



"Go-live" for digital real estate management

At Expo Real in 2018 we discussed together with experts the digitalization of office life and the underlying processes. This year our expert roundtable will be able to talk about the next level – commissioning, initial insights and further development.

By Christof Hardebusch

One may seem like a rather short year to real estate professionals, but twelve months is a very long time for digitalization experts. At last year's Expo Real, real estate managers discussed the technical revolution facing property management with selected experts at the Apleona stand. "Focus on the user" was the main topic of the intensive discussion.

The focus remains on the user this time as well. But instead of talking about tender beginnings and expectations, the expert roundtable will talk now about living practice already. "Going-live" calls Dr. Jochen Keysberg the implementation and use of digital tools. He's the CEO of Apleona and hosts the expert roundtable we convened again. The "ecosystem" of his company and the digital solutions developed by Apleona have already been used several times, including IBM, a major German financial services company and in the future also Siemens on its campus in Erlangen. Sensors measure, data is being recorded and evaluated – the upward spiral, already familiar from other economic sectors, has been set in motion.

The applications are diverse: data-based energy and waste management, predictive cleaning and maintenance, occupancy detection and, of course, the most noticeable user-apps for office users. The fact, that a service provider brings technical and procedural innovations on the way, however, would have little effect on its own – even if he cooperates with the IT heavyweight IBM, as in the case of Apleona. The client must claim these services. "The main drivers here are the big corporates," says Keysberg. "They focus on their employees. The 'war for talents' plays an essential role."

The manufacturing industry is currently experiencing one of the biggest changes in its history – keyword "Industry 4.0". It must be able to react faster and faster to changing customer requirements and competitive situations. Large, immobile forms of organization give way to smaller units that can decide and act independently. Corporations are becoming umbrella organizations and business families.

This development is reflected also exactly in corporate real estate management. Apart from the above-mentioned employee recruitment and retention through attractive working conditions, the focus is also on costs. "Further efficiency gains through economies of scale is only possible for large, transnational real estate portfolios through the digitalization of processes and later on the business model," says Keysberg.

Zsolt Sluitner, CEO of Siemens Real Estate, a visionary of the industrial real estate world and a member of our expert roundtable. In his company, he implements the change in strategy caused by Industry 4.0 more consistently than any other German CREM department.

The big corporates seize the new possibilities of digitalization with waving flags. Hendrik Staiger will be able to tell the expert roundtable whether this counts also true for medium-sized companies. He's chairman of the board of the CREM Association Crenet, CEO of Beos AG and also took part in the roundtable previous year.

Unlike corporations, professional asset managers and real estate investors still hold back strangely. Individual pioneers like Commerz Real are the exception here. Susanne Bonfig, Head of Digital Asset Management, will certainly report on the progress of "her" digital work in Wiesbaden at the expert roundtable. For many other asset managers, however, the motto "still and calm is the sea" applies for the time being. Only a few "trophy buildings" are sometimes equipped with sensors and IT above normal levels. By contrast, this trend has played virtually no role in the breadth of the portfolio so far. Hopefully, this will become clearer as the debate progresses. Obstacles could be inadequate IT equipment and skills – and more often tenants' works councils.

That this will not remain for long, may be considered probable. This is also ensured by educational institutions such as IREBS at University of Regensburg, which offers an intensive course in "Digital Real Estate Management". Professor Wolfgang Schäfers, who teaches real estate management there, participates once again at our expert roundtable and will certainly be able to say exciting things about it.

And last but not least, Stefan Lutz is back again. He's General Manager Global Business of the DACH region at IBM. The fact, that a global technology leader is so interested in the real estate industry and, incidentally, developed solutions together with Apleona, demonstrates the great potential of the industry. In order to raise this treasure, an intensive exchange is necessary, among other things – as cultivated by our expert roundtable. We will report in detail on the results in the November issue of immobilienmanager.

Expert Round Table "Go-live" – the participants:

Susanne Bonfig, Head of Digital Asset Management, Commerz Real

Dr. Jochen Keysberg, CEO, Apleona

Stefan Lutz, General Manager Global Business of the DACH region, IBM

Professor Wolfgang Schäfers, Chair of Real Estate Management, IREBS / University of Regensburg

Zsolt Sluitner, CEO, Siemens Real Estate

Hendrik Staiger, CEO, Crenet, and Beos AG.

Survey „Go-live“

Whether you like to call it swarm intelligence or not, if you interview many experts, you get more valid results. As in the previous year, we support the participants of our expert roundtable and, of course you, dear readers, in forming opinions and making decisions with a survey that we carried out online in the middle to the end of September.

Because we are not talking about planning, implementation and first steps this year, but about "ineffective setting", of course the questions have changed as well. In general, it is about digital processes and services in facility management and the changed relationship between clients and contractors. The results will be available in time for the Expert Round Table at Expo Real. The publication will take place in our November issue.