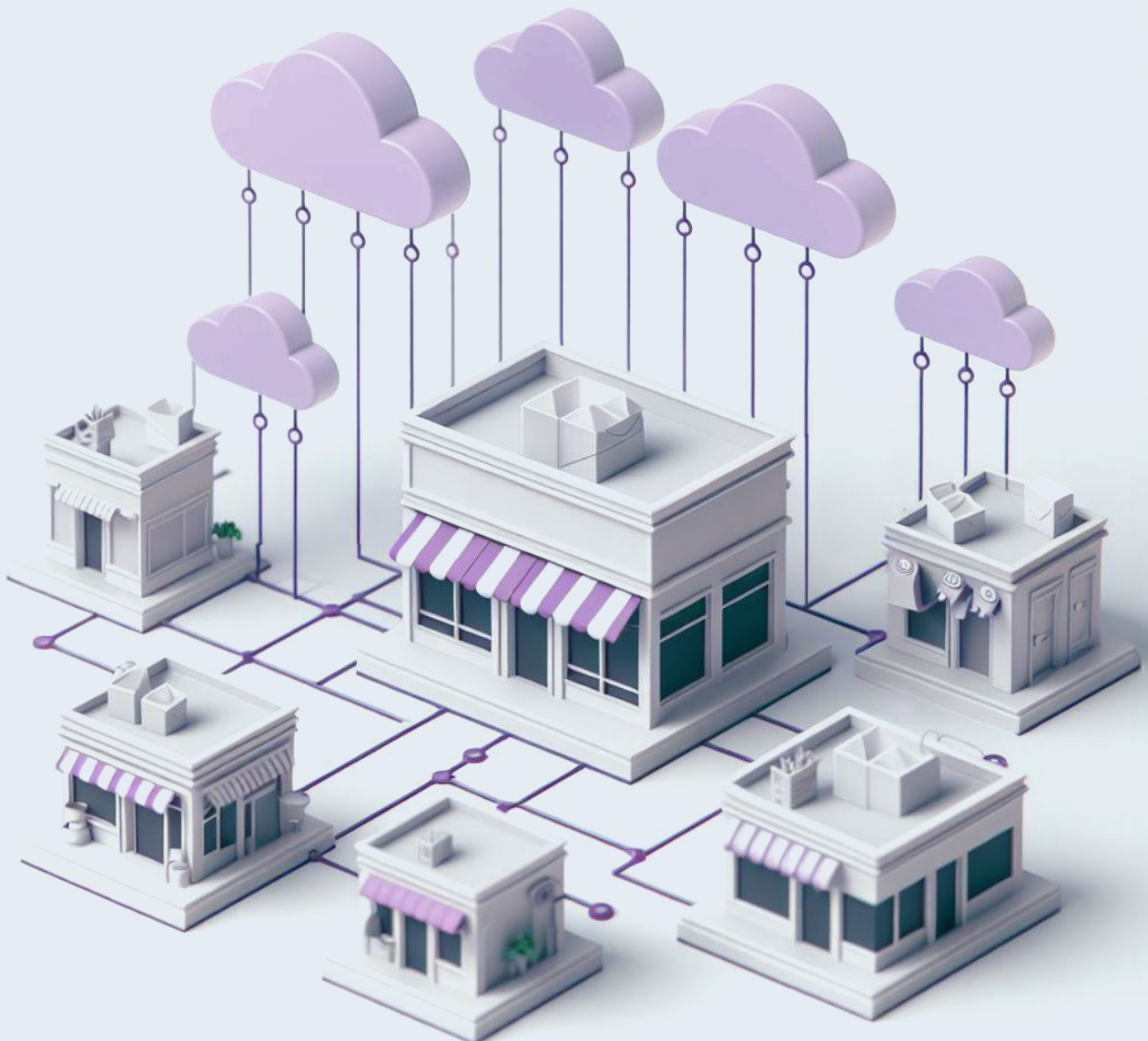# Revolutionizing Multi-Site Facility Management

Expert Perspectives on Platform-Driven Operations & Maintenance Unification

Executive Summary

In the ever-evolving landscape of Multi-Site Facility Management (FM), the present moment is critical. FMs, the unsung heroes ensuring the seamless operation of diverse facilities, find themselves at a crossroads, grappling with challenges that demand immediate attention and strategic innovation.

