LONE RANGER AT ABB: CORRALS INVENTORY, WORK ORDERS AND DIRECTORIES WITH iOFFICE

Luis Prado, Facilities Manager

Today's workplace is anything but static. Rapid change is the underlying constant. The rise of mobile device usage, cloud-based services and consumer demand for easy IT and computing applications worldwide are pushing companies to advance their internal processes and review the way they approach facilities management.

This unchartered terrain is affecting how and where companies locate offices, where and how employees work, how they connect, collaborate and communicate across disparate geographies, the size and number of office locations, and companies' real estate and capital investments. Many facility managers are forging innovative ways to manage their work scope, and this is spurred by recent innovations in cloud computing, mobility and even the consumer online shopping experience.

ABB is a Swiss-based global corporation with a history spanning more than 120 years. Its success has been driven particularly by a strong focus on research and development. The company maintains seven corporate research centers around the globe, and the resulting R&D investment has yielded significant returns on their record of innovation. Many of today's most critical technologies were developed or commercialized by ABB. ABB is the world's largest supplier of industrial motors and drives, the largest provider of generators to the wind industry and the largest supplier of power grids.

CHALLENGE

In late 2011, Houston-based Facilities Manager, Luis Prado, was charged with managing five US-based facilities of ABB's global operations, among the 150 locations across the US. His work experience and early background in the US military taught him a lot about standardizing technologies and processes and the efficiencies that standardization could bring to a huge global organization.

One of the first things Luis realized early on was that he had no clear way to track occupancy levels in each of his facilities. In the existing environment, he could not easily pull the numbers he needed. Ordering telephone lines, phones, physical infrastructure and office equipment for his sites without the exact number of current employees was like guesswork, based on disparate spreadsheets, outdated data and a patchwork of processes. Additionally, there was no current employee directory, no consistent approach to work order systems, inventory, updated floor plans or employee tracking.

Luis decided to propose some changes. He began looking around at what other companies were doing, and recalled his experience with iOffice. He looked at all the options in the marketplace and invited several contenders to make presentations to his boss and other key decision makers. They selected iOffice after carefully evaluating responses to their RFP and going through several rounds of down-selection. The process was complete by 2013, and implementation begun.

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SOLUTION

ABB deployed the iOffice platform, a cloud-based, single point of access with multiple functions and support tools for integrated workplace management services (IWMS).

When Luis and his team reviewed all the options, iOffice was the only system that came close to covering their needs with a single, ready-to-use interface. Being cloud-based, iOffice is easily integrated with other business applications, or it can stand on its own and deliver services quickly and conveniently via secure Internet connection. "Cloud" applications reside on iOffice operated servers in a secure, centralized environment, making it easier for clients such as ABB to order up their own set of services and transactions – from any office, any time and in any location with secure Internet access.

As a company, iOffice promotes the concept of "WOW" – Wide Open Workspaces – which sees an opportunity in the convergence of cloud-based innovation and the "new age" of work, specifically addressing IWMS. iOffice is committed to providing software that helps companies run their businesses in the most effective manner for their specific needs. The iOffice platform is a suite of services designed to advance Facilities Management.

ABB chose iOffice for its holistic approach that addressed five key challenges it faced:

1. Occupancy metrics: iOffice offered a tool to track employee numbers quickly, accurately and in real time.
2. Work Order systems: standardizing and stabilizing the work order process was easy with iOffice. Everything is managed under the same system, it's all transparent, the documentation that used to take hours or days now takes minutes to present.
3. Asset Inventory: understanding inventory was previously a mystery. With iOffice, this function is easy to manage and track.
4. Maintenance: equipment in need of repair, replacement or decommissioning is always on the FM's radar. The iOffice module makes this headache go away for good.
5. Moves, Adds and Changes – also known as "churn", impacts office space management and planning. With iOffice, the complexity is reduced with the introduction of an employee directory so that Luis can track accurate headcount in real time to implement required changes.

IMPLEMENTING iOFFICE

Taking your company's IWMS solution from "As-Is" to "To-Be" has to be carefully managed. Managing change, converting data and complexity from an old to a new system is intensive. At ABB, the iOffice conversion took about four months to go live. The ABB/iOffice project teams had to gather decades of data, office designs, site drawings and employee information and enter it all into the new system. The Houston facilities had no consistent Employee Directory. The data was not current, and headcounts were inaccurate. With the new iOffice system this info is at everyone's fingertips, and is easily tracked and updated. "iOffice has improved the way we manage our work orders," said Luis Prado. "It is easy for anyone to use. It takes what used to be manual and outdated and makes it accurate, automatic."

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"With iOffice, everything is standardized, transparent and uniform," Mr. Prado adds. "Processing work orders, space changes, employee turnover, asset inventory and equipment maintenance is all done via the iOffice portal. This is all no longer an exercise in complexity. I don't have to actively corral the process manually to get results. iOffice is really on the cutting edge; it just makes sense. It is focused on meeting the needs of FMs, and easy to use, even for the more traditional "Brick & Mortar" kind of person."

