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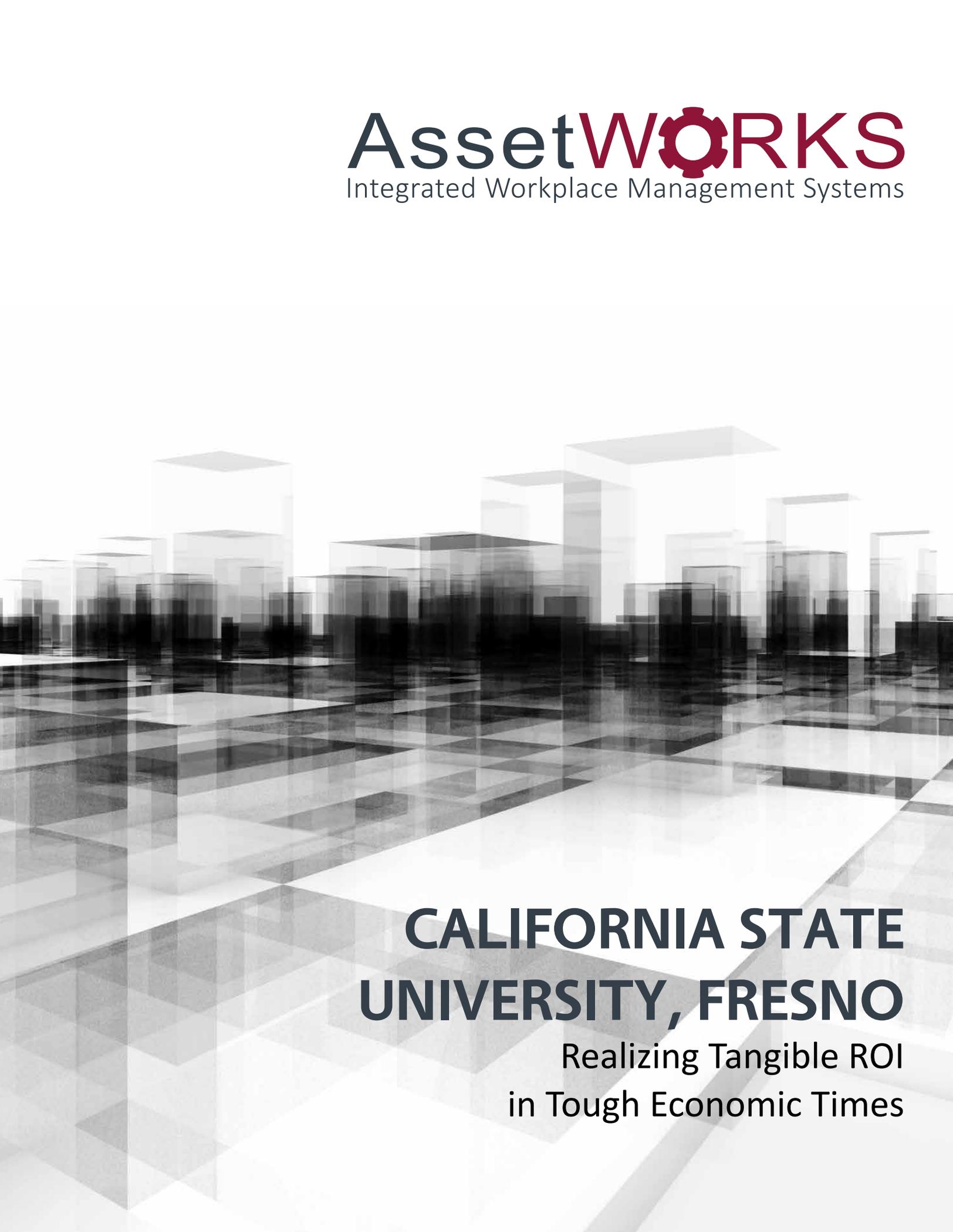
Integrated Workplace Management Systems

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

Realizing Tangible ROI in Tough Economic Times

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Situated in the wide open spaces of California's Central Valley and integral to the state's fifth largest metropolitan area, California State University, Fresno, or Fresno State, is among 23 institutions comprising the California State University System. Founded in 1911, the Fresno State recently celebrated its centennial, recognizing the school's evolution from a humble teachers college to a modern, world-class institution of higher education comprised of eight colleges and schools.

The Background

Over the course of the last 30 years, maintenance management at the university likewise evolved from binders and manual typewriters to a homegrown computer application used widely throughout the California State University System known as the Maintenance Management System, or "MMS." MMS was a simple system that tracked basic work order information, but over time, business processes evolved to the point that MMS could no longer support many schools' needs. This was the case at Fresno State, where employees needed online access to facilities records, more up-to-date information, and the ability to put real figures behind key business assumptions.