As we delve into this whitepaper, we confront the stark reality that the traditional ways of managing multi-site facilities are no longer sufficient. The sector, once characterized by routine tasks and reactive approaches, the sector is now caught in a whirlwind of change.

Skilled labor shortages, slimming profit margins, escalating operating costs, and the urgency to meet compliance standards have created a perfect storm, necessitating a paradigm shift in how multi-site FMs approach their craft.

At the heart of this narrative are the myriad challenges multi-site facility operators face. The current software ecosystem for multi-site facility operations often acts as a hindrance rather than an aid, reflecting outdated tools that impede the efficiency of technicians and field staff.

There is a pressing need for a systemic overhaul in the approach to software technology in this domain—seeking a unified, genuinely interoperable system, purposefully designed to facilitate real-time decision-making and empower teams rather than obstructing them.

This whitepaper envisions a future where multi-site FMs are visionaries orchestrating operations with foresight, agility, and efficiency–not mere firefighters reacting to problems. It paints a picture of a unified O&M technology landscape where legacy systems give way to more platform-led, mobile-first solutions.

The future beckons, and it begins with a single decision—to reimagine what is possible.

Meet the authors

Basant Singhatwadia | **facilio**

Heading customer innovation and strategy in Facilio Inc's Retail division, I leverage two decades of experience driving Industry 4.0 technologies. Recognized as a leader in multi-site facility management, I've architected and delivered solutions for most of the facets of facility management needs, including maintenance, monitoring, energy, sustainability, and mobile workforce management. My notable achievements include architecting a hardware-agnostic IoT platform and establishing an offshore software development center. My SDLC expertise, acquired through roles in Products, Engineering, Professional Services, and Customer Success, positions me as a versatile contributor to our success.

Jim Owens | **ECO TRAX**

With over 25 years of experience, I've cultivated an expertise in creating value and fostering exceptional growth within competitive markets. Currently serving as the President of EcoTrax, I lead the company's mission to enhance the value and sustainability of transport packaging through a purpose-built platform. My extensive background includes my role as Chief Growth Officer at SDI, where I played a crucial role in revenue generation and business development. In diverse roles over the years, I've consistently navigated challenges, showcasing a penchant for thriving in dynamic environments.

Table of contents

Evolving operational realities vs. priorities for multi-site FMs

Macro Trends

The multi-site FM industry is undergoing a seismic shift, driven by several macro trends that significantly impact operational priorities. In an era where customer expectations are escalating, and regulatory demands are becoming more stringent, the traditional approaches to multi-site FM operations are no longer sustainable.

A closer examination of these trends and the evolving operational realities vs. priorities reveals the shortcomings of the current tech landscape.

Not enough people left to throw at problems anymore

The scarcity of skilled trades is a pressing challenge for Facility Managers in the U.S., reflecting a broader trend of waning interest in critical manual and technical roles. Even with all unemployed individuals finding jobs, there remain 3 million open positions, signaling a lasting labor shortage, according to a recent report by the US chamber of commerce.

> This shift is not just a choice but a necessity to optimize the limited skilled labor available and the high associated costs.

Streamlining operations to combat climbing energy costs

In the fiercely competitive realm of multi-site FM, efficiency is the name of the game. The challenge intensifies with soaring energy costs, evolving consumer demands, and stringent compliance rules. Striking a balance between comfortable in-store environments and cost-effective energy usage is a formidable task for FM teams.

> The complexity lies in the disjointed management of energy responsibilities across departments.

Navigating the anarchy of disconnected point solutions

The pursuit of technology-driven solutions has resulted in an unintended chaos of disconnected point solutions—numerous software applications focused on specific tasks. Existing systems, with their patchwork of point solutions, struggle to provide real-time, accurate visibility.

This fragmentation impedes the industry's ability to maintain a unified view of multi-site FM operations, creating a challenge in aligning strategies and making informed decisions.

