use familiar AutoCAD tools to detail and manage space allocation, as well as being able to seamlessly track and report on occupied and vacant space. CAFM functionality will also enable two-way communication between facilities drawings and the database, speeding up the planning process by generating drawings for space planners to plot scenarios.

Most importantly, FMs have the ability to set up their database to charge departments for the space occupied, providing businesses with a more seamless way to maintain tighter control over income.

Access anytime, from anywhere

FMs rarely spend the day in front of a screen and the ability to access all the information on the move is essential. Any CAFM solution should have an intuitive web-based interface giving access to key information and reports from any web-enabled device. This also avoids the need for expensive investment in hardware.

For end users, a simple, easy-to-use interface is essential to ensure they take advantage of new technology, significantly reducing admin time and providing better information leading to an improved user experience.

Engineers are always on the move too and the benefits of having instant access from a mobile device are huge. You can provide them with risk and hazard alerts, signature capture for sign-offs to ensure no one performs high risk work without full information, as well as optimising key workers' time meaning projects become more efficient. With CAFM, engineers also have access to all the information associated with a particular asset, such as previous maintenance, associated tasks, future works, O&M manuals, meter readings and more.

With requirements constantly changing as businesses evolve, CAFM systems provide FMs with the flexibility they need to manage and operate an ever-changing facilities portfolio to best effect. Most importantly, reliable CAFM technology is like an extra pair of hands – taking the pressure off the facilities department, while helping to manage, mitigate and assess risks as soon as they arise.

Without the use of such technology, businesses are likely to be missing out on crucial intelligence that ultimately could be saving them money, delivering efficiencies and improving service delivery across the entire estate.





Interested in finding out more?

Idox is committed to user-centered innovation and the design of software solutions that empower managers to do more. All Idox solutions are built around best practice industry processes and insight from independent user groups. Our robust and versatile software is used by government, critical infrastructure, international corporations and small businesses around the world.

For further information on CAFM Explorer® and how it could help your business, please email marketing@idoxgroup.com

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