



Grow Your Business With Analytics

How Commissioning Providers & Energy Consultants Can Leverage Data for Wider Margins

- *Moving away from project-based work and toward recurring revenue and long-term client engagements is a top priority for consultants and service-oriented companies across every industry.*
- *By thinking of their consulting business outside of the hourly model and more as an ongoing partnership between advisor and client, consultants can stay relevant by providing continuous value, while also growing recurring revenue streams.*

For building owners, as facilities become smarter and greener, the demand for specialized consultants such as commissioning providers (CxPs) and energy managers has intensified. But while business might be booming for these consultants, that business tends to be short-term and project-based, with defined parameters and limited scopes of work for both new construction and legacy buildings.

Analytics Tools Help Consultants Provide Long-Term Client Value

Brad White, a principal with Vancouver, British Columbia-based SES Consulting, an energy efficiency and engineering consultancy, asserts that there are two factors shaping the long-term value that CxPs and energy or consultants can bring to their clients:

1. *The emergence of tools that liberate data from the building automation system (BAS) and*
2. *Tools that allow consultants to analyze that data.*

This new wave of powerful analytics tools and cloud-based platforms for commissioning agents and energy managers is enabling them to transition their business away from one-off projects, and place placing an emphasis on building long-term value and relevance with clients.

Looking back 10 years or so, the building automation systems had the capability to get data. The problem was that there was very little we could do with that data. There were no tools available," said White. "We would pull up the two-week trend logs at virtually every point in the building to figure out what's going on. You miss a lot of stuff when you do that.



SIDEBAR: "The big change is having tools that are built to take in a bunch of data and be able to properly analyze that. The thing that's come along is connected devices that will either store all of the data onboard, export it, or send it up to the cloud so that you can get a long-term historical view."



How can CxAs and energy managers best leverage the data from these platforms and connected devices, and grow revenue? Is it through improved tactical execution or through more strategic high-level conversations and consultancy? Yes to both. The answer is a combination of both.





Transforming the Classic Commissioning Audit to Enable Recurring Revenue

Keep it simple with sequences, setpoints, and scheduling

- *A manual audit based on a one-time site visit does little for a building consultant looking to provide longer-term insight or analysis to their clients.*
- *The information also falls short for existing facilities in that it lacks the ability to see trends after installation and over time.*

Manual building audits also require a consulting team to be constantly brought up to speed on both new and existing systems, or search through systems for changes since the last onsite audit. This inefficient process adds little value to the client and does nothing to position the consultant as a true advisor or partner in the project.

Additionally, while audits provide valuable information about a building's systems, the reality is that the resulting report can feel like an overwhelming laundry list of "to dos" for clients, especially without a measurable roadmap in place for a building or campus-wide solution.



Improving business processes even slightly can make a big difference in terms of adding customer value and increasing consulting margins for building consultants.

By implementing weekly or monthly calls to address one or two issues, they can remain engaged with their clients and help them to prioritize issues.

Data presented in the form of weighted cost estimates identify common issues found in commissioning and analyst inspection of data, without the high cost and time investment. Ongoing analytic information such as **weighted cost estimates** allow consultants to review system issues and necessary repairs with their clients **without requiring significant upfront cost analysis**. This enables **CxPs not CxAs** and energy consultants to **fix issues now and measure the impact later**.

By automating system checks and reporting with an analytics platform, building consultants can focus more on conversations with their customers to ensure that changes are implemented, rather than on administrative, low-value tasks. Custom reporting capabilities allow users to drill down on data in order to focus capital expenditures where they'll make the biggest impact.

Help Clients Without Travelling to the Job Site

- *Data analytics tools provide ongoing insight into building and system health, and allow commissioning providers CxAs/energy consultants to better understand trends – often improving client operations and lowering energy expenditures.*
- *This proactive approach is both more efficient and more solutions-oriented than traditional methods that involve a site visit and a manual review of building systems.*

As one example, leveraging analytics to avoid issues in indoor environmental air quality (IEQ IAQ) can cut down on the time and resources required to comb through data or search for issues in a walkthrough. Analytics can be used to determine the pattern of complaints in order to find the problem area, look for timing and symptom patterns, prioritize issues by cost savings, and identify issues before they become detrimental.



Being able to flag issues proactively before an enormous and unexpected energy bill arrives, for example, allows the energy managers and or CxPsA to establish themselves as a crucial participants in of their clients' business operations, and that builds both credibility and trust in the relationship.

Are You Making Money When You're Not Working? You Should Be!

It's literally impossible for consultants to stay on top of a site's equipment performance constantly, on a day-to-day basis with a manual commissioning and auditing process that depends only dependent upon consultants' site visits.

- *A cloud-based analytics platform enables remote monitoring and fosters more efficient team collaboration, since facility system data and reports can be securely accessed online regardless of team members' locations.*
- *Being able to connect remotely and get real-time updates reduces site trips by the commissioning provider agent. This enables consultants to identify problems quickly and troubleshoot from afar, saving time and resources while still maintaining customer service levels.*

When Owners install Installing devices such as building sensors, also allows consultants can to monitor building systems and automation equipment remotely; the sensors deliver ongoing updates on runtimes and identify systemic problems, enabling building operators to take preventative and proactive measures rather than being forced to operate in a reactive mode.

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Benefits for Facilities Teams and as well as Consultants

- *Realistically, not every building operators do will not have the resources to rely on contractors for long-term, ongoing projects and consultation.*
- *Being able to prioritize issues and automate at least some part of the facility team's workloads through data analytics tools can help teams stay focused on what matters: safety, security, health and occupant comfort.*
- *Facilities teams are often short-staffed and lacking in analytics experts, so a technology solution should be both user-friendly and intuitive, without a need to sift through overly complicated datasets.*

Realistically, not every building operator will have the resources to rely on contractors for long-term, ongoing projects and consultation. Facilities teams are often short-staffed and lacking in analytics experts, so a technology solution should be both user-friendly and intuitive, without a need to sift through overly complicated datasets. Being able to prioritize issues and automate at least some part of the facility team's workloads through data analytics tools can help teams stay focused on what matters: occupant satisfaction.



Data analytics doesn't just help building consultants to add revenue streams and grow their practices; the right technology platform has direct benefits for facility teams as well, including facility managers and building operators.

What to Look For When Evaluating Building Analytics Solutions

There are several questions for building consultants need to consider when looking to implement building analytics solutions into their business:

- *Will this offering provide a measureable roadmap of solutions for my clients, based on real-time data and ongoing analytics?*
- *Does it provide the ability to set up both one-time and custom projects? Recurring revenue relies on repeatable processes*
- *Does it integrate and normalize existing and new building automation systems (BAS) so clients can see all of their data in one place?*
- *Does it integrate easily into client projects, which can be expensive and complicated depending on the project scope?*
- *Will this solution help with my firm's ability to provide strategic counsel and long-term value for my clients, versus more tactical project-based and short-term engagements?*
- *Can I establish one (or two) team "champions" that can serve as experts on the analytics system for both my firm and my clients?*
- *Does it provide adequate network speed, data storage, and security?*
- *Is this offering cost- palatable to the market? Does it make the client's investment worthwhile?*



Customer Retention is Key

For consultants across any industry, customer retention is always less expensive than new business acquisition in the long run. Building long-term relationships with your client base is instrumental in creating recurring revenue, and establishing a consultant as a trusted advisor. Building analytics platforms add another layer into this value proposition by enabling consultants to more efficiently investigate audit facilities and systems performance, improve customer operations with real-time monitoring and insights, and make a tangible impact to their customers' business.

