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Building Facilities Infrastructure

Implementing CAFM in Emerging Biopharmaceutical Companies

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The use of Computer-Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) systems by facilities departments within large Biopharmaceutical companies has become commonplace. This is due to the enhanced decision-making capabilities that these systems provide. Unlike their larger counterparts however, most 'Biotech' companies in the early stages of their life cycle unwisely put off CAFM system implementation.

While building or refitting one or more facilities is often the focus of smaller biotech firms' real estate strategy, the real work begins after construction. "Building Facilities" after the building is built involves developing a multitude of infrastructure systems to support continuous and growing company needs. CAFM systems provide a single platform where shared facilities data can be input and maintained. Implementing a CAFM system early on in a Biopharmaceutical company's life cycle reduces data redundancy and therefore, saves the company time and money.

Although some aspects of a Biopharmaceutical company facilities infrastructure are FDA regulated, correct CAFM implementation should not compromise regulatory compliance. Day to day, non-regulated operations may include security, maintenance, IT, telecommunications, space planning, real estate management, EH&S and other responsibilities. Many of these functions have similar information requirements.

Emerging Biopharmaceutical companies (typically with less than 50 persons), do not have the internal resources to develop adequate facilities infrastructure operations. Equipment and systems are purchased without the foresight of long-term data management requirements or the need for integration with other company information systems. Facilities information systems that are implemented are typically independent from one another, resulting in duplication of data input.

As a company enters the growth stage (typically more than 100 persons), it usually hires a facilities staff. The staff may include a facilities manager, maintenance mechanics and, depending on department responsibilities, EH&S technicians, IT specialists, as well as purchasing and shipping/receiving personnel. Although these positions are typically understaffed, facilities personnel are expected to keep up with growing company infrastructure demands.

"Building Facilities," the process of developing infrastructure support systems requires an equally organized approach to development information systems. As staff and software systems multiply, it

becomes increasingly time consuming to maintain and access critical facilities data, especially if the data resides on multiple, autonomous systems. Facilities infrastructure support systems require that a simple, yet expandable database be in place before demands grow, when transition to an integrated database such as a CAFM system can be an insurmountable task.

CAFM addresses cross-functional informational needs, and may eliminate the need for other database systems such as CMMS software. The cost to purchase and implement a CAFM system is equal to CMMS; however CAFM offers many options for complete facilities management. Fewer software applications require less training and implementation time. At the touch of a button, facilities managers have access to information about space allocation, equipment, chemical inventories, and a number of other functions. Where it once took several days or months to gather space allocation by department, CAFM systems can deliver the information in seconds. Obviously, it is important to routinely maintain CAFM data. Appropriate procedures must be in place to capture information changes.

Without compromising FDA compliance, most CAFM systems can integrate with, and accept data from most validated systems. Moreover, with appropriate design and management, a CAFM system could be FDA compliant.

In summary, the advantages of implementing a CAFM system at the emerging growth stages of a Biopharmaceutical company's life cycle can result in significant savings in time and money. A basic CAFM system, containing employee, space, equipment and maintenance management capabilities require neither a large or expert staff to maintain. Consultants or software support representatives can supplement initial set-up. As demands grow, the CAFM system can grow to meet new requirements. By building a strong infrastructure foundation, the remaining system development becomes a manageable task.