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SMART WORKPLACE 2040

THE RISE OF THE WORKSPACE CONSUMER **18**



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DOC?

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LOOKING
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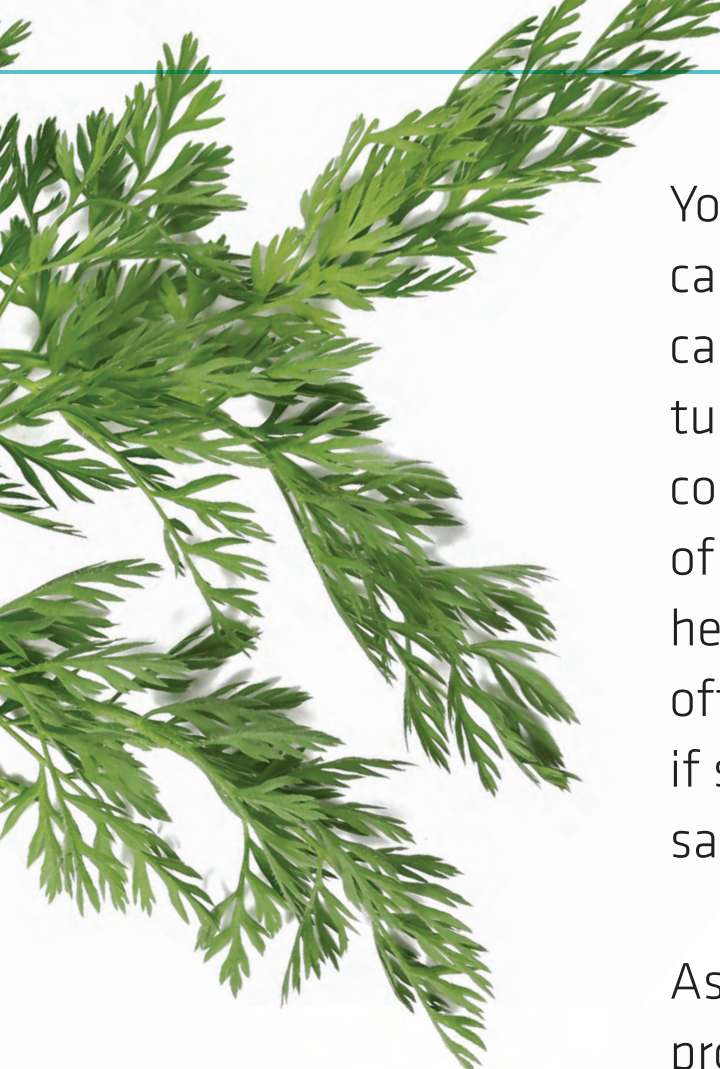




EH... WHAT'S APP, DOC?

BY JOHN RINGNESS

"COURAGE IS NOT SIMPLY ONE OF THE VIRTUES,



You may remember a famous cartoon that featured a wily rabbit called Bugs Bunny (who, by the way, turned 75 this year!). He was clever, cool and lacked the physical bulk of typical heroes of the day. While he was an underdog, Bugs Bunny often arose the victor. I wonder if smartphone apps will have the same successful storyline.

As large-server, silo-based programs and desktop PCs wrestle for a place within the technology domain while chasing smaller, agile smartphone apps and their sidekick the cloud, like Bugs Bunny, the apps always seem to be one step ahead.



➤BUT THE FORM OF EVERY VIRTUE AT THE TESTING POINT.” – C.S. LEWIS

Smartphones

If we take a moment to review the present reality of smartphones' market penetration, it is staggering to see the statistics:

- In 2014, for the first time in history, the number of global smartphone users surpassed the number of desktop users.
- According to a Gartner study from 2013, a third of business intelligence users access software dashboards from mobile devices.
- Current smartphone users amount to approximately 1.6 billion and are expected to surpass 2 billion users by 2016 according to eMarketer.

Smartphone apps

According to Statista, the number of apps available as of July 2015 was 1,600,000 on Google Play and 1,500,000 on the iTunes Store. In addition, the number of apps available on Google Play has grown by more than 300,000 each year for the past four years.

There are mobile apps for almost everything conceivable. There are those which help us track our finances, our body weight and our continuing education or professional development points. There are security webcams connected to our homes and offices. We can deposit funds into our bank accounts by taking a photo of a check. We can order a car, book a flight, and take videos, photos and soundbites to send to family and friends. If we are in a life-threatening situation, we can press a unique sequence on our phones to have an app automatically transmit the GPS location, a 10-second audio file and a photo to a source of help.

Some smartphones have apps that can monitor heart rate, oxygen saturation of blood and amount of ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Smartphones are starting to replace our television remote controls and devices for scanning documents. Games, social media feeds and weather apps are all readily available.

FM smartphone apps

Within the realm of FM, mobile apps are available to assist with a number of functions. These can be used for wayfinding within facilities, providing digital data for facility assets like motor efficiency and communicating real-time costs and electricity consumption by individual assets. The list of these proprietary apps continues to grow every month.