// 'CLOUD' APPLICATIONS RESIDE ON iOFFICE OPERATED SERVERS IN A SECURE, CENTRALIZED ENVIRONMENT, MAKING IT EASIER FOR CLIENTS SUCH AS ABB TO ORDER AND ACCESS THEIR OWN SET OF SERVICES AND TRANSACTIONS – FROM ANY OFFICE, ANY TIME AND IN ANY LOCATION WITH SECURE INTERNET ACCESS. //

WORK ORDERS *in the old system were often confusing and required multiple inputs, such as blueprints, a business case, previous history of repairs, and other data from disparate systems and records. When ABB needed to replace a coil unit or air handler in one of their Houston facilities, the processes to get this done slowed everything down. With iOffice, the system now documents all equipment repairs and stores them in one online place. Where FMs previously had to look things up manually in Excel or Access databases, this information is now readily available, accessible and up-to-date in the iOffice system.*
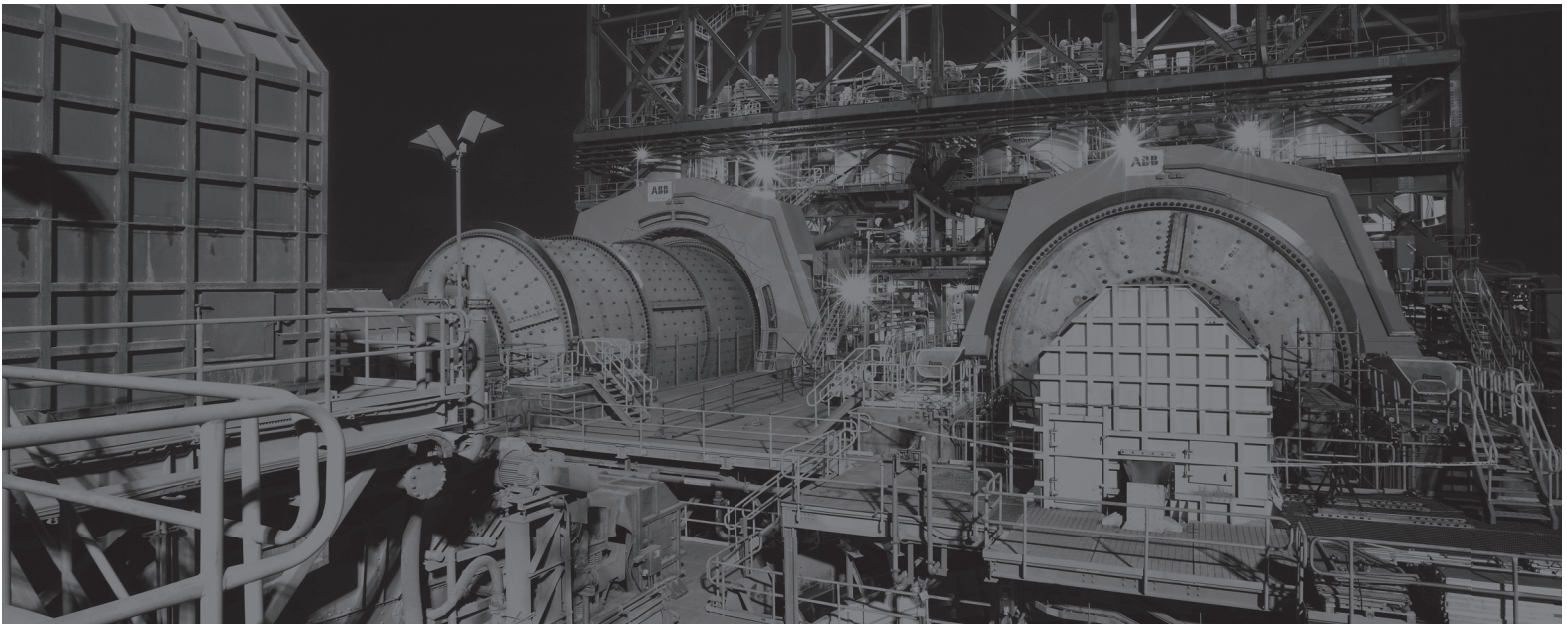
RESULTS

"The way ABB manages IWMS in their Houston facilities has changed dramatically. Time saved through a real-time directory, work order simplification and asset inventory process optimization is all empowering and revolutionizing the way we manage facilities. The next step is to socialize the success of these changes across the rest of the 150 locations in the US, and perhaps expand iOffice across all of ABB globally," says Prado.

"Whenever anything is broken, for example the air conditioning unit in a building is down, with iOffice, we simply type up the issue into the online system. It immediately triggers a work order, and pulls up the requisite records for the manager processing the request. There is no searching for documents manually, no more confusion over business case, everything is supported in the system and transparent," says Luis. "Once the issue is resolved, the A/C unit is back up and running, the ticket is closed out and the system stores the documentation automatically. What used to take hours, sometimes even days to fix, now takes minutes to initiate, and includes all the billing history for each asset, plus the detailed repair records and any other relevant data."

The iOffice system also requires little or no internal IT support. Since the cloud-based software is managed by iOffice on its own servers, ABB does not require localized IT support for the tool. In the event ABB has technical issues, they are resolved quickly by the iOffice experts who own it, manage it and run it.

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- Luis Prado, Facilities Manager, ABB

"If it was up to me, I'd like to propose rolling out iOffice to other offices across the US," Mr. Prado adds. "We have implemented here a standard CAFM solution that could be utilized throughout ABB. My internal clients and management are extremely happy with the new system. Any ABB employee can use the directory to look up employee locations and get visitors to the right office at the right time." Luis' initiative to convert to iOffice and lead the charge toward innovation made him ABB's "Lone Ranger" in addressing this challenge. The results speak volumes for corralling disparate systems and information under a single online application. ABB has a new model for IWFM that can help move its herds to new heights in facility management.

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