



**T**here's an ancient story about a man that decided to jump on the back of a tiger. Riding the tiger gave the man a feeling of power and control, until he came to realize that he couldn't get off. The tiger would eventually eat him alive. So it is with facility information. Technology can provide enormous financial and productivity advantages but requires careful consideration to realize its potential. What's more, emerging technologies such as BIM (Building Information Modeling) and

once you've tackled those issues, how do you decide who needs this information and how do you share it with them? We're all drowning in unprecedented amounts of information—but is it all necessary?

#### Sorting through it all

When gathering facility data, it's important to first identify what information is important to your company now and what may be important in the future. This is where your intimate knowledge of your company's business and objectives comes into play. There are data points that virtually every organization needs; metrics such as amount and types of space, number of employees and square foot per employee. Studying industry benchmarks will help you both identify the common data that you should gather and allow you and your management team to compare your company to similar organizations. However, it's identifying and gathering the information unique to your industry that helps you add the most value. This information gives management insight into the effect facilities have on business decisions and vice-versa. It is crucial in proving the effectiveness of the facility team to your organization.

As you begin to gather data for your system, it's a good idea to start small and build on successes. Start with one floor, or just part of a floor, and use this sample to perfect your techniques and procedures. Once you are confident and comfortable, add additional space or data. Remember that all data must be updated—partially accurate data is worse than no data at all—and the data updating process can be demanding and neverending. The rule of thumb is to gather the absolute minimum amount of data you will need.

Once you commit to gathering it, you need to always keep it accurate. You must continually compare the data you have against the data you need, realizing it may be a moving target as your business changes. Automate data feeds where practical—consultants and/or your IT department should be able to help with this. Whenever possible, integrate data collection and updating into business processes. No matter how important facility data is to you, your business partners will not be amused if you add more work to their already overflowing plate. Your trump card is your ability to use their data to create

# On the Track to IT Success

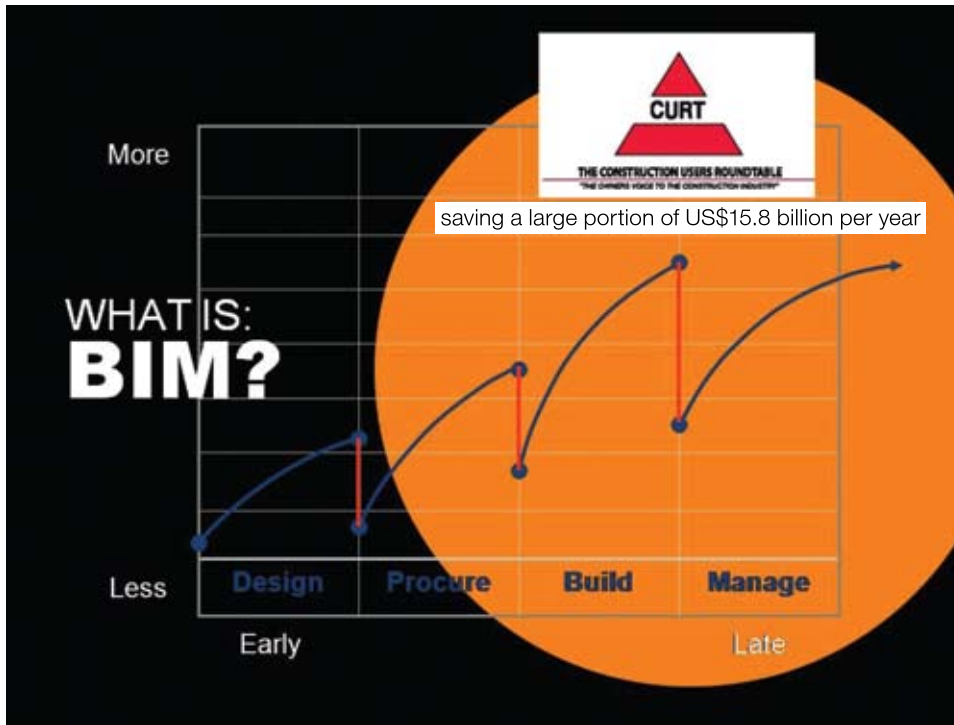
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IWMS (Integrated Workplace Management Systems) will redefine the way facility professionals get and share information.

#### The realities of managing facility information

Facility professionals see it all—paper floor plans that in no way reflect reality; electronic drawings of unknown origin that can't be opened by your software no matter what you do and drawing files that, once opened, are such a jumble of entities, blocks and layers they are virtually useless. Now, after all those years of harping to your design and construction team about never receiving accurate electronic record drawing files, they have finally come through. You've received an information-laden building model of your last project which can easily transfer that data to your facility information system. Now what do you do? How do you decide what information to keep, what form to keep it in and how long to keep it? And





information which helps make their jobs easier or more effective.