Let's turn our attention to mobile apps that can assist with facility management-related tasks and which are available for free at the Google Play store:

- How many times have you fumbled trying to find your way in the dark because you needed a flashlight? Try "Flashlight" by Surpax.
- Have you ever wanted to measure the current sound level in decibels? Try "Sound Meter" by Smart Tools.

- "Handyman Calculator" by Kalyani — the number of calculations this free app is capable of performing will blow you away. Power conversion? Yes. Rainwater calculator? Yes. Ohm's Law calculator? Yes. Paint calculator? Yes. There are dozens of calculations within this app!
- How many lux is the light level in a particular space? Try "Lux" by Symbol Mobile, which can also inform you what the lux level should be for different built spaces.
- Did you know that you can save energy by installing a V-notched fan belt versus a wrapped-style fan belt? How much? Try "Belt Efficiency" by RIDGID Software Solutions featuring Browning. They have done an excellent job, as the app permits the input of energy costs, size of motors, hours of operation, etc. to calculate annual savings. I personally used this app in India to determine savings in rupees.
- How many times have you been in a facility and needed to quickly measure an area, and resorted to counting ceiling or floor tiles to estimate the measurement? There's an app for that, too. Try "Smart Measure" by Smart Tools.

Keep in mind that these are free apps; however many other apps have further enhancements and are available for a price — some may cost a whopping US\$4.99 to install.

FMCC mobile app

With this penetration of data on the smartphone market and the feedback from its annual membership satisfaction survey, the board of IFMA's Facility Management Consultants Council (FMCC) approved the development of an FMCC smartphone app.

FMCC's vision is "to be the resource and voice for facility management consultants worldwide to leverage our collective expertise to benefit IFMA members and the facility management profession." With this vision in mind, the council leadership wanted to create an app-based digital database to help the FM community and offer members-only benefits.

The app was conceived to create a digital space where FM professionals can instantly and effortlessly access the council's complimentary podcasts and webinars, read the council's blogs, register for webinars, read FMJ, join IFMA, engage with



the IFMA Foundation, connect with one another and access a number of other pieces of data.

To begin, the council leadership prepared an abstract outlining the desired functionality and look, and then initiated an exercise to source a provider to build the app.

The first potential development company was based in the U.K. and offered a package for US\$15,000. Then a council member from Europe suggested an equally qualified company in India which could produce the app for US\$5,000.

Another consultant suggested reviewing the do-it-yourself apps on the market. A market search was conducted, a short list prepared and a contract awarded to a company that helped develop the initial framework. They also published to both Google Play and iTunes stores for less than US\$50 per month. It was painless to set up (even with the extra US\$300 to access their hire-a-professional option). Once the app product concept had been developed, it only took 14 days to have the app approved and published by Apple and Google.

The app is maintained by council volunteers, who edit as needed. If you have suggestions for improvements, the council would appreciate your feedback. You can download the app on Google Play and the iTunes App Store by searching for “FM consultants.”

Collaborative learning

If we shift perspective slightly and look at how mobile apps are being utilized in the consumer sphere, it gives us a picture of what might one day be possible in the facility management industry.

If you are not using this app already, take a look at “Lose It.” This app’s incredible interface manages immense data records and visually portrays the results. It personifies, “what is measured, is managed.”

Users input how much and what type of food they eat daily, and based on input of the type and duration of exercise, the app calculates net caloric count. It is compared to a predetermined daily “budget” of calories. This data is then graphed and communicated to the user.

The most fascinating aspect is the app’s ability to pull blended data from multiple sources. For example, the app lists calories for countless food types but is also connected to data from restaurant chains, allowing users to find the amount of calories in a medium French fries at McDonalds or a grande latte at Starbucks. It also integrates with supermarket chains to depict the calorie count for available food items and uses a global positioning system (GPS) to show you which restaurants are closest to you. The premium version allows you to forecast, and other features, for a fee.

While this may sound simple, the application and integration behind it is phenomenal, and amazingly, the basic features are free. Imagine what would happen if we managed the data in our facilities this way, with real-time results and in a sustainable manner.

The future

Picture an FM app that connects to real-time local electricity costs, factors in demand-side tiers and leverages IFMA’s benchmarking reports featuring regional productivity, labor and retail costs (including consumables like fan belts, cleaning chemicals and filters). How about interoperability within building management systems or drones delivering supplies to GPS coordinates sent from an app on a smartphone?

In the future, FM’s may have access to real-time FM benchmarking data and the ability to instantly correlate that data with current dynamics, regardless of the requirements in the people, assets, process, technology or geographical location. Perhaps one day, we will see a facility management app that connects to big data, maximizing the potential of all available connected resources.

In the meantime, embrace courage by grabbing a surfboard for the big data wave that is quickly approaching. Are you ready for it? Will you be a thought leader in this domain? A great first step is to download a few apps and see how they can help you navigate various areas of your life.

As with any FM process, we must from time to time measure and verify the tools and procedures we utilize and make refinements accordingly. What’s certain is that apps are swiftly changing the landscape of facility management. **FMJ**

RESOURCES

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His passion is to provide sustainable business solutions through consulting, training and technology, especially in the international context.