

Technology

Excuse me: Software has answer to reducing interruptions

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Do you believe if you had a dollar for every time you've been interrupted at work, you'd be a millionaire? Well, you're not alone. Interruptions are pandemic in the workplace.



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According to the latest release of the White Collar Productivity Index, a five-year study by the Institute for Business Technology (IBT-USA), people spend up to 4.5 hours/week "being interrupted." Executives and managers spend nearly 40% of their time dealing with interruptions; the study found they are interrupted every 13 minutes and need five minutes to return to productivity each time. On average, another 8.8 hours/week are spent simply dealing with e-mail.

These numbers may be even higher for commercial real estate professionals. Property managers are particularly susceptible to interruptions, continually receiving requests for information from clients, brokers and tenants. But a growing number of property managers and other commercial real estate professionals have identified a better answer for overcoming interruptions.

What's the answer? Sorry, it's not gadgets, although many swear by them. Cell phones just provide clients and others with one more way of interrupting a property manager. They compound the problem by allowing interruptions anytime, anywhere. Likewise, BlackBerry-type devices make e-mail interruptions inescapable and more time consuming, with their difficult to use keypads. Gadgets simply do not cure the property managers' "interruptions" dilemma.

How about software? Until recently, only two types of software solutions were available to property managers seeking to reduce time lost to interruptions: costly custom solutions and off-the-shelf document-management applications.

Some large property management firms have effectively addressed the "interruptions" dilemma by bringing in consulting firms, allocating large budgets and devoting a lot of time. These company initiatives

may result in applications that address a firm's data management needs, but despite the costs and effort involved, they often fail to reach completion for a variety of reasons.

Some small-to-mid-sized property management firms, unable to commit the required time and budget required for a custom solution, have turned to off-the-shelf document-management software. Many of the document-management solutions available today provide some helpful functionality, including collaborative access to the most current documents available.

However, property managers who only provide access to documents fall short of providing answers. When clients don't have access to answers and specific data, they will interrupt the property manager.

For software solutions to make a difference they must deliver immediate, intuitive, "at-a-glance" analysis of complex information.

Many property managers are discovering a new breed of software tool that combines the cost-effective advantage of off-the-shelf document management with much of the functionality of custom solutions. These new tools provide access to the right data for all the members of the commercial real estate team.

They use a "data dashboard" to pinpoint the information commercial real estate professionals seek. By providing answers directly to the people who need them these new tools reduce the number of interruptions and allow property managers to stay focused, work more productively, and reclaim previously lost time.

A simple fact drove the development of this new type of software: the commercial real estate indus-

try, unlike manufacturing, manages a relatively static and standardized data set. Most of the information requested from any property manager falls within one of several fixed categories: documents, dates, dollars, space, or contacts.

Where manufacturing might need a custom solution for every type of process, 90 percent of a commercial real estate professional's needs can be standardized and packaged together in an off-the-shelf software tool. By providing clients with the means to answer their own questions, property managers reduce the number of requests they get from clients and decrease the amount of time it takes them to respond to the requests that they do receive.

These new tools may not do everything a property manager would like them to do, but they are cheaper and easier to implement than custom solutions and they offer capabilities far beyond simple document-management applications. We created our company to deliver this new breed of software.

It brings building details, tenant/lease abstracts, portfolio and other important data into focus for property managers and other industry professionals, providing a practical and easy solution for providing answers, reducing interruptions, and helping businesses function more effectively.

Property managers are embracing this "new breed" software solution, because it reduces the frequency of interruptions and provides clients with direct access to answers. Ultimately, the "data dashboard" helps property managers gain a competitive advantage to win and efficiently maintain more business while providing a higher level of client service. ■

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