Wrestling with ill-fitted solutions for segment-specific operations

In the high-stakes world of multi-site FM, each sector faces distinct challenges. In the grocery business, minimizing food loss battles recurrent equipment failures, outdated practices, and undetected refrigerant leaks that compromise quality and safety.

Big-box retail adds complexity with compliance intricacies, navigating a fragmented landscape that puzzles the development of tailored solutions.

Technicians grapple with multiple work orders, juggling eight different apps, which hinders efficiency and first-fix rates.

Store staff struggle with constant alarms that divert attention from revenue activities, particularly in retail. Distinguishing between critical alarms and routine disruptions becomes challenging.

Internal teams responsible for end-to-end visibility encounter challenges reconciling various operational aspects, including maintenance, processes, payments, inventory, system performance, and budget management.

Existing FM software function as one-size-fits-none solutions that hamper growth, sustainability, and productivity.

Bridging this gap isn't just strategic; it's a lifeline for those navigating the daily challenges of multi-site FM.

Unraveling multi-site FM hesitancy toward tech change

Challenges
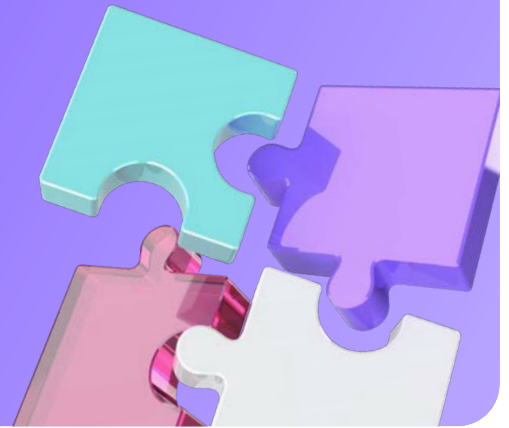
Maintenance, once viewed as a cost center, is changing. FM teams must shift from firefighting to strategic contributors, embracing long-term goals through a mindset shift and tech-driven decision-making. The old "don't fix if not broken" mantra no longer applies in our competitive landscape. However, understanding the valid reasons behind the resistance to change within multi-site FM teams is crucial and warrants closer exploration.

Inertia due to FM tech awareness gap

The reluctance to adopt advanced FM technologies isn't just due to a lack of alternatives but stems from widespread industry unawareness. Technology evolution hit a tipping point, catching FM professionals off guard, leading to technological inundation and isolated point solutions. Recent interactions with multi-site FM heads highlighted a lack of awareness about comprehensive solutions, exemplifying a broader industry issue.

> The overwhelming variety of technologies has left the industry in a state where the whole is less than the sum of its parts, leaving FMs confused and fatigued.

The imperative for a unified platform is clear, yet awareness and education on this transformative approach are lacking. It's not just resistance to change but a resistance born out of fundamental unawareness of possibilities beyond the status quo.

Another layer to this resistance is the mindset that if current systems work adequately, why bother with a change? Addressing this necessitates focused education and awareness initiatives within the industry, emphasizing better alternatives and the potential a unified platform approach brings.

The horrors of failed multi-site implementations

The vast scale of multi-site retail magnifies the consequences — if a solution fails, it disrupts operations across thousands of stores. In recent discussions with a service management company, a leading FM company shared its firsthand experience with a failed solution.

The interrogation was relentless, as they had invested significant time and effort in an ultimately non-functional solution, setting their organization back by at least a year. The commonality of building solutions followed by disappointing rollouts underscores the deep-seated resistance to change in the industry. Instances like these highlight the aftermath of investing in solutions that don't deliver as promised.

> The fear of failed implementation often leads decision-makers to choose the familiar, even if it means sticking with outdated tools. FM leaders must recognize that maintaining the status quo carries risks and costs that often outweigh the perceived risks of change.

Until this realization takes hold, the industry will grapple with reluctance to embrace transformative technologies. FM leaders must confront the pivotal question: What's the true cost and risk of not changing?

Conditioned acceptance of bitter experiences with legacy systems

Users find themselves conditioned by past encounters with legacy systems, where challenges such as complexity in deployment and customization, coupled with prolonged implementation timelines, have become the standard.

