The Top Five
must-haves for space management software

FM:Systems®

Consider how drastically the professional workplace has changed. A few decades ago, the average workplace had row upon row of offices and cubicles bursting with workers—nameplates by all the entrances, file cabinets everywhere, desktop computers with big CRT displays and stacks of papers on every surface.

Today, the office landscape is very different. We have telecommuters and mobile workers, with no fixed office addresses. When they do visit an office, they use space in alternative ways, gravitating towards collaborative and ad-hoc areas versus assigned cubicles. Terms like neighborhooding and hoteling have been added to the lexicon of facility managers.

Laptops and mobile devices have replaced desktop computers, bulky screens, files cabinets and landline phones.

Your space management system must be able to break away from traditional practices and accommodate the constant change of this 'new normal.' The software has to be more than just a tool to track where people sit or how much space is assigned to a specific department. It needs to support your organization's business needs by providing information to inform strategic real estate decisions.

And to do that, here are 5 must-have capabilities for space management software.

1 | Managing change

Organizations are adopting more flexible ways of working that support mobile technologies and a highly dynamic workforce. Activity-based workplaces (ABW), hot-desking and other workplace planning approaches no longer assign one workstation per employee. In this environment, space and occupancy information is constantly changing and organizations need powerful, flexible software tools to help them manage that change. To keep up, you need to be able to quickly and easily edit large amounts of data. The software should include mass editing capabilities, allowing you to reassign space on an entire floor (for example) or drag employees from one space to another with a simple mouse click, accomplishing in just a few seconds what used to take hours.

Your software should also have the ability to calculate space in multiple ways that reflect regulatory, industry and/or internally developed standards for defining and classifying space. All organizations have unique space tracking needs and coding structures. For example, a hospital may need to calculate space for Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. A University may need to track space to capture costs associated with research grants. The software must be easily configurable to fit your unique workflow and map to your specific needs—even when those needs change.

The software should be built from the ground up to be highly configurable so that it can be easily

Easily view your facilities data on your PC or mobile device

adapted to handle your organization's unique business practices. Your space management system should have strong out of the box capabilities, but also be easily configured to match your requirements—from simply adding, removing or renaming fields to accommodating very complex changes such as modifying space classification codes and coding structures. You should be able to make these changes without the need for ANY software code customization. And any modifications you make should also be easily upgradable when new versions of your software is released.

2 | Visualizing Space

Floor plans are the visual guide for facility managers and must be tightly integrated with your space management platform. Moreover, this should be a live bi-directional connection, enabling the space management software to use spatial information directly from floor plans created using popular BIM or CAD systems such as Autodesk Revit or AutoCAD. This will allow you to publish facility plan geometry and data directly from Revit or AutoCAD on demand, when your floor plans change. As a result, you'll always be working with up-to-date floor plans.

Once your floor plans are linked to your space management software, this feature should also provide secure access to anyone on your team who needs to view, report on or update data associated with those floor plans.

In addition, your software should allow you to visually navigate through your organization's real estate portfolio via an interactive map—quickly zooming into a facility and clicking on it to access building information without having to sort through the hierarchy of a standard navigation tree.

And if you have Revit 3D building models of your facilities, your space management software should be able to link to them and provide streamed 3D model views to access and visually navigate the model in your facilities workflows. The ability to navigate the models should be simple and intuitive, giving your facility team access to the rich, intelligent 3D models coming from BIM design and construction processes, but without having them learn the Revit software or become BIM experts.

3 | A centralized source for all facility information

Your space management system should be a centralized source of facility information for all your individual facilities. Gathering and combining decentralized space data is a time-consuming, costly task, often performed manually by culling data from dissimilar systems and workflows, resulting in an enterprise view that is immediately out-of-date. Whereas a centralized system provides real-time access to important facility information—helping groups within your organization communicate and work together more effectively. And with centralized facility data, your organization will have a broader information view across all your facilities to support decision making.

Equally important, the centralized space management system and all your other facility software tools (for asset and move management, hoteling/space reservations, strategic planning and so forth) should be linked together to form an Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS). As a result, any process or tool used for operating your facility will leverage the reliable space data from the centralized space management tool.

Furthermore, you should be able to easily integrate this system with critical enterprise databases such as human resources or accounting. A centralized IWMS database should be able to draw upon and feed (in real-time if desired) multiple corporate data sources, eliminating manual data entry and processing, and avoiding data redundancy. More importantly, this programmatic sharing of data between systems and service groups will lead to data efficiencies throughout your organization.

