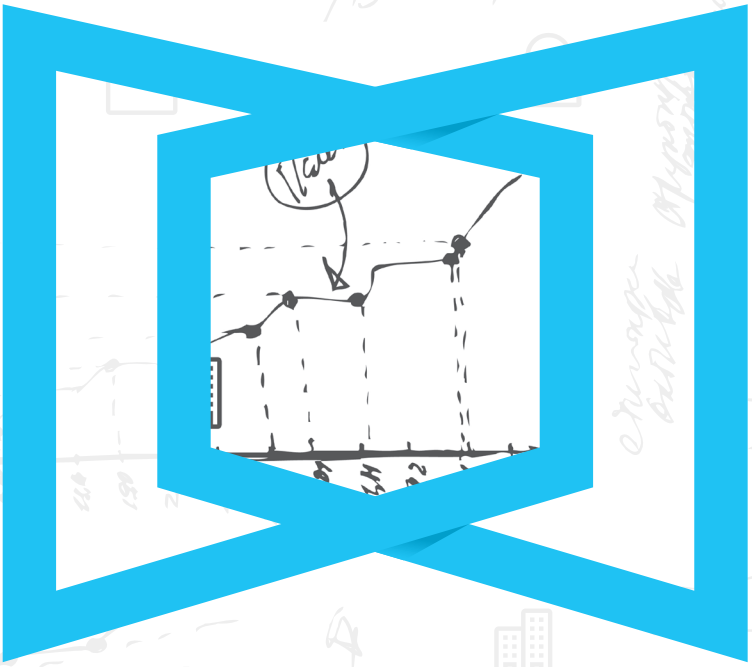
White Paper

How to Buy a Facilities Management System



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Overview

In this white paper, we dig into the elements to consider and the challenges you'll face when evaluating a facilities management system. Key topics include:

- ➔ What to Look for in a Facilities Management System
- ➔ Vendor Selection Criteria
- ➔ Deployment Challenges

What to Look for in a Facilities Management System

There are numerous benefits to deploying a modern facilities management system. Being continually under the gun to "do more with less," facilities managers responsible for multi-site retailers, restaurants and convenience store chains who have such solutions realize substantive results from hard dollar cost savings, greater operational efficiency and improved site uptime and hence *Brand Uptime.*

> Today, facilities managers gain by having systems that bring simplification and automation to the complex and time consuming processes.

But putting such a system in place can seem daunting. That's why it's important to take a systematic approach. While there are a number of systems available to manage one's facilities management operations, there are certain features and functionality that at a minimum, you need to make sure exist and that have been proven in production, at scale with similar companies.

This isn't an exhaustive list; it's simply meant as a starting point on the key features and functionality you'd want to include when considering deploying a facilities management system. Each company will have its own particular needs but through discussions with scores of companies, particularly those who have realized the greatest results, we've found the following selection criteria to be common across most sectors and important to all:

