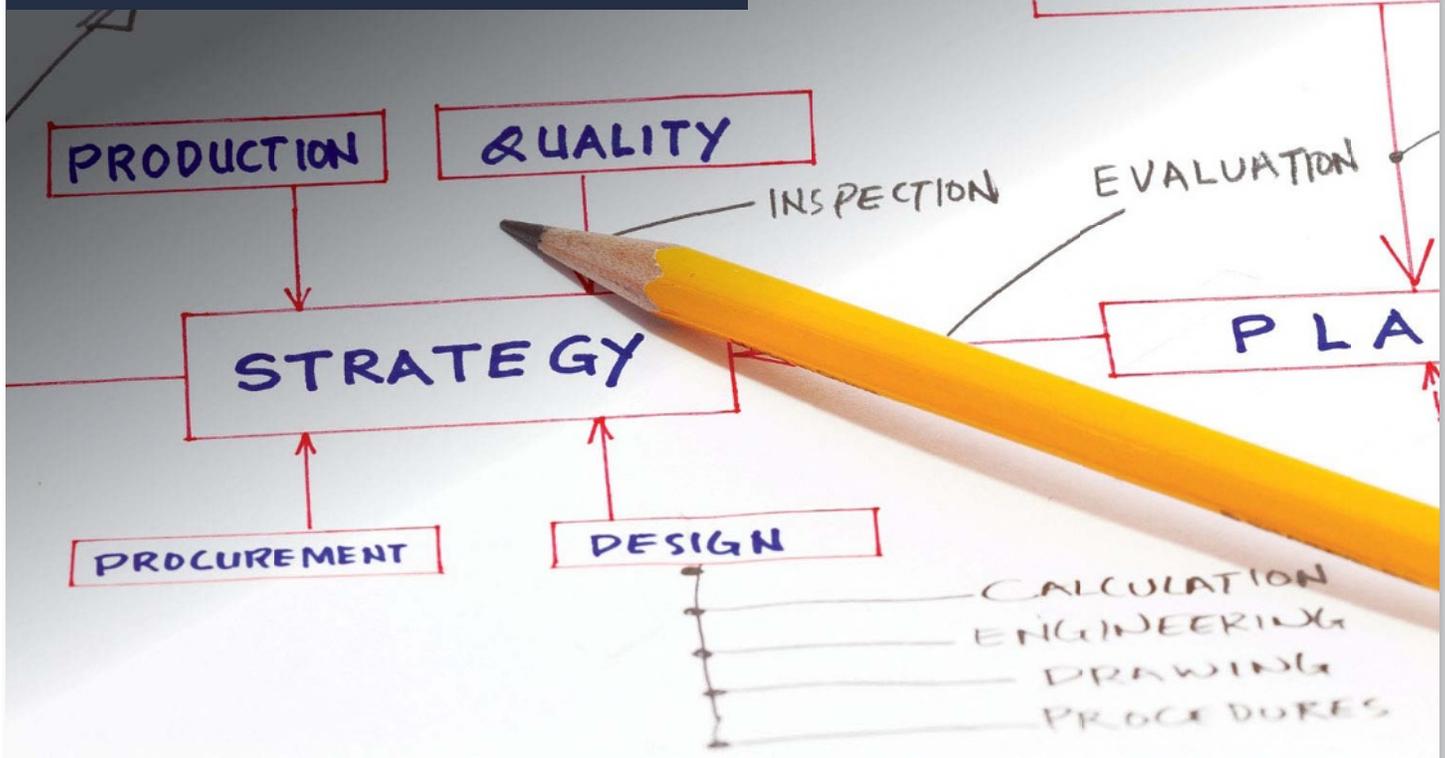


Steps to Successfully Launch

IWMS Solutions



BY PHIL WALES

In today's business environment, companies not attempting to maximize top-level cost savings and return on investment (ROI) by implementing Integrated Workplace Management Systems (IWMS) are outside the mainstream. Yet, driving service alignment and optimizing ROI within a workplace organization involves much more than technology.

As with all support groups, facility managers optimize their value by aligning services with the corporate mission. Managers arrive at this service plateau in two ways. First, they reach an understanding of the true mission of the facilities they support. Then they utilize streamlined and standardized business practices supported by synchronized and normalized information to deliver space that best enable the

mission. This new business environment is defining the relationship between successful IWMS technology deployments within the context of a logical top-down business transformation methodology.

Rapidly changing world

Change is all around and the way people work is morphing almost exponentially. Today's news is how change continues its profound impact on facility management organizations which continually must adapt assets not typically built for this flexibility. Unfortunately, this "stability" within the assets that managers support can lull them into believing the rapid change revolution does not have a direct impact on what they do. This faulty illusion quickly is being exposed.

Yet, the very concept of change is even changing. Formerly, change was focused on how and where companies worked or the way that companies sell and acquire services, Web services and phone apps. Now, corporate change is driving work to take place increasingly outside a traditional office. Not only is this new paradigm reshaping how portfolios should look and react, but also reshaping how facility managers support those portfolios within the broader context of their organization's mission.

In the facility management field, the existence of brick-and-mortar assets requires facility managers to be responsive to activities such as out lights or a roof leak. As a result, managers must continue doing everyday "blocking and tackling" while figuratively stepping back to view

the dynamics of the corporate business transformative and what that means to the assets being maintained.

Beyond this transformational shift, facility managers also are seeing ramped-up pressure to drive efficiencies, which translates into corporate management eyeing indirect revenue producing investments such as real estate and facilities. Living in an overhead environment, facility managers are well aware that decreasing costs without cutting the ability to do quality work is the challenge. As a result, many look to technology as the “silver bullet,” with managers essentially saying, “If I have to cut costs and maximize ROI, I need better information and a way to eliminate labor intensive, manual work.”

