Simplify and diversify

Rick Stoor, MD of Templa Computer Systems, explains how clever integration between software systems can help cleaning contractors absorb other FM services in to their existing operation.

Total facilities management (TFM) contracts have always been a feature of the cleaning industry, and yet 2018 has seen a growing number awarded by clients who in previous years might have let contracts for the individual services be won separately.

Local authorities and universities have led the way, awarding cleaning in conjunction with security, maintenance, catering and in some cases M&E services.

DYNAMIC 3rd PARTY INTEGRATION

TEMPLACMS

CONTRACTS
Clients
Sites

FM CATERING
Sales Invoices
Purchase Invoices
Stock Costs
Wages, Accruals

FM SECURITY
Employees
Staff & Sub-Contractor Wages
Billing, Accruals

PAYROLL
Timesheets
Wages Control

ACCOUNTS
Billing
Purchasing
Journals

JANITORIAL SUPPLIES
Purchase <> Sales Orders
Sales <> Purchase Invoices

SUB-CONTRACTORS
Workbills
Invoices

PAYROLL PACKAGE
Employees
Payroll Processing

ACCOUNTS PACKAGE
Clients/Suppliers
Ledgers

Single consolidated database | No data duplication | One version of the truth

If it's cost efficiency that's driving this consolidation, that's not good news for single service cleaning contractors with ambitious growth targets. It also raises the question: what stops cleaning contractors from diversifying into related FM services?

No doubt some are hesitant to develop the skill base needed to support diversification and some may prefer the subcontractor/partnership route. Many more will baulk at the idea of acquiring a company from another industry, either to run alongside their existing operation or as a fully integrated division.

However, for those cleaning companies who consider the acquisition route, what they may not realise is how easy it is to integrate their existing management software systems with any line of business systems already in place to support key processes in the other services.

Software integration

It's stating the obvious to say that the basic processes required to run a business in any FM sector are the same: contract management, payroll, client invoicing, budgeting, accounting, analysis, workflow. What's equally clear is that most sectors will also have their own specialist features or processes.

For cleaning contractors, a business management software system like TemplaCMS has all the basic functionality needed by any business, but with the addition of several specialist 'modules' designed for the cleaning industry, like quality auditing, work bills and hygiene services.
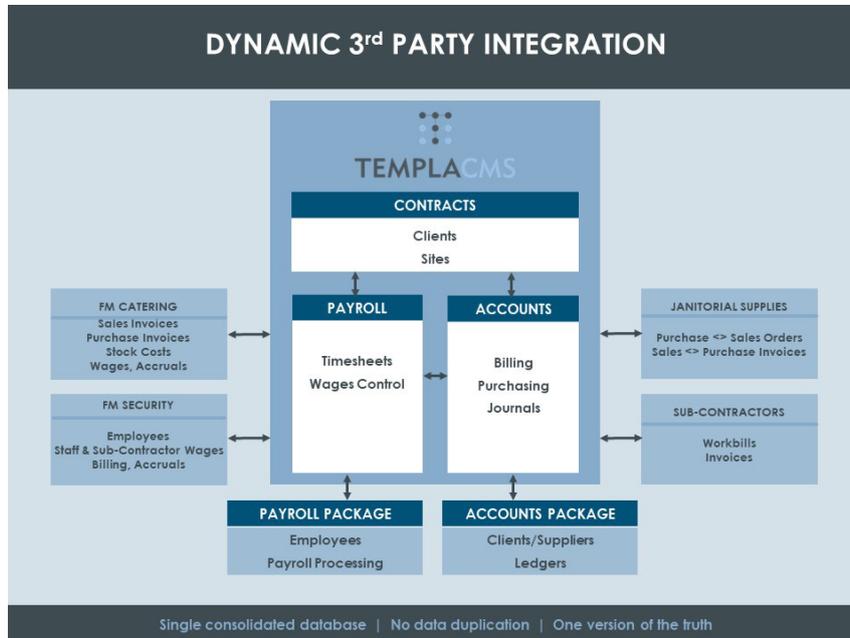
Over in security, manned guarding comes with a requirement for staff rostering and control room operations. In catering, food purchasing, menu management and stock control is critical to the success of the operation.

If, as a cleaning contractor, you already use end-to-end management software like TemplaCMS to run your core processes and you decide to diversify into other services, there are two things to deal with. Firstly, how are you going to deal with the introduction of software to manage new procedures that do not apply to cleaning? And secondly, what happens when elements in those systems for paying staff, billing clients and so on, duplicate your core business software?

The answer, as the diagram shows, is that with a correctly designed software interface between your core system and the new software, you can allow the new software to perform its sector-specific task, such as control room ops or stock control, but extract the relevant data to your core system to perform routine tasks such as payroll, client billing, budgeting, accounts and so on. That way you gain the efficiency benefit from using your core system, but don't lose the specialism of the 'acquired' software.

Working in harmony

As we have discovered at Templa, software developers will happily work together to benefit clients who want to diversify into closely related industries, as is potentially the way forward in facilities.

For example, we have been able to support a major client of our own by developing an interface with Logosoft for their security wing and with Caternet for their catering operation. Elsewhere, in janitorial supplies, we are co-operating with huge names like Bunzl to streamline the ordering, delivery and invoicing of consumables and cleaning materials.

All in all, this is an exciting time for cleaning contractors who want to grab their share of multi-service awards.

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