Many of the Fresno State's needs also stemmed from the effects of a crushing budget crisis looming over the State of California. State institutions had to adopt innovative approaches to run lean while simultaneously preserving service quality. Caught between budget cuts and growing service needs, Fresno State faced significant challenges.

The Solution

According to Bob Boyd, Associate Vice President for Facilities Management at Fresno State, the situation was initially rather dire. *"My team came to me and said: 'Bob, we're hemorrhaging cash, and we're going to have to do something to turn this around,'"*

said Boyd. *"We were looking for every available dollar out there. Our budgets have declined—not been flat, but declined—over the past five years. So I was understandably skeptical that implementing AiM would help us improve how we 'ratchet nuts' in the field. I really needed to be convinced that this was going to work for us."*

The university initially targeted several pain points for remediation, including improving work management PROCESSES, automating billing, integrating with the university's PeopleSoft ERP system of record, improving inventory control, and implementing a bulletproof purchasing system.

"We needed to know how much money we had spent and how much money remained on our blanket purchase orders, and we needed to provide our employees with complete transparency to detailed financial data, which I think set AiM apart from most other vendors," notes Cristina Wheless, President of ckIS Consultants, Inc., who was retained by the university to assist in the evaluation, implementation and on-going operation of the university's new workplace management solution.

Auditing was another key consideration. *"We're always being scrutinized as to how much deferred maintenance we have and how we are handling our deferred maintenance budget and how we quantify everything. It seems like we always have to defend our position,"* said Boyd. *"You may have an asset that's been on the books since 1951, and the average estimated deferred maintenance is based on a model that factors in age, investment, utilization and so on. When I go after capital dollars, I have to use these kinds of justifications to bolster the argument for a new roof or a new chiller. That's always a challenge in our business, and one of the main reasons we looked to AiM from AssetWorks for help."*

The Results

Bob Boyd is blunt in his overall assessment of AiM. *"I would say our return on investment was in the first year to a positive,"* said Boyd. *"With the initial investment we made, I thought we were on a six to seven year payback. Truly, it was within the first year. It was that successful."* Cristina Wheless is equally pointed. *"For the first time in several years, we finally have enough information to authoritatively tell someone what we can and cannot do,"* she notes.

Since implementing AiM in 2007, Plant Operations at Fresno State has witnessed a 20% increase in billable services year/year, even with fewer personnel and an overall decrease in service requests. Revenues have thus increased even as less work was being performed. *"We saw billable services jump nearly $100,000 from what was billed in MMS versus what was billed in AiM in the first year,"* said Wheless. *"In the second year, that nearly doubled, and by year three we reached over a half million dollars, up from $189,000 in year one."*

Interestingly, the increase in billing was attributable to the little things—things no one previously might have billed for, because MMS was too cumbersome to use. Work such as keyboard tray installations, whiteboard mounting, picture hanging and furniture assembly now resides in a standardized price list in AiM. Leveraging AiM problem codes (containing the estimates) and work order billing (billing to the estimates), Fresno State is now able to recoup this money.

"It's been a big selling point for the staff too, because we had a lot of tradespeople, supervisors and managers who were resistant to the idea of closely tracking day-to-day activities," said Wheless. *"They quickly came to understand that where we had an additional $200,000 in billable services revenue, four jobs would be saved. Everything was explained in terms of who would not need to be let go by showing diligence in the use of AiM."*

AiM's mobile solution, AiM iDesk for iOS, is also in widespread use throughout Plant Operations. With iDesk in the field, Plant Operations has almost eliminated the need for a full-time data entry clerk, enabling the university to repurpose that employee in another mission-critical role. What's more, Plant Operations once had as many as two students and three full-time employees fielding calls to the work control center. 70% of those calls have now been eliminated, because students and faculty can access AiM on the Web, enter requests, and obtain a tracking number. *"In the past, a dean might call me and say 'I turned this request in months ago, and I haven't heard from you,'"* notes Boyd. *"Now when they call or go online, they can reference the work order number and get an instant status update. We also have automated notifications that go out to let them know when work is completed."*

"Our tradespeople found iDesk to be very easy to use," said Wheless. *"It was completely tailored to them with 'channels' or queues where they could look at their specific work assignments and view their PM work. What we encountered with iDesk was a dramatic decrease in paperwork. Looking at how much time was spent printing, how much was spent on paper, trips to and from plant operations to pick up paperwork, lost or forgotten paperwork, wasted trips to the warehouse, and data entry, we calculated that iDesk paid for itself in 4.6 months and increased data accuracy two-fold."*

Operationally, Fresno State has used AiM to pinpoint several areas of inefficiency. *"Plant Operations seems like an easy place to make cuts,"* said Wheless. *"You flip a light switch, and the lights come on. But you rarely give any thought to the electricians and power systems behind the lights until they don't come on. In one instance where we implemented preventive maintenance on an older science building, AiM began cranking out hundreds*

upon hundreds of work orders. We quickly realized that we simply didn't have the bandwidth to do the needed work. In this case, AiM enabled us to graphically illustrate what wasn't getting done as a consequence of layoffs, budget cuts, and staffing issues."