This type of enterprise integration is based on the individual practices and workflows of your organization (which can change), and includes live connections to your enterprise systems (which can also change). As a result, your IWMS platform must be highly configurable—with scalable open architecture and integration tools that will simplify the data integration process, eliminate the need for complicated, custom middleware and be easy to update when workflows or systems change. And the scope of the integration effort (both cost and timing) should be the same whether your IWMS platform is on-premise or hosted in the cloud.
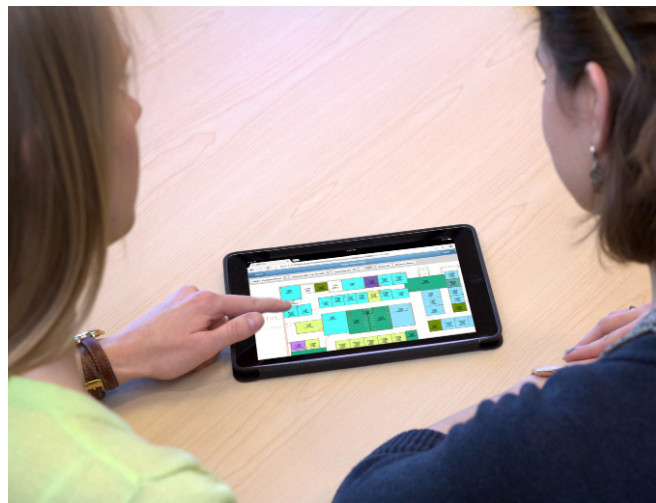
Get real-time access to key information across all deparments

"The bottom line is that productivity has been greatly increased since implementing this technology. The ratio of time saved is 10-to-1, for every ten minutes we spent prior to FM:Interact we now spend only one minute. I think that speaks for itself."

—Bob Donahue, Space Planning Manager at MathWorks

4 | Collaboration anytime and anywhere

Your space management system should provide stakeholders in your organization selective, secure access to data, reports and floor plans when and where they need it. The system should include Web-based access via a standard Web browser on a computer or common mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

This capability will enable your organization to effortlessly share and update space information—increasing the accuracy and visibility of the data and improving collaboration across the enterprise. While visiting other offices, mobile access will enable you to update space and occupancy information in real-time. In addition, you will be able to collaborate directly with department stakeholders by reviewing live space allocation and chargeback reports anytime and anywhere.
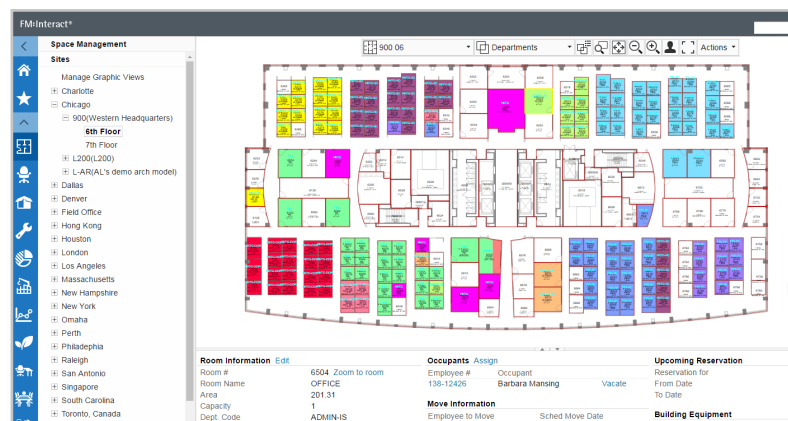
5 | Reporting and analysis

To streamline communications and reporting, your software should include robust yet flexible space reporting and analysis features. Day-in and day-out, you must be able to efficiently produce space reports across your entire space portfolio, using both predetermined and ad-hoc formats. You should also be able to export any report or list views to standard business formats (such as Word, Excel or PDF) with a simple mouse click. Reports should also be available online, allowing the appropriate employees to view real-time workplace reports from their Web browsers instead of burdening you with the task of emailing them around your organization.

Whether you are generating your weekly occupancy reports or working to identify enterprise portfolio trends for an upcoming executive planning session, you will need an easy-to-use report writing tool—enabling you to accommodate virtually any space information request or reporting requirement that comes your way. And your system should allow you to generate these reports (that may have once taken days or a week to create) in just minutes.

In addition, your space management software should feature dashboards for the real-time graphical display of facility data. These informational snapshots of portfolio-wide facility performance—such as occupancy and vacancy analysis, occupancy history over time or departmental chargebacks and allocations—enable informed decisions to be made at a glance.

Conclusion

When it comes to choosing a space management system, you need to know what's really important and what's just noise. Because best-in-class space management can help you plan for and manage change in today's dynamic workplaces—giving you the information needed to make smart real estate decisions. Don't just count every space. Instead, make every space count.

Visualize space on a color coded floor plan

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