**Approaching the end**

But how can you tell when you have accomplished your FM information goals? The reality of the situation is that you'll probably never get there. There are a variety of reasons why, not the least of which is because the end of your journey will continue to relocate. Unanticipated needs and uses will arise for facility management data due to changing business conditions, different internal and external personnel, shifting regulation requirements and a myriad of other conditions. Critical data needs may become less important or even unnecessary over time. Others that once seemed insignificant may become of prime importance. The key is to remain flexible and sensitive to business needs; you almost need to be clairvoyant—anticipating the needs of the business before they materialize.

If you wait until the needs are identified by the business units, you won't have the time it takes to adequately gather and organize the data—let alone put in place the business processes to continue to feed and update the new data sets. The trick is to not become isolated in your office shuffling data. You must be "out in the business" and aware of what's going on so you are ready to support

it with your data. Don't let the day-to-day detail bog you down in purely tactical thinking. The real value is in your ability to support strategic business decisions.

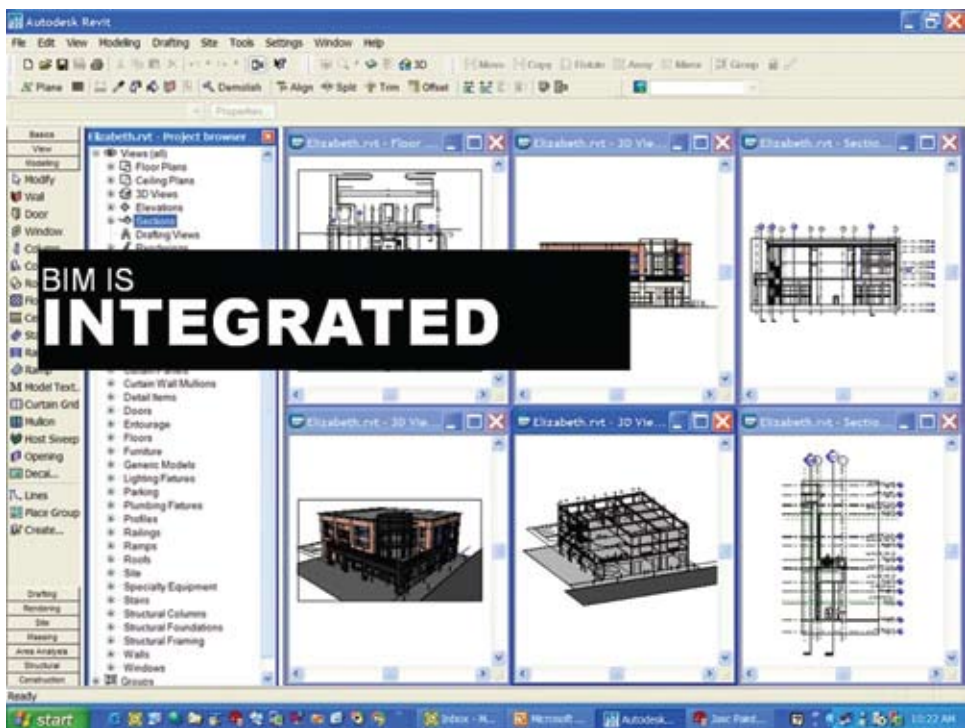
**Checklist for success**

Facility information systems are tools to help manage business. Losing your focus on supporting the business could mean losing your job. The following are pointers for success:

- **Technology is meant to make things easier.** Learn to integrate the collection of facility data into everyday business processes and automate data feeds from corporate systems whenever possible. This minimizes errors and facilitates data updating automatically with little or no human intervention. Making this happen requires a lot of cooperation, trust and teamwork from your HR and IT departments—take the time to develop relationships in these areas. When these key groups understand the value of facility information to the organization and to them, getting your project accepted will be less of a challenge.
- **Recognize that facility managers view and use corporate data differently from the rest of the company.** Your view across accounts, for example, may need a different twist than is standard across the business. It's vital that you're able to

identify the people in the organization that can help make this happen, build relationships with them, and can clearly articulate your needs to them. If your needs are clearly thought out, focused on the business and communicated well, your chances of success increase.

- **Keep your data in the most appropriate location.** Don't labor over copying data from elsewhere and trying to maintain parallel databases. Let others maintain the data where it is and pull it together only when necessary for analysis.
- **Don't lock your graphic or non-graphic data up in proprietary database formats.** The most expensive portion of your facility information system will be the collection and maintenance of data. If your vendor of choice is suddenly no longer in the facility information business and you can't get access to your data, you're in trouble. Beware of "translators"—they are much less effective than some vendors would lead you to believe.
- **As word gets out that you have facility data, the demand for it will increase.** Be ready for requests, and be prepared to politely say no to items that don't make sense. However, if an internal customer requests a particular collection of data that can be leveraged to enhance other information, give serious thought to complying with the request.



