Technology Solutions for Facilities Management - Now or Never

Many years ago, the driving force for my joining the FM profession was that I strongly believed in the evolution of skills that this industry would require as it matured. My belief has been well proven since and further strengthened. The response to current pandemic is still more so an emergency / business continuity response to a very unique and rare incident. There shall be more long term and permanent changes in the way real estate is built and managed. While some of these could still be categorized as return to best practice, there will also be engineering changes to meet the safe work environ challenge created by this pandemic.

At the start of this pandemic, as we started going into lockdown, all functions and specially the facility management teams had to work with less than normal hands. Also, there is a strong possibility that the resources available were not the highest skilled. The availability was more a function of proximity to premise than skill set. Those who had some or the other technology solution in place were better prepared in terms of data with respect to monitoring the physical condition of their premise, energy consumption, operations of critical equipment and so on. This would have allowed them to take more timely decisions to control operations and specifically waste rather than be reactive.

This reality makes a stronger case than ever for companies to invest into technology for their real estate and facilities operations. Solutions available today are not limited to data capture but also specialise in core equipment analytics which can help improve efficiencies and also warn of impending breakdowns thus improving systemic dependability. Adopting such solutions will help you get more timely, more accurate data which can then be used to develop internal performance benchmarks and even plan cash flows for inefficient equipment upgrade which would eventually bring savings in mid to long term.

It's surprising that most organizations easily moved forward with implementation of financial, HR or other ERP solutions but the real estate function which controls one of the more significant costs stays ignored. Technology can be as useful for a real estate or facilities function as to a CFO in terms of recording & controlling information, its analysis and timely decision making. The lack of it only makes the decision making reactive but the damage is already done. The Facility Manager is easily pushed backed with the question of ROI for investment into technology, but the ROI for many ERP's is more based on the need to control and audit. The need to monitor and control your facilities / real estate (read high costs, if you have to) is as real and critical.

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