

PULLING TOGETHER

Helpdesk software is evolving into sophisticated, integrated FM solutions, finds Frank Booty as he explores the latest developments in CAFM

As CAFM (computer aided facilities management) systems have become more established, numerous acronyms have sprung up for systems that only cater for helpdesk and PPM (planned preventative maintenance) applications. There are claims these systems are more attuned to CMMS (computerised maintenance management system) or IWMS (integrated workplace management system) working.

Indeed, in the USA and Canada, the word is that many are claiming CAFM is becoming an outdated technology and that most large organisations are deferring to IWMS instead. This could be misleading or just plain jockeying for market position. Or sour grapes.

The definition of IWMS goes as follows: 'An enterprise platform that supports the planning, design, management, utilisation and disposal of an organisation's location-based assets. IWMS systems assist organisations in optimising the use of workplace resources, including the management of a company's real estate portfolio, infrastructure and facilities assets'. Is this not what CAFM does?

UK software house FMx Ltd owns the trademark for CAFM and is keen to shed some light on the situation. Tony Leppard, MD of FMx Ltd, the author of CAFM Explorer, and seasoned player in the FM business for 25 years, claims that CAFM is still the strongest acronym to describe an integrated FM solution.



'The flow of information between FM applications makes for a far more productive solution than isolated applications like helpdesk,' he says. 'For example, a reactive issue is almost always associated with assets, location, people, contractors, trades people, costs, rooms, and so on. So where do you draw the line?'

'Reactive issues need a CAFM solution, and the name CAFM simply recognizes that the solution caters for the whole of FM and not just a helpdesk.'

In today's economic climate, cost saving and mitigating risk against corporate manslaughter are in the forefront of everyone's minds, and CAFM Explorer is leading the way with a number of customers. Moto Hospitality claims that using CAFM Explorer's web-based solution for end users to log their own faults and contractors to manage their own jobs has reduced traffic on their helpdesk by 50 per cent and reduced administration costs by 40 per cent.

Law firm Withers claims it has saved £570,000 by using CAFM Explorer to improve service levels, reduce administration and improve financial tracking. And the London Borough of Brent claims the software mitigates the risk that now exposes senior facilities personnel to potential corporate manslaughter charges. That's no mean feat for an investment in a Microsoft GOLD-partnered product that costs under £1,000.

FMx also provides a range of services that allows customers to contract out the running of the helpdesk, either on a fulltime basis, with FMx taking complete responsibility for logging, assigning and tracking calls, or as an out-of-hours service. Leppard's CAFM Explorer is also now servicing 33 different countries all being managed from London – and, as may be guessed, they use CAFM Explorer as their helpdesk to track reactive and planned issues in their software.

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