

BIG DATA

– big impact

Just how important is FM data in strategic property decisions?

By **MARTYN FREEMAN**

The term 'Big Data' has slipped into the common consciousness recently as many organisations explore the potential for business improvement that can be realised from tapping into the wealth of information so readily at our fingertips. More of the decisions we make on just about every aspect of work are affected by, or rely on, hard numbers and

the world of FM is no exception.

The challenge lies in identifying the most appropriate data and making sense of it. Everyday we're assaulted with information, yet while we may be drowning in data, too little of it is used effectively. Surprisingly few organisations have access to a single view of the minute details that make a massive difference to the quality and cost of long-term occupancy decisions.

This is just one of the many findings that have come out of research MITIE has commissioned among senior property and facilities directors across the UK. The research has formed the basis of the MITIE Debates, centred on energy, data and agile working, which explore these issues in more depth.

One key finding of the research was that every aspect of a building's life is capable of

'Its what you can do with this data'

By **JACQUELINE WALPOLE**

FM data can give you the information you need to make the right property decisions for your organisation. At its most basic, it allows you to gather all the information on all the costs required to maintain your buildings: energy, contracts, lease and rents. But it's what you can do with this data that's really exciting.

It enables you to plan your budgets for lifecycle costing, plant replacement, planned refurbishments and post-occupancy evaluations. It gives you the ability to optimise energy consumption, sustainability and space management, helping you identify how often facilities are used and the right workspace solutions, such as dedicated versus hot desks. Most importantly, you can measure the data



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against KPIs and decide whether the trade off in customer satisfaction from improved efficiency is merited.

Exactly what knowledge you want from your FM data will depend upon whether you are the occupier, the FM provider or

the finance department, but a good FM platform will offer the right insights for all three perspectives. It is important to identify the type and level of information you want before commissioning your FM system, but ideally it should give you the big headlines with the ability to drill down into them to get the level of detail you need in a way that is easy to interpret, for example pie charts and graphs.

It should be able to integrate with other systems to optimise your business intelligence and it should give you the flexibility of access you need: web-based, multi-platform solutions can be accessed from anywhere on any device.

• **JACQUELINE WALPOLE is Business analyst with FSI FM**

being captured – not just rent, business rates and utility costs, but also usage information on a vast range of factors that can help us determine how effectively each building is being used.

The increasing quantity and complexity of data available to FMs through new reporting protocols poses challenges and opportunities for the industry. Capturing this data and turning it into actionable information should now be a key part of effective FM, supporting well-informed decisions that will help to drive down operating costs, whether through more effective use of existing space, relocation, or consolidation.

Yet surprisingly few organisations we work with have put in place computer-aided FM software (CAFM) to capture and analyse this key data. MITIE operates several ‘off-the-shelf’ packages on client sites, which provide part of the answer. To achieve effective data mining we have developed MiWorld, our own web-based, fully integrated data portal solution that consolidates data from numerous sources to deliver total business intelligence around all property costs.

We belittle ourselves in FM because in our unique roles we have considerable power with access to, and management of, all the important data. And we have the skills and knowledge to interpret it to make meaningful and valuable strategic decisions. Property

data flows out from the FM team – dynamic, real-time information about occupancy, building use, energy consumption etc. that can assist and fuel property portfolio decisions.

We can provide a more realistic perspective of TOTAL occupancy costs, not just the un-dynamic stuff like rents, space, lease periods and break clauses. In a way this is the small data that can drive big decisions.

Many facilities departments are now adding this ability to convert raw data into usable and meaningful information to foster informed decision making.

I recently visited one of our client’s campuses, where we provide a total FM service. Sitting in the FM Director’s office, he gleefully showed me the dashboard displays he can call up at the touch of a button. These present a vast range of information ranging from consumption of consumables, visitor numbers, number of ‘seats’ in each building and their occupancy patterns, energy management, catering needs by time slot.

He can even see how different parts of a building are used and how they consume energy as the working day progresses, and compare all this information on a daily, weekly monthly and annual basis. What gave him particular delight is that he can compare

in near real time, and identify trends and exceptions that can have implications both for the individual properties and the wider corporate portfolio.

FM and Property teams tend to work in silos, with defined areas of operation and frequently FM is a function of the Property department because it is viewed very much as a necessary commodity. Too many FM decisions are being made based on a short-term need to do more for less, rather than to deliver strategic benefit to the business. Yet effective use and interpretation of the critical data captured through managing the facilities of an organisation, holds the key to potentially dramatic savings across the business.

If we make effective use of the data we control, then we can raise the importance of our value to the organisation, not just by saving operating costs through delivering a leaner, cleaner and more exciting environment, but also by avoiding the costs of hiring in expensive consultants who’ll borrow your data and feed it back to you.

• **MARTYN FREEMAN is MD at MITIE Facilities Management**

**Future MITIE debates
Energy – 1st week February
Using FM data – 1st week April**

‘FM data enables informed decisions’

By **GARY WATKINS**

In a turbulent economic climate, it is vital that organisations understand how efficiently a building or facility is performing in order to minimise property costs and drive profitability. Yet many businesses have no visibility of the facilities management data that determines building quality for end-users and drives long-term occupancy decisions.

Too often, facilities management is viewed as an operational overhead, with facilities Managers placed under constant pressure to reduce the cost at which services are delivered, with little consideration for the strategic impact of resulting actions. However,

when considered as a central part of property portfolio management, facilities management can provide the insight needed to deliver long-term, sustainable savings across any organisation.

Supported by CAFM (Computer Aided Facilities Management) software or IWMS (Integrated Workplace Management Software), effective facilities management allows every detail of building performance to be captured; from space utilisation, to asset performance and visitor statistics. It compliments property management information concerning rent, service charge and rates to deliver complete insight into building usage and real estate cost efficiency.

Reporting tools inherent in CAFM

software and IWMS applications allow property managers to visualise portfolio performance and compare KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for one building, site or region to another. Facilities and space management data enables real-time, accurate insight into portfolio performance and supports future occupancy and growth trend analysis.

In summary, FM data enables informed decision making, whether through expansion, relocation or more efficient usage of existing facilities, to optimise property portfolio management and reduce occupancy costs.

• **GARY WATKINS CEO of Service Works Group**