

Facilities Management from A to Z

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C AFM

The most commonly used term in the UK for facilities management software is CAFM, which stands for computer-aided facilities management. CAFM software applications assist in the monitoring, management and planning of operational activities and expenditure, standards, regulatory compliance and capital budgeting in one, or several, of the key FM areas.

These might include maintenance records, asset control, resource scheduling, fault reporting, property administration, space usage, client requests, environmental performance and many more.

In fact most of the vast number of tasks and functions that come under the FM remit have some form of data management requirement and, just as the facility manager is responsible for integrating these activities, a well designed CAFM system does the same. This can provide the FM with significant operational efficiency and, often more importantly, with valuable management information.

An MIS system operating as part of an integrated Computer Aided Facility Management (CAFM) system provides a valuable function. They can collate into coherent reports unmanageable volumes of data that would otherwise be broadly useless to decision makers. By studying these reports the FM can identify patterns and trends that would have remained unseen if the raw data were consulted manually.

MIS systems can also use these raw data to run simulations – hypothetical scenarios that answer a range of ‘what if’ questions regarding alterations in strategy. For instance, MIS systems can provide predictions about the effect on operating costs that an increase in building occupancy would have. These Decision Support Systems enable more informed decision making within an enterprise than would be possible without MIS systems.

Buildings have become more technologically advanced in recent years in parallel with the work that takes place within them. CAFM Systems are now able to gather data from a wide variety of sources integrating data from security systems, building controls, company records and a host of others. This enables the provision of truly useful information on how the building is used, real time service levels and unit costings.

The Facilities Management Association has a Technology Working group which focuses on the use of CAFM systems in the FM sector and have published a useful survey on the status of CAFM systems in the UK. See www.fmassociation.org.uk