- Be prepared to find amazing and unanticipated uses for your facility information. These may include:
  - Creating area take-offs and graphic maps to show cleaners' areas that need to be cleaned and at what level.
  - Providing required governmental reporting that in past years had either been estimated or had taken many man-hours to compile.

- Creating evacuation maps that are posted throughout the buildings showing areas of refuge, emergency showers, fire extinguisher locations, storm shelters, exits, etc.
- Preparing annual reports that incorporate people, space, property and financial data.

### Capturing facilities data

According to the IFMA *Space and Project Management Benchmarks Research Report #28*, 43 percent of all organizations have turned from the Excel spreadsheet method to automated facility information management in some way—with adoption rates reaching 80 percent for larger organizations. While the key to facility data is to get the right information to the right people in the right way, it's important to be aware of some of the new technologies recently created to capture this information.

### BIM

Building Information Modeling is a new approach to building design that has been growing steadily for the past five or six years. Buildings are no longer drawn, but rather built. Components that know how to behave in the context of a building project and also naturally preserve their specification information and quantities are used. The BIM approach allows for the development and encapsulation of critical building maintenance information directly within the model. A single electronic document can contain the majority of building component information at the completion of the project, including construction documentation, actual building materials and product references.

This makes it a very attractive delivery mechanism for building projects. When a project is complete, a digital file with all the information that used to be held in one or more paper binder(s) is delivered to the building owner.

Capturing data with BIM offers many advantages to facility managers. For example, there is the opportunity to track data for the purpose of accelerated depreciation. With minimal tracking of various building components, hundreds of thousands of dollars may be saved through recognizing and depreciating allowable finishes and products in the required time frame—shorter than the building's depreciation schedule.

## IWMS

Integrated Workplace Management System is a Web-based technology that enables you to share information with everyone in your organization in ways that simply weren't feasible with older technology. Why share this information enterprise-wide? It's evident that facilities are enterprise resources. Almost everyone in your organization depends on you and the facilities you manage. Today you already share information—just in manual methods like paper forms, floor plans, reports and other documents. By turning those

documents into data, you can begin to transform the way you interact with your partners, your customers and your management. The results of enterprise access to facility information can be dramatic. Organizations have realized cost savings by optimizing both property portfolios and facility operations; increased productivity for their departments and for their organization as a whole; and improved customer satisfaction with their internal customers.

Consider the following success story of CA (Computer Associates) and

IWMS. CA launched an executive initiative to reduce its real estate footprint worldwide. Based on an internal return on investment (ROI) analysis, CA estimates that through better visibility into occupancy in conjunction with more accurate internal chargebacks for rent, it will realize annual recurring cost savings of at least 2.5 percent in the U.S. alone. CA anticipates that optimizing its real estate portfolio will result in at least a four times ROI on the project by the third year with a payback period of less than a year.

## Using technology to your advantage

Technology can be the key to efficiency, productivity and savings or it can result in failed projects, lost time and excessive costs. Keep your eye on new technologies because the results are real and significant—but don't let their sparkle blind you to the need for careful planning and communication. Understand your business, set clear goals, know your internal customers and carefully plan for the implementation and maintenance of your system. Then you will be on track to success. **FMJ**



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Stevens

Rod Stevens is an architect and facility information manager for Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., a DuPont company. Prior to his present position he spent more than 20 years designing and managing a variety of projects, both domestically and internationally. Stevens has been involved in Pioneer's facility information efforts since 1994 as well as providing design, code compliance, accessibility compliance, technology advice and sustainability consulting for the company.

Stevens is a registered architect, was a member of IFMA's first group of Certified Facility Managers, became an IFMA Fellow in 2002 and received the LEED AP designation in 2006.



Michael  
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Michael Schley is the CEO and founder of FM:Systems. He has spoken on technology topics at numerous facility management conferences including World Workplace, EuroFM, FMA Australia and the Hong Kong facility management conference. He also chaired the AIA Cad Layer Guidelines Task Force and the IFMA Area Measurement Task Group. Before founding FM:Systems, Schley was a registered architect specializing in architectural space analysis and technology applications for building design.



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Susan Hensey is the studio principal and partner for Little and a licensed architect with more than 17 years experience. In 1993, she founded the FM Strategies studio at Little. The studio specializes in three areas of expertise—computer-aided facility management, facilities technology and planning and research. Hensey was recently appointed to serve a 10-year term on AIA's Contract Documents Committee. She also served on the 2006 AIA Convention Continuing Education Advisory Committee and is a former chair of the AIA Facility Management Knowledge Community.

  
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