> The conditioned acceptance of suboptimal experiences creates a formidable barrier to embracing newer, more efficient approaches.

The familiarity with legacy systems, despite their flaws, becomes a comfort zone that is hard to break. Human nature plays a significant role in this resistance.

Breaking free from the chains of legacy systems requires not just technological solutions but a collective effort to educate, communicate success stories, and instill confidence in a more agile, integrated FM ecosystem.

Pitfalls of the in-house tech allure

The temptation to dive headfirst into technology without a strategic understanding opens up a modern Pandora's box. This inclination is partly driven by the scarcity of innovative and suitable facility management solutions in the market. The allure of in-house tech development, however, conceals several challenges that can impact efficiency and focus.

In pursuit of technological self-sufficiency, retail giants often face inefficiencies stemming from a lack of fundamental understanding when venturing into technology. This approach can result in resource mismanagement and escalated costs. Efficient operations, especially for large retail chains, demand a delicate balance between core business functions and seamless technology integration.

Envisioning the future of platforms for facilities management

Approach

Envisioning an optimal platform necessitates understanding the current landscape. Currently, various disconnected point solutions address specific needs like maintenance, supply chain, lease management, workforce management, sustainability, energy management, room booking, and IoT functionalities.

Now, let's turn our gaze to the future—an idealized platform that seamlessly connects these distinct modules. Think of it as an all-in-one control center for facility management, akin to what Salesforce accomplished in CRM. This unified platform would offer a comprehensive overview, like a dashboard, streamlining operations and decision-making processes.

A platform where functions like maintenance, supply chain, and energy management converge allows facility managers to efficiently oversee and address diverse aspects from a single vantage point.

From tools to ecosystems: Exploring the future of FM with platforms

The concept of a platform in facility management often sparks confusion in the FM space. Let's clarify. Consider a platform as a toolkit, offering adaptable tools tailored to meet multi-site FMs' specific needs. This flexibility replaces an all-or-nothing approach, providing an operational toolkit where each element aligns effortlessly with strategic goals. This adaptability goes