For many in today’s facility management operations, technology is that silver bullet; more specifically it is often an integrated workplace management system. Silver bullets improperly aimed can inflict more collateral damage than provide any real benefit. This is because IWMS solutions are designed to allow facility management organizations to adapt them in supporting optimum FM practices. IWMS software is unique in that it is process driven. Being agnostic, the software will support bad processes just as easily as it supports good ones. Too often, people naively assume technology is the solution. Truthfully, technology is only an enabler of business practices and entirely too often it enables bad practices.

The challenge

For every organization, the challenge is to define its true business requirements before investing in the enabler. As a result, managers must reach a point where they know how they must change to support the company’s current business vision. In some cases, this entails fundamentally changing what the facility management organization does. In others, only simple tweaks to current processes and operating standards may be required. At a minimum, a pivotal move is necessary—from being a reactive, tactical keeper of assets to becoming an integral part of the team.

Critical steps

Logically, facility managers ask, “How do we do this, and what steps are necessary?” Six actionable steps should well position an organization:

Step one involves engaging upper management about the company’s guiding mission, its vision and the overall business strategy going forward. Understanding the corporate mission allows the FM organization to assess how the portfolio must be aligned to support the mission. A good facility management strategy will assess which services should be maintained, which may need to be enhanced and, in some cases, which ones should be dropped.

Driving service alignment and optimizing ROI within a workplace organization involves much more than technology.

This fundamental step is markedly different from what tactical service groups do day-to-day, while not discounting delivery of tactical services. Just remember the extinct business species dictum: Legions of highly competent and dedicated professions now are extinct because they failed to recognize the change around them and did not adapt. Stated differently, the harsh reality is that being relevant in business supersedes just doing one’s job.

Somewhat predictably, step two is a direct outgrowth of the first step: “How do we become relevant in the new corporate paradigm?” facility managers ask. “How does management look at and measure what we do?” The short answer is that upper management assumes that daily operational duties and maintenance are being done, and done well. Therefore, they will be more

attuned to measuring how the facilities enable or hinder profit margin, shift to a new product offering more quickly or retain key talent, just to name a few examples. They look at metrics and key performance indicators (KPI) to determine what’s needed to best respond to market changes.

Step three focuses on the facility management business processes to understand what to do and how effectively it is done. Note that the FM staff may be working efficiently but that is not the real issue. Instead, are they supporting the “right” work in a standard and normalized way and are they aligned with the corporate mission? This step not only is focused on the discrete activities of a specific service offering but, just as importantly, on interactions between service offerings. Improving a siloed process may drive cost savings and efficiencies in that service area but may hamper the ability to perform other critical activities downstream.

In reaching step four, managers now have a clear understanding of the impact the required changes will have on current operations. The gap between what is done today and what must be done tomorrow inevitably creates resistance and even fear among those the change will affect. For example, the right skillsets may not be on board, so people may have to be retooled for fundamentally different roles. Beyond the people, the assessment may identify disconnects between what facility management has been supporting and which operations they now must support. This focus on optimizing, streamlining, standardizing and adapting both the team and the assets supported will be challenging.

In a unique twist, within this model it is critical to include a re-focusing assessment that helps ensure another generation of outdated processes is not created. In a profession where decisions tend to be oriented toward the longer term, this is significant. The solution? Build a triggering mechanism to, in effect, send up a red flag saying, “Is what we’re doing now still relevant and, if not, what should we do?”

With processes in place, during step five decide on the right way to enable the new processes and new mission. This may be

done through partnering, aligning with external experts or working on a virtual basis anywhere/anytime without actually having a facility. Remember that decisions made here will have as large an impact on an IWMS selection as any of the above. Too often, major investments made in IWMS technology are thrown into complete chaos because a major outsourcing effort is executed shortly after the technology project is initiated or soon thereafter.

Finally, in step six, assess the functional requirements that must be supported by an IWMS vendor. Several of the steps just presented can have a material impact on selecting the best solution to meet an organization's needs. Ultimately, in the dynamically changing work environment, any new tool must be configurable to support how work is performed. Therefore,

the tool must be adaptable with the ability to be refined in the way that supports the business both now and in the future.

Driving service alignment and optimizing ROI within a workplace organization involves much more than technology. Technology is only an enabler of clearly defined operating practices that are traceable back to a well defined strategic vision and appropriate performance measures. Facility managers optimize their value by aligning the services they deliver with the organization's mission. This new business environment—defining the relationship between successful IWMS technology deployments within the context of a logical top-down business transformation methodology—is the key to achieving service alignment and maximizing ROI. **FMJ**



Phil Wales is the founder of Houston-based EBusiness Strategies, LLC (www.askebiz.com). For more than thirty years he has enabled some of the world's largest private and public sector organizations to develop and apply best practices and business solutions for critical enterprise assets: people, processes, technology and physical plant.

A consistent source of new business thinking, Wales emphasizes the need to focus and share knowledge as the world's volume of information grows exponentially. He is published often and speaks to a broad range of business audiences across the U.S. on solution-driven issues.

Optimize Your Performance. Optimize Your Solutions. Transform Your Facilities Organization.

- Strategic Visioning
- Process Redesign & Standardization
- Organizational & Operational Transformation
- Workplace & Workforce Mobility
- Change/Transformation Management
- Technology Selection, Design & Deployment
- Benchmarking

With recognized enterprise-level expertise — working exclusively with Facilities and Corporate Real Estate organizations — we bring innovative solutions to optimize your investments, enabling your organization to realize true transformation.

ON THE WEB

AskEbiz.com

TOLL FREE

1.888.647.EBIZ

EBUSINESS STRATEGIES
ENTERPRISE WORKPLACE CONSULTING



Envision. Enable. Evolve.