



FMJ has a recognised role to play in supporting technical expertise in the FM market.

As part of this, we offer FASTFacts — a series of specialist summaries that give no-nonsense information on topics of importance with signposting to further sources for the expert reader. **Mark Purnell**, director, ComplyNY, discusses technology and its role in FM's battle to be compliant, and things to consider when selecting what technology's right for you.

## THE TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION

Technology in all its diverse forms is a fundamental and irresistible feature of everyone's working and social lives today. It opens up a whole new world of opportunities for those who are prepared to embrace it and are able to focus its revolutionary capabilities to enhance their modus operandi.

It is also evolving exponentially at breakneck speed, which in itself presents potential problems. Will today's innovation become obsolete in a few months as the next generation product is released? Nobody wants to be stuck with a Betamax solution when VHS is just around the corner. Also, price mechanisms are being driven down very significantly as the market matures and jumping too early can be very costly in the longer term. So, take your time and don't be seduced by polished sales devices.

## ONE SIZE FITS ALL

A further challenge faced by FM's in settling on the best technology for their particular purposes is the sheer choice of today's CAFM products which all purport to be the Holy Grail solution and the panacea to all FM ills. However, there is currently no "one size fits all" system and great care should be taken to select the product which truly meets with your operational requirements.

Don't lumber your organisation and staff with an over-engineered leviathan which does 1,001 things you don't really need and doesn't actually do the smaller number of things you do need in the way that you would choose. Keep it simple. Make sure that your FM technology works for you, your team and your client and not the other way round. Selecting the wrong system can very easily and quickly lead to terminal disaffection amongst the operational team upon whom its success, or failure, critically depends. Consultation is key.

## THE WEB

The internet is thriving and will be the facilitator for incredible technological advances for many, many years to come. I would recommend that any new CAFM product must

be web based and that desktop systems simply do not enable the speed, power and interactivity of their next generation internet usurpers. Many CAFM developers are releasing web versions of their established products, although a number are still surprisingly sticking to the old "in the box" technologies, perhaps due to a lack of available investment or simply restricted commercial foresight. Nevertheless, desktop solutions are the 2010 Betamax equivalents: yesterday's news!

## COMPLIANCE

Compliance is a major and ever changing challenge in today's FM world - whether it is technical and statutory governances, contractual obligations, KPI's and SLA's, International Standards or simply client specific requirements. Technology has the clear potential to help steer FM's through the minefield of these critical issues and ensure that services are managed and delivered to optimum, compliant effect. Essentially, this should take the form of a flexible process mapping capability which allows users to set out their own compliance pathways to meet their particular needs for any given client or contract.

## LEGACY TRANSITION

Another significant consideration in selecting your new FM technology, lies in the problems which might be experienced in transitioning data, and indeed working practices, from a legacy system to a fresh solution. This very often presents a major psychological barrier to change and I am aware of a number of corporate organisations who are not particularly enamoured of their old CAFM technologies, but who are reluctant to adopt new systems due to perceived problems with the security and integrity of the legacy data and the potential for damaging hiccups in transition.

Some of the established CAFM products actually rely on this indolence to maintain their market share. Your chosen technology partner should, however, be able to guide you reasonably effortlessly through this process of

change with the minimum of disruption. It's all in the planning. The interfaces are available, or can be refined, to transfer data between any systems. That's not the problem. Communication and consultation between the various parties - before, during and after the changeover - is paramount to the success of transition. This can be a bit long-winded, but the end product and improvements realised will be well worth the effort (*assuming that the most appropriate system has been selected*).

## COST

Cost is always a highly sensitive issue, particularly in today's more straitened economic climate. I have been regularly amazed in the past by the number of large organisations who have opted for incredibly overpriced and excessively complex systems which were destined to fail before the ink was even dry on the contract. Hopefully, those days have gone.

The whole, consciously opaque culture of software charging (*restricted user licences, upgrades etc*) has massively changed and improved alongside the advance of the internet. Indeed, we are heading for an era where freeware, via the web, is the more de rigueur experience, which should shake up the CAFM market somewhat? We're still a little way off such an idyllic situation in the FM technology sector, but not that far off I'd wager. Some costs are unavoidable of course, such as secure external hosting or mobile hardware, but these are also being driven down radically by an increasingly aggressive and competitive marketplace and the pain can be spread over terms with leasing type arrangements.

*It's an exciting, technology enabled world out there. Just look long and hard before you leap.*

## Contacts & Sources

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