

# A HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

## David Bolt, Chairman of Mass Holdings, considers the changes in our industry over the past two decades

Mass is twenty years old this year, but in the current economic climate celebrations may be modest. It is interesting to reflect on how life has changed over that time, within both Mass and facilities management (FM). Taking a technology perspective, we have seen a progression from the “early adopters” to what is today a high-level acceptance and understanding of well developed systems, designed to help control an organisation’s built and workplace assets. FM as a discipline, supported by fit-for-purpose technology, has become sophisticated and professional in its approach to best practice and the achievement of goals.

### “Realising Innovation”.

At Mass we have always seen technology as an enabling mechanism – providing the right tools to foster innovation and facilitate change. It is also embodied in our company slogan: “Realising Innovation”.

Taking an economic perspective, opinions differ on the extent and length of the current recession. In my view it has been ferocious. In comparison to other downturns and with more cuts to come, I don’t see it abating for some time. We have to live with it, but find new ways to cope. That said, I do see a positive side: a period of austerity always provides an opportunity to ‘get back into shape’ and become more effective and efficient, both on a personal and business level.

Clearly it won’t be easy. From a business perspective at Mass, we see our clients under great pressure to become operationally more effective, against a backdrop of budget and staff reductions. Consequently, many of our users face a dichotomy: they need to invest in FM technology to facilitate the efficiencies and cost savings demanded, whilst working within reduced budgets. We all know the difficulty in squaring our fight for investment with the CEO’s mission to cut costs!

New adopters of FM technology may find it particularly difficult. Of course, the initial set-up cost may seem prohibitive but has to be seen against the overall and greater cost – and risk – of not implementing necessary changes. Transformation is more than ever essential to become leaner, more efficient and competitive. It will be imperative to make a strong and viable business case, setting out the cost-benefits of investment in technology, needed to achieve business aims.

For existing Archibus users you have “had the pain” now “get the gain”. The initial and main investment has been made.



Make your system work harder, and expand and grow its uses and applications within your organisation. With the system already up and running it will be easier and less costly to add new applications, especially if the value of benefits – quantitative and qualitative – outweighs the new investment.

### “The human aspect”

We believe one of the biggest and unchanging challenges in the implementation and development of IT solutions is the human aspect: people naturally dislike change and are generally reluctant to move out of familiar comfort zones. Often, clients underestimate this when implementing or extending the uses of FM systems. So I would encourage all users to take this on board and plan for it, involving and empowering users, and always seeking to gain their buy-in to any new application or procedural change. Help them see the benefits it will bring to their particular tasks.

Another noticeable aspect today is the greater concentration on statutory compliance and green issues, and how these topics have become a much larger focus for our clients. The ‘environmentally concerned’ generations X and Y are now moving into middle management and senior positions within organisations. Their priorities are geared towards these issues. Again, technology will help achieve desired results.

### “Competition from fast-developing economies”

Reflecting over the past twenty years, the overall aims of business remain similar, but the difference is we are all faced with a new set of major challenges – deep austerity cuts, sharply rising energy costs, increased regulation, and competition from fast-developing economies like India and China. We all have to find smarter ways to make buildings and the workplace support the business better (whether that’s working in an office or outside it).

But just as before - witness for example the fax machine, mobile phone, and the internet - technology comes up with new ways to help us work leaner, more productively and profitably. Going forward, our job at Mass will be to help you get the best out of technology.

Last but not least, I should like to thank all our users personally for their continued support and business, and wish them prosperity and fulfilment. We at Mass will continue to help clients all we can to support innovation, business improvements and the process of change, so that we will all be ready to ‘catch the wave’ when the time is right. And enjoy many more birthdays.