beyond meeting present needs, granting FMs the flexibility to enhance and optimize their toolkit over time. Not every tool bundle earns the title of a true platform. A genuine platform operates as a unified ecosystem where information flows seamlessly between modules, supporting efficient decision-making without sluggish data transfers. The key lies in tighter integrations and fluid data dynamics, ensuring a genuinely unified solution.
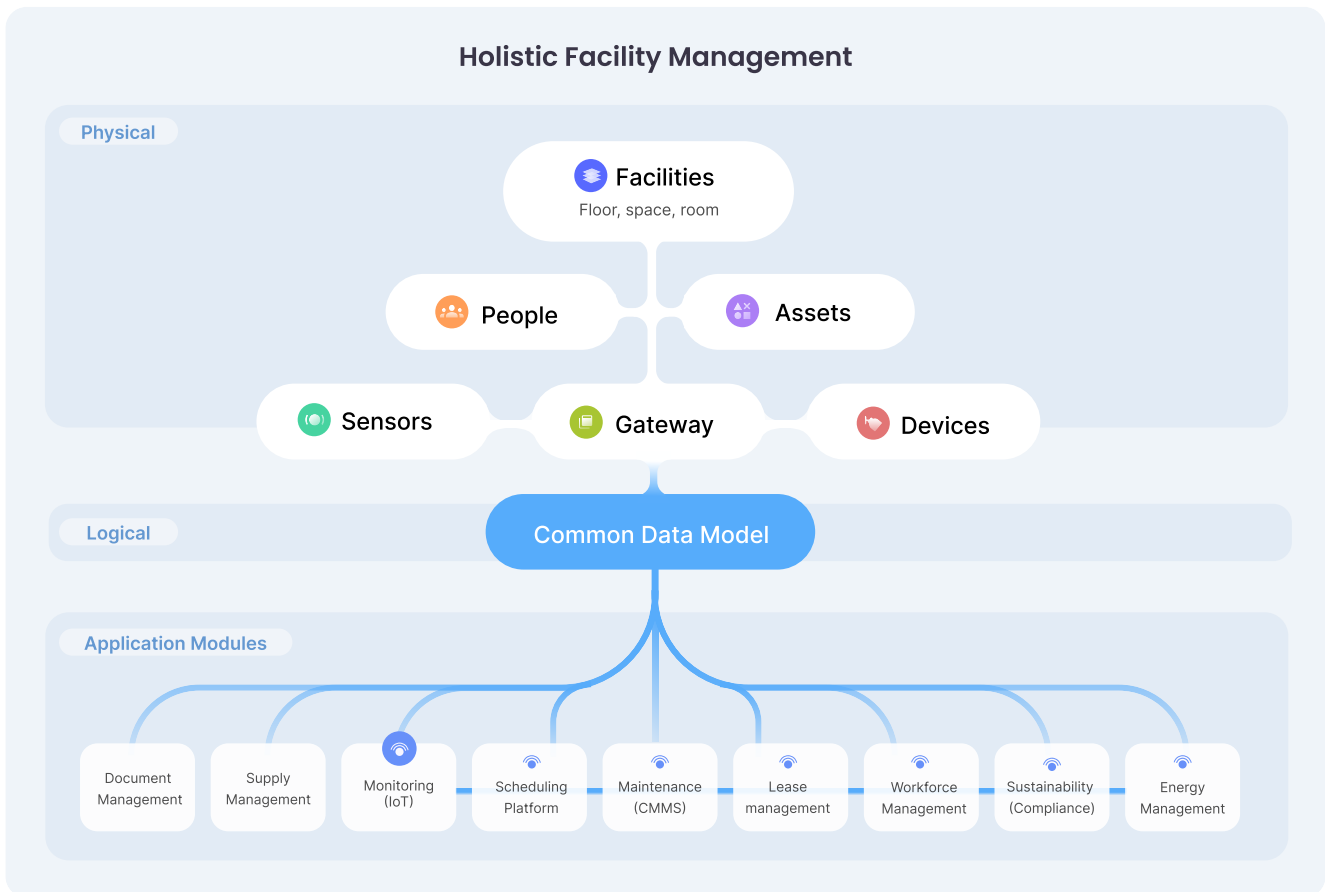
While such an integrated solution might not be a reality at present, the concept resonates with the need for a unified, user-friendly interface that caters to the intricate demands of multi-site facility management.

Previewing the shift towards a connected future: The art of the possible

This forward-looking approach aligns with the industry's evolving needs, emphasizing the importance of integration to enhance operational efficiency, collaboration, and overall effectiveness in managing complex multi-site operations.

The insight is profound – channeling all facility management needs through a single infrastructure could yield a tangible 40% to 50% reduction in solution costs. This isn't just about budgets but operational efficiency and scale.

Tremendous savings to be gained in operational efficiencies

At the enterprise level, the promise of immense efficiency savings looms large, yet the true costs of a fragmented FM tech landscape with legacy systems and point solutions become starkly evident when viewed at the granular level of the maintenance contractor.Technicians, from HVAC specialists to plumbers, are entangled in a web of technology demands, often encapsulated within various applications. The common narrative involves these professionals using internal systems for routing, procurement, and work order management, only to encounter a customer's insistence on a different work order management system.

The ensuing complexity multiplies across diverse customers, each with its unique system – a disjointed symphony of technology fatigue. Technicians navigate a labyrinth of applications, remembering usernames, passwords, and sequences, which frustrates and diminishes their productivity and job satisfaction.

As the field grapples with this challenge, a resounding business case emerges for a single unified platform. A unified backend emerges as the solution to the inefficiencies of managing multiple infrastructures. The emphasis on connecting the dots underscores the importance of creating a cohesive and integrated ecosystem that can revolutionize multi-site FM operations.

This isn't merely about convenience; it's a plea for operational sanity, ensuring that those at the forefront of maintenance can execute their tasks seamlessly and satisfactorily.

