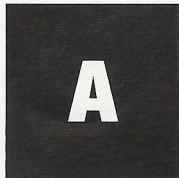


# BMS: A blessing to FM... or not?

*N.G. Thomas* warns FM companies against the use of proprietary BMS software



All FM companies inherit a common necessary evil: building management systems (BMS), a proprietary monopoly. While a BMS is meant to be a tool for FM companies to enhance their operations and reduce energy and life cycle costs, the maintenance of a BMS it-

self is a major cost. FM companies are at the mercy of BMS suppliers. Their business strategy is to sell systems at low price and then make lifetime revenue from its maintenance and service.

Is there a way out for FM companies? The answer is YES. Today, digital technology has many advanced features to help FM companies to gain freedom from such proprietary monopoly.

The convergence of digital technology and information and communication technology is probably one of the biggest revolutions in the FM industry, which makes it easier for service providers to operate multiple buildings from their own offices in an efficient and cost-effective manner, reducing substantial energy and life-cycle costs. However, the effectiveness of such digital systems depends on the design and procurement, engineering and implementation, testing and commissioning of the BMS, as well as the training obtained to use such digital systems.

However, FM guidelines are seldom considered during these stages, and therefore the resulting BMS that is delivered is often one that does not comply with FM requirements. A BMS is specified and implemented more as a routine, and not tailor-made to meet the specific building's functionality and occupational patterns. It is essential for FM companies to know that digital technology today allows for interoperabil-

**// THE MAJOR PROBLEM FACED BY FM COMPANIES TODAY IS THE SOFTWARE PROVIDED BY BMS COMPANIES IS 100% PROPRIETARY AND NOT OPEN. //**

ity between various different vendor systems such as BMS, fire alarm systems, lifts, HVAC, etc. installed in a building. However, such interoperability is not specified during the procurement stage. This lack of knowledge in digital systems and interoperability ends up in the BMS vendors dictating their "proprietary" terms and prices.

Purchase contracts should ideally get the buyer rights to things like copies of the digital data bases, administrative passwords and training on usage of the software tools for modification of the system. The major problem faced by FM companies today is that the software provided by BMS companies is 100% proprietary and not open.

FM companies need to realize that much like how they are able to source BMS hardware from alternative sources, they are also able to replace BMS proprietary software with open, SCADA (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition) software made by independent IT companies. The good thing about SCADA software is that any person with a software background and adequate training can maintain it, without the need of the software vendor's services.

The cost of replacement of BMS software by IT-compliant SCADA software is less than two years of BMS maintenance costs paid to BMS vendors. Go for it. Wouldn't this be a great emancipation for FM companies from vendor monopoly?



*About the author*

**N.G. Thomas** is the CEO of NG Global FZ-LLC, a Dubai Internet City company providing vendor-independent technical services for smart city and smart building controls.

## Vacancies

For more jobs visit [constructionweekonline.com/jobs](http://constructionweekonline.com/jobs)  
Please apply directly to the listed consultants.

**ROLE: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
DIRECTOR  
AGENCY: AVERDA**

The basic function of this position is to drive rapid operational business development for averda across the GCC by leveraging on existing experience, capabilities and relationships in the market in order to achieve expansion success. It is critical that the candidate is already well-connected and highly active with key and influential contacts in the relevant industries and markets.

**ROLE: COMMERCIAL MANAGER - FACILITIES MANAGEMENT  
AGENCY: SERCO**

Serco is looking for a commercial manager who will be responsible for leading projects and bids in the delivery of best practice commercial governance and the application of the Serco Management System with innovative solutions appropriate to client requirements and risk. He/she will lead the process that monitors, reviews and challenges all commercial negotiations in the FM and technology businesses.