Technology

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EVERAGING the Latest Technology

Are you taking full advantage of CMMS solutions?

Computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) and enterprise asset management (EAM) solutions have become standard for many organizations, helping companies keep their maintenance plans on schedule and avoid the risk of failed equipment. But many businesses aren't taking full advantage of the capabilities of CMMS products, which may impact their bottom line over time.

A CMMS is a computer database of information about an organization's maintenance operations, CMMS systems have profoundly revolutionized facilities maintenance as we know it today.

Searching for a CMMS

When you consider a CMMS platform to streamline your maintenance model, you'll want to consider what features may be best for your business. Some businesses may require features that others don't. Your company may use other software tools for a specific business task that may very well be included in a CMMS program, and the function may be duplicative. Be sure to do your research. Some of the main CMMS features include:

• Warranty tracking

• Scheduled maintenance, testing and inspections

• Record keeping and historical data

• Managing asset inventory

• Key performance indicators

• Managing repair parts inventory

• Vendor list management

• Document retention (COI, contracts)

• Work order requests and tracking

• Capital expenditures (including RFPs, line item detail, purchase orders and invoicing)

Most will have a basic login page and a primary dashboard that allow you to navigate the program. Some dashboards are customizable, and others are a standard format. Your CMMS will be your primary tool for work order management, so it's essential that the dashboard and web layout makes sense to you and doesn't leave you, the end user, scratching your head in confusion. Ease of use is an important factor to consider, since you and your team will likely use the CMMS program most work days.

Key Features of a CMMS

One of the best features of a CMMS program is the ability to retain data and mine it easily. Simply put, the system should be able to keep an entire history of service calls on all of your assets, in all of your sites. Having this history will allow you to make quick and educated decisions with the "repair versus replace" conundrum that most FMs face on a day-to-day basis (remaining book value versus repair cost). Keeping site-specific information on warranties can help you quickly manage how to handle downed equipment. Having this information on hand will help you avoid scrambling to decide who needs to work on the asset.

The goal is to provide the correct frequency of preventive maintenance on equipment, helping you to get the most life out of your assets as possible. For those who purchase replacement parts for in-house teams or keep on-site parts, the data collected can also provide information on what parts may fail the quickest and allow you to more accurately forecast when stocking your parts inventories, resulting in decreased equipment downtime.

A key ingredient to managing the effectivity of your CMMS is the ability to onboard new vendors in the system and maintain the current vendor set in real time. The ability to scorecard your vendors in relation to key performance indicators is essential for discussing business

relationships and seeking opportunities to improve. Also, being able to retain specific documents as it pertains to the vendor relationship (service level agreements, insurance certificates, indemnity agreements, etc.) is an added feature to consider.

It's also important to consider the reporting and business metrics that you may be able extract from your CMMS. This high-level business intelligence is intended to help you manage your facilities and save money on repair and maintenance expenses. The collective detail from problem code information will be critical to understanding your facilities' pain points. There may be changes you can make to your maintenance and repair regimen that can be derived from these metrics and help your financial model. Often, this will allow you to formulate a plan for maintenance and repair and even consider design improvements.

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Additional Considerations

Whether you're currently using a CMMS program or are in the market for one, be sure to consider the safety and security of the data being stored. Ask yourself how big the risk may be if any of that data was compromised. Most of the bigger CMMS companies store data within secure data centers, but it would be worthwhile to find out for yourself just how they manage, store and back up data.

Another thing to note is how customer service is structured and how responsive support teams are. It is crucial that the system is working at least 99.5 percent of the time. Sure, we all understand that there are snags that happen from time to time when software is being upgraded or networks go down. But these occurrences should be few and far between. Most companies keep track of these instances and plan their system upgrades at night.

Additionally, make sure that all accounts are password protected and that users are prompted to change passwords at regular intervals. This will help prevent passwords from being stolen and data from being compromised.

Benefits of a CMMS

The best CMMS systems are those that allow users to accomplish their existing maintenance practices more effectively while introducing timesaving features that lead to savings in both costs and time. The tool must enable FMs to achieve their goal of supporting facilities by being strategic and tactful, keeping people safe and spaces looking great, and ensuring R&M costs stay in line with the financial model of their business.

The primary benefits to having a CMMS in place include:

• Less downtime

• Ability to better control costs

• Labor and overtime visibility (accountability and tracking)

• Ensuring accurate invoicing and approvals

• Better understanding and management of parts usage and inventory levels

The technology in this arena is ever-improving with innovations such as cloud-based user platforms and mobile applications. This means more effective time on site and not stuck behind a desk. Most CMMS companies are constantly investing in technological improvements—but some more than others. Make sure that you familiarize yourself with the different systems available and shop around before making a commitment. This will help you to understand the big picture, and whether your needs are going to be fulfilled, and get a good idea of how much your provider is putting into advancements and system improvements.

Finally, remember that there are some things a machine can't do. I'd encourage you not to eliminate the human factor from the management of your facilities.

Tom Buiocchi, CEO of ServiceChannel, explains it this way: "You shouldn't have to trade off cost for quality within your FM program, which is why outsourcing your facilities maintenance program is a bad idea. But we are nothing if not realistic. Some companies may be required to or simply choose to continue outsourcing various aspects of their facilities maintenance program for a wide range of reasons. And for those companies, that means living in the dark, trusting a third party without any method of monitoring and validating the work being done across their locations." Expenses can get out of hand quickly if you don't keep your eye on the prize, and personal vendor

relations is a facet of the industry that will always remain critical to success. The CMMS world is one not to be overlooked. You'll quickly realize that the investment will show a return almost instantly, thanks to the ability to track your work orders, ensure pre-set pricing is consistent with your SLAs and to reduce labor, due to the fact that your facilities will be easier to manage.

Jeremy Weber is the Owner of Pacific Northwest Facilities Group, a facilities-based strategic consulting firm based in Seattle. With more than 20 years of service in the restaurant industry, Weber has extensive experience in leading facility management teams across global enterprise operations. Prior to his current role, he was the National Facilities Director for Chipotle Mexican Grill, where he was recognized for creating an environment of ownership and empowerment for teams through open dialogue and strong partnerships between operations, facilities and other supporting disciplines. He now serves as an Advisory Council member for RFMA and is a former Board director.