Efficient first-time fixes with closed-loop maintenance

Picture a facility manager overseeing a network of 500 rooftop HVAC units (RTUs) across multiple sites. Traditionally, at spring cleaning, technicians would need to inspect each unit manually, a labor-intensive and time-consuming process to identify units that may not be functioning optimally.

However, with a centralized platform, the facility manager can send a command to all 500 RTUs from a centralized command center. They instruct the units to cool for 3 hours while telemetry data is monitored in real-time. Using this data, the platform analyzes each unit's performance, identifying the 20 requiring immediate attention.

This enables a closed-loop maintenance system, ensuring higher first-time fix rates and minimizing the need to reopen work orders, enhancing overall system reliability and reducing downtime.

Elevating HVAC management with intelligent maintenance

Transitioning from traditional HVAC preventative maintenance to intelligent maintenance marks a significant advancement in facility management. In this innovative approach, cooling needs are addressed dynamically through setpoint adjustments rather than relying solely on scheduled inspections and upkeep.

When a cooling requirement arises, the system automatically initiates setpoint changes and runs predefined rules to assess HVAC unit performance.

This forward-thinking strategy boosts HVAC efficiency, reduces energy consumption, and lowers the risk of breakdowns. With intelligent maintenance, facility management enters a new era of reliability, energy savings, and streamlined operations.

Continuous compliance with enterprise setpoint standards

It's a Friday evening, and employees are ready to wrap up for the week. Suddenly, a glitch arises at one of the retail stores: the refrigerator isn't cooling properly. In a rush to resolve the issue, a technician manually adjusts the set point from 40 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit, just enough to mask the problem temporarily. However, this quick fix comes at a cost – increased energy consumption.

With a centralized platform, set point data is continuously monitored in real time. Any deviation from predefined corporate standards is immediately flagged for attention. In the past, grocers relied on periodic manual inspections to ensure compliance, an inefficient and resource-intensive process.

> With continuous commissioning facilitated by the platform, set points are monitored around the clock, ensuring constant adherence to corporate standards.

This saves energy and eliminates the need for manual checks, streamlining compliance efforts and reducing operational costs.

Beyond mere regulatory deadlines, this technology-driven approach transforms preventative maintenance. The platform enables proactive asset management by integrating monitoring systems with maintenance processes, translating to significant cost savings.

Agile response during demand response events

It's a sweltering summer day, with electricity demand soaring citywide. To alleviate strain on the grid, the utility company initiates a demand response event, urging commercial establishments to curtail energy usage. Traditionally, retail stores manually tweak setpoints on HVAC systems or refrigeration units to conserve energy during such events.

Yet, with an integrated platform, enterprise control of setpoints during demand response events becomes automated and efficient. As soon as the platform receives notifications of demand response events from the utility company, it swiftly adjusts setpoints across all stores.

For instance, HVAC setpoints may be nudged up a few degrees or refrigeration unit parameters optimized, all aimed at curbing energy usage while maintaining operational effectiveness.

This proactive strategy boosts energy efficiency and slashes manual intervention, empowering retailers to focus on core operations while reducing their environmental impact and operational expenses.

Streamlining parts procurement for swift repairs

When a technician arrives to repair a malfunctioning HVAC unit in a retail store, time is of the essence. In the past, ordering parts could cause delays, extending repair times and disrupting operations.

With an integrated maintenance system, this process is streamlined. The technician inputs the required parts into the system, triggering an automatic order. The system communicates with suppliers or warehouses to expedite delivery. Consequently, the technician has the necessary parts within hours, minimizing downtime and ensuring swift repairs.

Optimizing energy usage with occupancy-based controls

Traditionally, heating or cooling systems may operate continuously, regardless of occupancy, leading to energy waste. With advanced building automation systems, rooms can have occupancy sensors linked to heating/cooling controls. When a room is occupied, the system activates the heating or cooling to maintain the desired temperature.

Conversely, the system automatically adjusts to an energy-saving "unoccupied" setpoint when the room is unoccupied.

For instance, in an office space, if an occupancy sensor detects activity in a conference room, the heating or cooling system activates to ensure comfort for occupants. However, if the room remains unoccupied for a designated period, the system switches to an energy-saving setpoint to conserve energy.

