

Navigating CMMS Challenges: From Frustration to Optimization

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Many facility managers express dissatisfaction with their CMMS (Computerized Maintenance Management System). Complaints range from being outdated and overly complicated to failing to provide the necessary data. Consequently, there's often talk about replacing these systems with newer, better options.

Legitimate concerns do exist regarding some CMMS options, as outdated and inefficient systems are still in use. However, not all CMMS systems are created equal, and sometimes the problem lies in how they are implemented and used.

The Root of the Problem: Improper Setup

The most significant issue with CMMS systems is often their improper setup during the initial implementation. A successful setup requires a clear understanding from the end user of the data they need to collect and manage. Unfortunately, many facility managers are unsure of their specific requirements and struggle to communicate them effectively to sales and implementation staff.

Sales teams may prioritize closing deals over asking the right questions, which would help clarify the client's needs. This results in a "cookie-cutter" implementation plan that lacks the necessary customization to meet the client's specific requirements. When unexpected issues arise during implementation, clients often face additional costs and delays. While paying for software changes is sometimes necessary, these costs should ideally be included in the original agreement.

Negotiating Customization and Configuration

Clients are in a stronger position to negotiate customization and configuration costs before signing the software license. Once committed, the incentive for the vendor to offer favorable terms diminishes. The communication breakdown between clients and vendors often stems from clients not knowing the right questions to ask and sales teams avoiding in-depth inquiries to avoid jeopardizing the deal. Consequently, the implementation team inherits a client relationship without a comprehensive understanding of the client's needs.

Strategies for Improving Your CMMS Experience

If you're stuck with a CMMS system that doesn't meet your needs, it's crucial to take a structured approach before considering a replacement. Here are some steps to optimize your current system or make an informed decision about a new one:

Develop Detailed Specifications: Conduct a thorough analysis to develop clear specifications for what you need from the software. Define your success criteria, including required data, necessary system integrations, and essential modules.

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Engage Your Current Vendor: Share your newly developed specifications with your current vendor to explore if their system can be upgraded or customized to meet your needs. This approach may involve additional costs, but it can prevent the disruption of switching to a new system.

Market Evaluation: If your current vendor cannot meet your needs, it's time to explore other options. Use the detailed specifications you've developed to guide the procurement process and ensure you select the best system for your organization.

Conclusion

Proper planning and forethought are essential for maximizing the value of your CMMS system. By clearly defining your needs and ensuring the system is set up to help you achieve your goals, you can significantly enhance your organization's maintenance management efficiency. While many organizations struggle with their CMMS systems, it's never too late to put in the effort to understand and articulate what you want from your software.