

Why the time is now for a mobile facility information technology revolution

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The mHealth movement is transforming healthcare—from data collection to patient monitoring—using mobile and wireless tech. Yet, even with the growing emphasis on cutting-edge healthcare service delivery, most facilities teams are still forced to rely on outdated technology. Especially with regard to how they manage building information.

A 2017 survey indicated that more than 75% of facilities teams rely on flawed information infrastructures. Yes this forces employees to waste time searching for information, but the issue is much larger than low productivity.

Inaccurate, incomplete, missing, or inaccessible information is a significant liability – before, during, and after – renovation projects, compliance inspections, and emergencies. The situation also makes it nearly impossible for facility managers to maximize space utilization, plan capital projects, implement preventive maintenance, and more.

Where difficult problems exist, though, so do significant opportunities. That's why the facility manager who recognizes the potential of mobile tech and understands how to leverage it will stand head and shoulders above their peers.

An increasingly complicated (and expensive) regulatory environment

Between the CMS, the OCR, the ONC, and the OIG, it doesn't look as if federal agencies have any interest in reducing the regulatory burden on healthcare. Facility managers must drive the adoption of solutions that streamline compliance activities—inspections, training, and reporting as well as periodic compliance audits.

Fortunately, the technological ingredients for a solution are there. Among other workflow-changing features, cloud-based storage enables immediate access to information required for compliance from any device and automatic syncing.

Consider the facility manager who can conduct inspections on the fly using a tablet or mobile phone – logging information as he or she goes. The reporting aspect could be automated, ensuring that logged reports are recorded accurately and distributed to anyone who needs to see them.

All of a sudden, manual data extraction is not so time-consuming, nor are duplicate reporting requirements, two significant drains on financial resources, according to the AHA. Given that hospitals and post-acute care providers in the



U.S. spend nearly \$39 billion per year on the administrative aspects of compliance, alleviating these burdens is significant.

The opportunity for smarter asset management processes

Beyond fixing what's broken, advances in mobile tech enable facility managers and their team to build an entirely new model for healthcare facilities management. A new model that consumes data, learns from that data, and improves on everything related to facilities management – from workspace utilization and customer service to capital planning and preventive maintenance.

Mobile devices enable facility teams to collect, store and analyze data with unprecedented efficiency. With a central repository of information and plenty of analytics tools, it's much easier (and cost-effective) for a facility manager to gain valuable insight into, for example, the ideal preventive maintenance schedule.

Every organization is unique, but when everything is documented and easy to access, there's no telling what processes might improve. Think of it like a remote patient monitoring system (something the mHealth movement has introduced). The only difference is, information is being gathered about the facility—rather than the patient—to inform decision-making in the future.

Meeting customer demands: Customer service

The driving forces behind mHealth (and society in general) will only increase the expectations on customer service providers. Building occupants, whether they're requesting maintenance or trying to reserve space, will begin to expect a seamless mobile experience. Mobile work order and workplace management systems can meet that expectation.

The power of analytics will also come into play here. For example, currently, much of facilities management is reactive; customers make demands, facilities teams rush out to meet them. Smart analytics can make this process smarter by revealing patterns in services needs, allowing facility teams to prepare for surges in customer demand. The result is happier, more productive building occupants and a more proactive facility team.

Emergency preparedness and responsiveness

Recent regulations from the CMS have placed a renewed focus on emergency preparedness for all facilities. Mobile technology makes emergency preparedness much easier because it allows facility managers to distribute new procedures and validate the requisite training.

Gathering facility information on mobile devices also has unanticipated benefits for emergency preparation. For example, in late 2017, millions of Kidde fire extinguishers were recalled. Facility managers everywhere had to scramble to find out which of their fire extinguishers were affected. Had that product information been logged in a searchable database—a feature available in many mobile tools—finding the faulty equipment would have been accomplished in short order.

While being prepared for an emergency is as much about people as it is technology, mobile devices also play a critical role during emergencies. For example, during Hurricane Sandy, 89% of hospitals affected reported communication failures. With emergency procedures available on any device, whether there's internet or not, internal communication could be so much easier.

Moreover, facility teams with quick access (mobile) to utility shut-offs, evacuation routes, and safe refuge areas are well-equipped to mitigate the effects of disasters.

Shifting attitudes enable new healthcare IT infrastructure

In early 2017, several prominent healthcare executives predicted that IT infrastructure would drastically shift from on-site servers to the cloud. Historically, relinquishing complete control of critical data like health records was unheard of. Yet, even big players are getting in on the move to the cloud. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services leveraged a cloud-based analytics platform to eliminate \$5 million in underutilized infrastructure spending. While still far from an industry-wide movement, the CMS' actions are indicative of an ongoing shift in attitudes towards data governance. Attitudes that, previously, would have prevented any hospital employees, including facility managers, from storing data in the cloud.

Competitive and regulatory pressure will persist in healthcare. However, shifting attitudes towards data storage will open the floodgates to the disruptive forces of mobile technology. In the coming years, this technology will move from a promising path forward to a foregone conclusion in healthcare facility management.

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