Implementing occupancy-based heating/cooling controls allows building operators to optimize energy usage, cut utility costs, and minimize environmental impact.

Driving holistic sustainability reporting with integrated modules

Integrating maintenance, energy management, compliance, and monitoring modules within a centralized platform in sustainability data gathering is invaluable. For instance, as stricter regulations loom in the US, meticulous tracking of various activities becomes imperative.

Consider service technicians traveling from their homes to worksites, stopping at multiple stores to procure parts along the way. Each mile traveled needs accurate recording for sustainability reporting. With all modules operating within the platform, this data is seamlessly collected and centralized, enabling easy access and accurate reporting.

Whether tracking refrigerant leak compliance, monitoring energy consumption, or recording maintenance activities, the platform ensures that all relevant data is efficiently captured and readily available for comprehensive sustainability reporting.

From streamlined operations to enhanced decision-making capabilities, integrating disparate modules into unified ecosystems offers unparalleled efficiency and adaptability.

Navigating the crossroads: Legacy thought vs. Multi-site FM revolution

Way forward

In the realm of multi-site FM operations, the reluctance to part with familiar legacy systems is understandable, given their complexity, the work that would go into change, and the very tendency of humans to stick with the familiar.

However, success in this industry depends on adaptability. The call for change echoes, urging a departure from archaic norms.

Consider the nimble startup – unburdened by tradition, forging ahead with innovation, and free from outdated practices. Even with limited funds, startups leverage technology, delivering value – a crucial lesson for those entrenched in the familiar.

The evolving narrative emphasizes adaptability as the key to survival and prosperity, signaling a shift toward a future where efficiency, sustainability, and operational prowess converge seamlessly.

From shadows to strategic partners: Elevating the role of FMs

The art of the possible in FM extends beyond problem-solving to encompass broader organizational objectives like sustainability. Achieving this ambitious end goal demands the seamless integration of disparate FM modules.

By fostering cohesion among these elements, FM professionals can elevate their roles from reactive firefighting to strategic contributors, delivering comprehensive sustainability metrics that align with overarching organizational initiatives. A grocery chain in the UK allocated a 32-member team to monitor alarm traffic across 1800 stores. Transitioning to a more automated solution freed up these resources, redirecting them toward more crucial tasks and illustrating the potential for efficiency gains.

The fact is that the in-house approach puts a strain on resources and payroll for a team that would never be able to keep up with modern technology and would be managing an existing solution, eventually blunting their tech prowess and making them fall behind in the solution space.

Unlocking direct cost savings from technology consolidation

Navigating the world of facility management often involves grappling with legacy systems and an assortment of diverse point solutions. Consider a scenario common in legacy CMMS – dealing with eight distinct solutions. Each solution demands its own infrastructure, maintenance procedures, and dedicated teams across various functions. It's not just a financial challenge; it's a complex operational puzzle. Picture the strain on procurement, IT, and the budget as each solution requires its slice. Teams are segregated, leading to redundant efforts and significant resource allocation.

Now, envision consolidating these solutions into a unified platform. It's not just about saving costs; it's a strategic realignment. The call for a more advanced approach in FM is a precursor to a paradigm shift. In this shift, education is crucial. Procurement and IT must grasp the substantial benefits of a unified platform.

The insight is profound – channeling all facility management needs through a single infrastructure could yield a tangible 40% to 50% reduction in solution costs. This isn't just about budgets but operational efficiency and scale.

Tremendous savings to be gained in operational efficiencies

At the enterprise level, the promise of immense efficiency savings looms large. Yet, the true costs of a fragmented FM tech landscape with legacy systems and point solutions become starkly evident when viewed at the granular level of the maintenance contractor.

Technicians, from HVAC specialists to plumbers, are entangled in a web of technology demands, often encapsulated within various applications. The common narrative involves these professionals using internal systems for routing, procurement, and work order management, only to encounter a customer's insistence on a different work order management system.

The ensuing complexity multiplies across diverse customers, each with its unique system – a disjointed symphony of technology fatigue. Technicians navigate a labyrinth of applications, remembering usernames, passwords, and sequences, which frustrates and diminishes their productivity and job satisfaction.

