

## **Technology and Facility Management – Go Hand in Hand**

Facility management, filled with experienced building experts who have made a reputation for themselves by being able to fix anything. Facility managers have a work ethic that doesn't quit and wits that make them a necessity for every large project. What many people don't know is that facility managers sometimes rely on technology as much as they rely on their abilities. Without technology, many of today's facility managers would be in the dark when it comes to complicated measurements, facility supervision, equipment management, and maintaining a successful business. Many management companies of the day rely on a company web page and the internet to relay their capabilities as a business, with electronic mail being the most prominent communication medium. The possibilities are endless when it comes to technology because technology is constantly evolving.

Since the beginning of architecture, math has always been a requirement of the job. As soon as they were practical for everyday use, calculators became a mainstay at the construction site. Numerous computations would have to be made in order to properly measure area, density, volume, and a number of other necessary calculations. Calculators have since enabled workers to do calculations in a fraction of the time that it would take to manually estimate. Yet even the calculators are being replaced by the all-powerful personal computer.

Nowadays, computers are often found on-site, sometimes smaller than a calculator, and are a requirement for any business operation, including facility management. The computer actually derived from the calculator as its original intentions were for mathematical problem solving. Over the years, however, the computer has developed into much more than just a great calculator. Among the thousands of inventions for the computer, the internet has created a world wide forum for idea sharing and competitive marketing. Never have we been able to access such a high volume of information, in so little time, using so few resources. Although the internet is still far from perfect, it has enabled users to connect with others in a way never before imagined. Communication can be made across thousands of miles with the simple click of a button. This capability has led to the development of corporate websites and always available customer service. And if you are into facility management, then you should know that facility management is the equivalent to customer service on a structural level.

The computer has also made available thousands of processes that can occur simultaneously through the combined use of hardware and software. Today, we have the ability to manage and maintain multiple, individual systems through one common interface. Recently, we have seen this technology installed in residences through a wireless central control unit. Similarly in the commercial realm, Computer Aided Facility Management (CAFM) is on the rise and may become a necessity as systems grow and become more complex. Even handheld computers are used to collect data and file reports on-site. The data that is collected can later be uploaded into a computer and combined with other data to create more useful information.

Much advancement in facility management has been made available through the progression of technology such as cordless power tools, portable lighting, safety devices, and power generation, but none are as versatile as the computer. As technology continues to evolve, so does our understanding of the possibilities it provides. Robotics and nanotechnology continue to progress into more useable applications as we develop hardware and software that are compatible with concurrent systems. When all of these technologies are combined, very powerful, highly efficient systems are created. These systems however come with a lofty price tag and a steep learning curve.

A common problem occurring more and more frequently is our lack of understanding technology. Scientific advances continue to outpace the human understanding of operation, and often systems are put into place before they can be fully tested and calibrated. These developing systems continue to use more and more cutting edge materials in their design, and some of the components put into these newly developed systems are very volatile and need to be carefully managed. Again, technology can help us to overcome many of these obstacles; however, nothing to this date has been able to replace or replicate the human thought process.