IFS Field Service Management™ helps Associa standardize processes to better prepare for future growth

Maintaining and repairing a single-family home is one thing. Keeping up with the maintenance and repair needs of an entire community is a whole different ball game. Multiply that times more than 9,000 communities worldwide, and you get a sense of the logistical challenges faced by Associa, the industry leader in community management. IFS Field Service Management (IFS FSM™) on the Microsoft® Azure™ cloud has helped Associa meet those challenges by providing a single, flexible solution to manage the service needs of its client base.

Acquisitions led to growth, disparate systems

Since its founding in 1979, Associa has grown dramatically through acquisitions. That's led to a lot of success for the Dallas-based company, but it's also meant that all the operating entities in the system followed vastly different processes.

"Before, especially on the maintenance end, each of our divisions operated in a silo. There was no standardization. They dispatched things one way in this office, and a different way in the next office," said Josh Warren, assistant vice president for field service at Associa. "Standardizing our processes has been a goal of Associa Vice President Tosh Tricas's since he took on his leadership role in 2012. He drove us all to find a solution to our software challenges."

About Associa

Building and managing successful communities for more than 35 years, Associa is the worldwide leader in community management with over 9,000 employees operating more than 170 branch offices in the United States, Mexico, Canada, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa. Based in Dallas, Texas, Associa's industry expertise, financial strength and innovation meet the unique needs of clients across the world with customized services and solutions designed to help communities achieve their vision. To learn more about Associa go to **www.associaonline.com.**

Finding the right solution

Associa took its time researching the options in order to make the best choice for the business. Eventually, it narrowed down its decision to IFS and another leading provider. But after looking deeper into both solutions, IFS quickly became the company's top choice.

"With IFS FSM, we didn't have to get three different pieces of software; it was a true end-to-end solution that met our high-level requirements," Warren said. "We knew we were going to have to integrate it with our other major systems, but we didn't want to have to buy three systems to do our core business."

Benefiting from mobility

Many of the benefits Associa has realized from IFS FSM stem from the mobile functionalities built into the system.

Using IFS FSM allows offices to send work orders directly to technicians' tablets, where they can be accessed immediately. Technicians can then go straight to their first job and clock in when they get there. "We can bill two extra hours a day just by not having a technician come to the office every day," Warren said.

Mobility has also saved time in the company's back offices. Before Associa introduced mobile devices, technicians typed work order notes into an email and sent it to the office, where someone then transferred the information to another system.

"We have about 50 different operations, so in each of those locations, someone was doing that process," Warren said. "Now, that person who was spending half their day keying stuff into the system can spend maybe an hour a day just reviewing it, and then spend that other time going out and talking to clients, generating more revenue."

Staying on top of service level agreements

IFS FSM has also helped the company improve the way it manages service level agreements. For example, if a technician had been sold to a site to work on the first and third Wednesday every month, and was on vacation one of those days, the office handling the contract would either find another technician to fill in, or, more often than not, would try to make up the contracted hours later.

Associa's past processes made it so cumbersome to reconcile those hours that offices would sometimes wait until year-end to tackle the issue. But putting things off usually meant that an office would have to use up all of their man hours at the end of the year catching up on contracts, forcing them to

Benefits

- Provided one end-to-end solution to handle core business needs
- Standardized work order processes across the organization
- Increased billable hours
- Improved oversight of Service Level Agreements
- Enabled future growth without needing additional overhead

basically give up any opportunities for additional time and material work. That's no longer the case. "Having something that's real-time, data in and data out, keeps us closer in touch with where we need to be on our contracts, and allows us to change direction or fix it before it snowballs into a much bigger problem," Warren said.

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Josh Warren, Assistant Vice President for Field Service

Choosing the Microsoft Azure cloud

Associa runs IFS FSM on Azure, Microsoft's cloud computing platform. "Azure is a good solution, and Microsoft is something that's familiar to most people; it's not like you have to set up new accounts with a new vendor," Warren said. "From a user perspective, running on Azure is the same as running on premise, except for the fact that it doesn't go down like other systems."

Azure's pricing structure has been another plus. "The product we're using is basically infrastructure as a service, where the licenses for the servers, the upgrades and patches are all included, so it made the total cost of ownership a rounder number for us to manage. It was one less variable we had to deal with, whereas with some of the other infrastructure-as-a-service companies, it's hard to know what you're going to spend."

"It's also beat our expectations on price," Warren said. "We budgeted based on some calculators that we got from Azure, and our actual spend has been consistently less than that."

Ready for future growth

One of the biggest future benefits Associa expects to achieve with IFS FSM is the ability to manage future growth without increasing back office support. "We shouldn't have to hire as many people to keep up with future growth," Warren said. "Before, we were running things on a ratio of one back-office employee for every three to four technicians. We really hope to stretch that to about one office staffer for every 10 techs."

Find out more

Further information, e-mail info@ifs.com, contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com