As the field grapples with this challenge, a resounding business case emerges for a single unified platform. A unified backend emerges as the solution to the inefficiencies of managing multiple infrastructures. The emphasis on connecting the dots underscores the importance of creating a cohesive and integrated ecosystem that can revolutionize multi-site FM operations.

> This isn't merely about convenience; it's a plea for operational sanity, ensuring that those at the forefront of maintenance can execute their tasks seamlessly and satisfactorily.

Bridging stakeholder worlds with a unified platform experience

The success of any platform relies on its simplicity and adaptability, ensuring accessibility for stakeholders with varying levels of expertise, particularly in a retail environment where technology should feature user-friendly Graphical User Interfaces (GUIs) for store managers.

Consider the frustration of navigating through 24 different systems with varied interfaces for maintenance operations. Imagine effortlessly creating a work order for an HVAC issue with pre-populated elements and guided questions, resulting in improved technician performance.

Simpler technology = Less frustration, more productivity & efficiency

Collaboration is paramount, facilitating seamless information exchange during maintenance requests and transparent communication between maintenance teams and service providers to prevent issues like rejected invoices. **A well-crafted platform strategically aligns technology with key moments, offering a common user interface for an intuitive experience.** Standardized design simplifies navigation, saving time and contributing to widespread technology acceptance.

Leveling the playing field: Modular solutions to fit all budgets and sizes

A recurring theme in our discourse is the ever-accelerating pace of technological evolution. The technology gap, comparing the UK and the US, is vast–and the UK is at least a decade ahead. This is probably because necessity is the mother of innovation. Retailers in the UK are pressed with space constraints, unlike most in the US–so, they have to ensure their spaces are utilized effectively, efficiently, and sustainably. Larger retailers, in their pursuit of innovation and competitive advantage, often resort to developing proprietary solutions. While some retailers prefer to build and own tech in-house, others are compelled to do so when the market lacks suitable solutions.

However, not everybody has the resources to develop proprietary solutions in-house; not everybody can afford a team of 80 to develop and maintain tech infrastructure in-house. This raises the question of accessibility. Where do they go if they cannot afford to develop tech in-house and cannot buy all-in FM software? How do they stay competitive?

> Adopting integrated platforms emerges as a strategic imperative driven by a dual commitment to operational efficiency and workforce empowerment.

facilio | ECO TRAX | connexfm

A centralized platform providing accurate and real-time temperature data not only streamlines operations but also highlights the cost-effectiveness of technology in replacing labor-intensive processes, empowering employees to engage in more meaningful endeavors.

Embrace or evaporate: Tech's non-negotiable role in FM

Technology isn't a luxury for today's multi-site FMs—it's a necessity. Change is accelerating, and standing still is no longer an option. This is a wake-up call for all in the field. It's not about choices anymore; it's an imperative. The key term here is "future-proofing."

It's not just about securing the profession but ensuring the future of each organization, department, role, and career. Facility managers are not just overseeing spaces; they are steering through change.

To navigate successfully, one must embrace and embrace technology—a survival strategy in a swiftly evolving world.

About ConnexFM

Established in 1995, ConnexFM is the premier authority for Retail and Multi-site Facilities Management. With 750 member companies, it offers best practices, education, and trusted partnerships. ConnexFM fosters innovation, resourcefulness, knowledge-sharing, and ethical business relationships within its community. Empowering FM professionals through benchmarking and discussion forums, it drives excellence in facilities management.

About Facilio

Facilio is the data-driven property operations cloud platform that aggregates operational information across real estate portfolios to help owners and operators optimize performance and control operations, from one place.

Trusted by forward-thinking enterprises across 25,000 buildings of space globally, Facilio empowers FM professionals with real-time operational visibility and complete control over their portfolios.

About EcoTrax

EcoTrax transforms supply chains with a focus on transport packaging. Our platform and experts enhance the value and sustainability of recyclable packaging, streamlining the management of returnable/reusable packaging. We digitally integrate stakeholders, automate workflows, and provide real-time insights for reduced environmental impact and improved fiscal performance.