# Technology for new dimensions of business intelligence and communication

May 07, 2012 - Design / Build

The current popularity of Microsoft SharePoint stems from the high volume of documents involved in real estate transactions. Companies initially, and successfully, used SharePoint as a way to manage documents in an organized fashion.

New key features included in SharePoint 2010 that resonated with real estate professionals included business intelligence capabilities from interactive dashboards, pivot analysis and reporting, with a new twist in which reports and dashboards could be published through Web pages. This went far beyond document management and thrust SharePoint into the front end of all real estate business applications. SharePoint's adoption continued to grow over the past several years in all industries, real estate included.

Tighter, built-in integration between property management platforms and SharePoint is the next logical step. However, some significant challenges remained, such as maintaining document security and integrating with a property management system, so SharePoint's utility as a full real estate business solution wasn't fully realized. Real estate management companies grappled with getting property operating, accounting and investment data into a place from which it could be used to take advantage of all of SharePoint's new business intelligence tools. Ensuring proper security so that users would only be able to view reports and documents pertaining to their properties and assets was another challenge. In most cases, the task of building interfaces or manually synchronizing and maintaining security protocols and data integration was prohibitive in terms of both complexity and cost, so once again real estate was faced with potential failure regarding business intelligence deployment.

Real estate companies are reaching out to their property management software providers to help close these gaps. New platforms such as Yardi Orion for SharePoint promise to be a game changer. Orion is designed to integrate user and property security, entity hierarchies and attributes, and document access between SharePoint and Yardi's property management system. Even further, by using "out of the box" data warehouse and cubes, it leverages the property management system's operational, financial and ancillary data to produce a complete picture of the business. This includes business intelligence dashboards, analytics and key performance indicators that utilize SharePoint's dashboard and reporting toolsets and enable interactive and predictive charts, graphs, and analyses.

Orion also includes portals and website tools that provide a way for dashboards and reports to be delivered to both employees and outside stakeholders in a secure fashion. Typically, only about 30% of employees in most property management organization are licensed to use the core property management system. Orion exposes, in a secure, controlled way, enterprise-wide documents, dashboards, property abstracts, tenant contact information, etc.â€"to the remaining 70% of the

employee population.

The Orion framework is the key, enabling security to be synchronized between the property management system and SharePoint. It also allows site collections and document libraries to be auto-generated from the property and entity hierarchies in the property management system. The result is that the real estate manager is able to overcome the interfacing problem with a turnkey solution, resulting in ensured security, efficient sharing of data between systems, and a remarkably faster SharePoint deployment.

This ability to synchronize represents a safe, efficient way to share documents and vital business information with authorized users both inside and outside a company. Documents can be loaded in bulk or individually into SharePoint libraries and securely accessed either from the property management system or from SharePoint. Packages of executed lease documents can be scanned and automatically routed to the correct folder while attaching the appropriate meta data tags from property management data. New document library folders can be automatically created when new leases, properties, jobs, contacts and other items are added. Employee portals can provide access for human resources documents and such corporate communications vehicles as blogs, news sites and property sites. Marketing and service request portals with out-of-the-box functionality can also be embedded in SharePoint, allowing users to easily control their use, content and access.

It's reasonable to expect other property management providers to create their own frameworks that will integrate SharePoint with their core business systems. If one accepts SharePoint as a relatively new best practice, then it seems clear that part of that practice would involve enabling SharePoint to interoperate with property management, investment management and accounting systems throughout the industry. And there's a compelling business case for any real estate management system that can easily leverage SharePoint's capabilities in such a fashion.

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