"It's been staggering," said Rick Finden, Fresno State's Associate Director of Plant Operations. "Because of improvements in our PM processes, we're not getting as many 'too hot/too cold' calls. Lighting is very similar. We were able to track historical 'lights out' calls and present that data to the university's administration, which in turn enabled us to fund and organize lighting crews that swept through buildings at night. In the first year, we changed nearly 12,000 lights, and we hardly ever get 'lights out' calls anymore. With AiM, we've witnessed a sea change in how we handle PMs. Before, it was 'fix at failure.' Now we're able to be proactive in our approach to maintaining the campus."

Similar improvements have been seen in inventory control, and inventory carrying costs have declined. "Our ability to capture the cost of goods going through our inventory improved dramatically," said Michele Janiel, Budget Manager at Fresno State. "We have inventory down to a science now: we know when materials enter inventory, when they are assigned to a work order, and can determine whether they should be charged back to a department or are overhead."

Ensuring a sustainable environment is also very important at Fresno State, which recently earned the distinction of being named one of 322 green college campuses by the Princeton Review and the US Green Building Council (USGBC). "We can see very clearly in AiM who our worst offenders are in terms of carbon footprint and other inefficiencies," said Wheless. "We can see what buildings need work. We can track water utilization and well conditions to better understand our irrigation practices and determine whether potable drinking water is being used in irrigation. When you look at the cost figures tracked in AiM, they have really bolstered the case for green improvements like HVAC upgrades in older buildings. For example, we can look at how many 'too hot/too cold' calls are placed to determine where to focus our efforts. We look to AiM as a tool to help us make the case for a lot of change that is 'green' in nature."

Fresno State found that getting meaningful data out of AiM was easy too. "We're able to produce reports in rapid succession to whoever might require information, whether that's

Bob, or another vice president, or the chancellor," said Janiel. *"We didn't have that ability before without enduring long, agonizing hours of sifting through large stacks of paperwork."*

"We can customize reports and get the data out in a usable fashion that we can compare our performance against nationwide standards, whether that's the APPA standard for cost recovery or another standard from organizations like NACUBO," said Boyd. *"We've also found it useful in dealings with local labor unions. One union was having difficulty aggregating key labor information, and many campuses in the CSU system were having trouble providing that data without hours of tedious manual effort. With AiM, we were able to readily provide that data."*

Conclusion

Bob Boyd likens everything done in higher education to a beauty contest. *"There are studies that show that prospective students like to see the condition of the buildings and grounds, and if those facilities are not in good shape, it leaves a lasting impression,"* he notes. *"I can't teach class in buildings that are not acceptable. We address maintenance needs relative to foundations, wall systems, ceilings, mold abatement—the list goes on and on. AiM becomes a very valuable tool in communicating these needs to the legislature, chancellor's office, and Board of trustees—the people who have to try to make funds available to us—and because of the accuracy of the data, AiM has credibility."*

"AiM is also extremely user-friendly; especially when you consider that many of our tradespeople are older and nominally computer-savvy," said Janiel. *"It's easy for them to use iDesk on their mobile devices, and it's easy for them to set up their personal Workdesk layouts in AiM so they see exactly what they need to see to do their work."*

Boyd is equally impressed with AssetWorks support. *"AssetWorks support services are tremendous,"* he notes. *"If we stub our toe, we get a solution. And it doesn't take weeks or days, it's virtually immediate. And every AssetWorks upgrade has been exactly what they said it would be, and it's been on time."*

"I don't endorse products; that's just not me," said Boyd. *"And I was skeptical at the start. But quite honestly, AssetWorks made me a believer."*

Why AssetWorks?

A leader in Integrated Workplace Management Software, AssetWorks provides a single, unified platform for all of your facility management needs.

Dedicated to continued innovation, we're constantly listening to your feedback and ideas for improving our current products. As part of this process, we consistently add state of the art solutions to our product line.

At AssetWorks, we're more than just an IWMS solution, we're a family dedicated to the successful management of your campus/community.

Re + **Ai** + **Go** = Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS)

ReADY
Facilities Self-Service

AiM
Enterprise IWMS

Go
Field Service Apps