Repair & Maintenance Management	Manage all work orders, service requests, contractor proposals, preventive maintenance at all locations through a single dashboard. Place service requests via internet or phone.
Parts & Supply Management	Provide a mechanism for local locations to buy approved sourced and contracted materials. Maintaining control of both supplier and product selection enables companies to save money, ensure quality, streamline ordering and maintain warranties.
Asset Management	Maintain single, comprehensive record of all equipment and locations including all work history and maintenance records. Manage and track all equipment warranties.
Contractor Sourcing and Management	Have efficient and cost effective way to access qualified, vetted and insured contractors. Instantly access all contractor data including W-9 and insurance info, and compare service performance with real-time scorecarding. Streamline contractor management through company defined private network of approved contractors.
Proposal Management	Easily send an RFP to one or more contractors and get back proposals, all online.
Preventive & Scheduled Maintenance	Schedule, authorize via NTE levels, verify and validate all preventive and scheduled maintenance events.
Settlement/Payment Processing	Ensure contractor and supplier invoices are submitted online, validated against contracted rates and applicable sales taxes, coded for G/L processing and linked with third party accounting systems. Reduce payment processing costs and time via straight thru processing capability.
Call Center Access	Enable 24x7 work order submission by location staff via phone. Formal follow up of time sensitive service requests to ensure timely contractor performance and reassignment as necessary.
Actionable Data Insights	Access all data in a comprehensive and unified view on a real-time basis. Make data-driven business decisions with historical data, real-time updates, forecasting and trending. Benchmark against industry standards and corporate goals. Monitor scorecard generated performance.
Software as a Service (SaaS) Platform	Accessing a continually updated system via the web eliminates the need for costly software installs and upgrades. A SaaS-based approach also removes the burden of supporting additional hardware and associated equipment through "always on" cloud technologies, dramatically reducing total cost of ownership.
Open and Scalable Architecture	Any system needs to work regardless of platform or technological change, just like cellphones do. The system should just work wherever one is, however it's accessed, without having to think about it.
Secure, Multi-site Accessibility	One platform with guaranteed security, all your data accessible from anywhere. Needs to be built on an open architecture to work easily in any environment.
Third Party Integrations	To fully benefit from a source-to-settle implementation, the system should easily connect to third party accounting and payment systems. This minimizes data input errors and streamlines payment and audit processes.
Mobile Access	In today's world, it's critical to be able to access your system to report maintenance issues and check statuses anywhere, anytime and from any device.

Vendor Selection Criteria

A facilities management system, like any successfully deployed software solution, is more than a set of features and functions. Vendor choice is just as, if not more, important than the solution itself. Whom you work with during deployment and thereafter is a crucial element. A strong partner can ensure an easy, successful implementation. In fact, most facilities management professionals view their system vendor as a key partner in their being successful in their jobs and bringing value to the rest of their organization.

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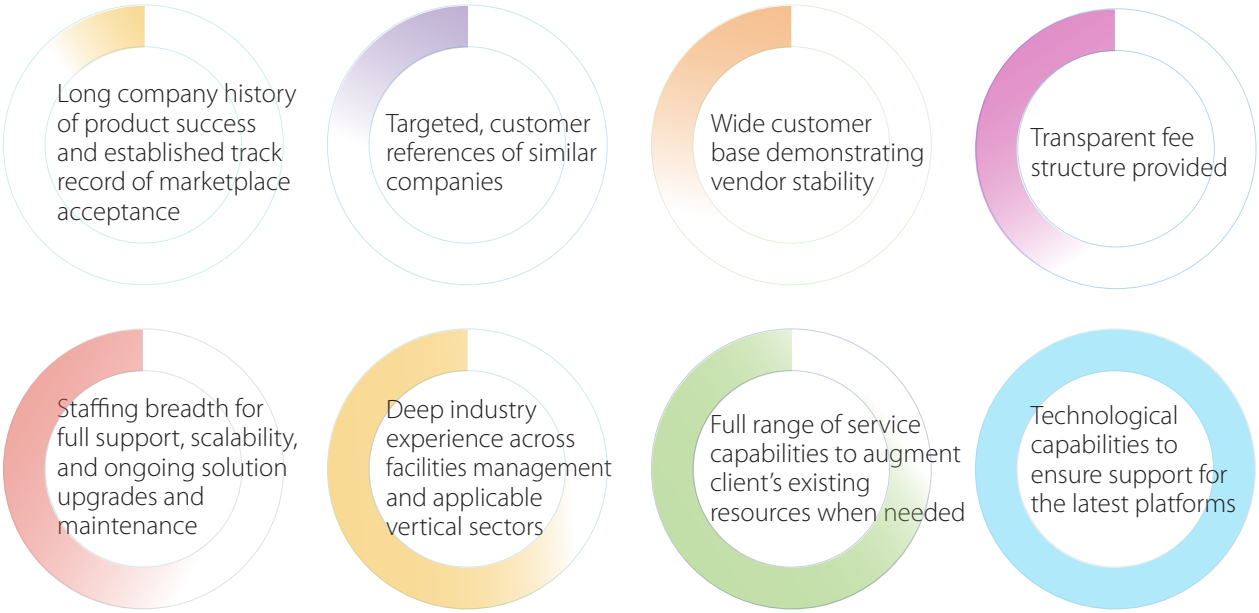
Some of the important vendor criteria to require when evaluating a facilities management system are:



Deployment Challenges

So how hard is it to deploy a modern facilities management system?

Of course, the short answer is it depends. But in general, we've found that any company can realize the benefits of such a system without much difficulty. The hard part is simply to make sure that deploying successfully is a company priority. In most cases, simply allocating the time and focus is the biggest challenge to get things going.

> Once deployed, all facets of an organization should realize immediate and tangible benefits.

To address some specific issues, here's a brief Q&A on the challenges of deploying any facilities management system:

Q: HOW LONG BEFORE A COMPANY'S UP AND RUNNING WITH A FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

A: Of course, every company is different but in general a facilities management system with a standard setup package can be deployed within four weeks. Customizing a particular configuration (e.g. specifying particular workflows or work order categorization) can take longer based on the extent of the requirements.

Q: WHAT IS NEEDED BEFORE BEGINNING A SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT?

A: Typically, a company needs to collect and have available all its location information, user information, contractor data, NTE thresholds, etc. A vendor should have a checklist of all data that needs to be input into the facilities management system.

Q: WHAT CAN SLOW A DEPLOYMENT FROM GOING INTO PRODUCTION?

A: As to actual deployment, companies that don't have ready access to their location, user and contractor data can find overall time to production takes longer as that information is collected. From a usage perspective, active contractor participation, or lack thereof, can impact how quickly system benefits are realized. Typically, once contractors learn the benefits from their perspective in simplified operations and easy payment processing, they become fans of using a system.

Q: HOW DOES A FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT IMPACT THE REST OF THE ORGANIZATION?

A: Once deployed, all facets of an organization should realize immediate and tangible benefits. Operating staff find time dramatically freed from having to follow up on service requests and their accompanying work verification and payment issues. Accounting departments find that payment processing is simplified as all vendor data is centralized, work order invoices are approved, sales tax is computed properly and information flows easily into their existing systems. Management gets newfound analytical capability to gain R&M insights and actionable data. And importantly, facilities management staff can focus on the critical issues that truly require their attention and not be subsumed in the morass of handling every request and work order issue.

Q: WHAT OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENTS ARE TOUCHED?

A: The benefits of a modern, software as a service (SaaS) platform, is that there's virtually no impact on a company's current computing infrastructure. All any user needs to access the system - whether to input a service request, check its status, approve payments, analyze data - is internet access, whether that's via a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile device. For companies that want to link their facilities management system to their accounting system, some vendors offer easy integrations to facilitate the flow of data from one system to the other.

Parting Thoughts

Leading retailers, restaurant chains and convenience store chains are increasingly realizing significant and tangible hard dollar benefits from deploying a modern facilities management system. Given the pace of business today, it's practically become a requirement to deploy such a system to be able to maintain store or restaurant operations, ensure *Brand Uptime* and compete effectively. With the never ending mantra to "do more with less," these systems can allow the facilities manager to leverage the latest innovative technologies to do just that.

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About ServiceChannel

ServiceChannel provides facilities managers with a single platform to source, procure, manage and pay for repair and maintenance services from commercial contractors across their enterprise. By delivering unprecedented transparency and data-driven analytics of service quality, across all trades, locations and contractors, facilities managers drive significant brand equity and ROI for their organizations without outsourcing or investing in new infrastructure. The world's leading global brands use ServiceChannel and Big Sky solutions daily to help optimize millions of transactions and billions of dollars of spend annually.

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