

Group14 Engineering reaps the rewards of standardizing and streamlining commissioning projects with Facility Grid

Group14 Engineering, PBC

Group14 Engineering, a Denver-based consulting firm founded in 1992, provides building energy analysis, energy master planning, sustainability consulting, LEED services and commissioning. A Public Benefit Corporation (PBC) and B-Corp that is also JUST certified and woman-owned, Group14's mission is to inspire better buildings where people thrive.

The Problem

Market awareness of the benefits of commissioning is on the rise. Years ago, it was thought to be only for government projects, but more and more building owners are demanding Cx services. A good problem to have, to be sure, but with 12 commissioning agents on the team and many projects in the field, Group14 was searching for ways to streamline and standardize their commissioning processes in order to deliver better service and to meet this increased demand more efficiently.

Passing spreadsheets and PDF documents back and forth among Group14 team members, their clients, and contractors caused lag time and often created re-work. Contractors in the field did not always update issue logs in a timely fashion and sometimes didn't even receive the latest issues to review in time. The team agreed that a software solution could help, but only if a single platform could meet their needs for an offline mobile-enabled and cloud-based solution to keep all parties in sync and informed on projects and issues.

The Solution

Group14 evaluated several commissioning software tools and platforms. Each software platform was evaluated on real projects. The software platforms were evaluated on training, onboarding, support capacities, ease of use and project usefulness. Forming a collaborative relationship with the right partner was as important to Group14 as choosing the right tool.

Following a recommendation from a Building Commissioning Association (BCxA) member, they ran a pilot with Facility Grid Commissioning Software. The first thing they took advantage of was Facility Grid's cloud-based functional performance testing and acceptance capability. The Facility Grid team helped Group14 set up the project and upload their tests, and Group14's commissioning team saw an immediate benefit.

"It allows me to carry better continuity through the process. It makes me better at my job."

**– Nick Buike, Senior Cx Agent,
Group14 Engineering**

The Results

Group14 saw improvements in many areas, including the issue logging process and site observations.

The issues logging process needed to be simpler for contractors and for Group14's team. An issues log process that's easy to use and up to date is going to be adopted more readily and used more frequently and effectively. With Facility Grid, contractors can be notified immediately of issues that require their attention. Many issues are now getting resolved in the span of a single site visit by Group14.

Engineers and contractors with tablets and smartphones in the field can be alerted about issues on their devices, enhancing the level of communication and flow of projects. With the Facility Grid mobile app, they can receive and address issues and their resolutions right on the spot, potentially lessening the waiting and keeping all participants up to to date on the commissioning process. In addition, there is no more wondering which version of which issues log they are looking at, or how many issues are “Open”. There is also a level of accountability when someone has to log in and write a response that has a date and time stamp associated with it.

To help increase project success, Group14 tries to do a Facility Grid walkthrough with contractors at the start of a project. With the contractors set up on Facility Grid early this helps smooth out the issues resolution process throughout the project.

The site observations process was similarly laborious: photographs and reports had to be manually collated and updated constantly in the pre-cloud based software days. Now, with Facility Grid, CxAs can write an observation report, take pictures with their smart phones and with the click of a button, send an updated PDF report to all project participants.

By standardizing their processes and adopting Facility Grid as its commissioning software platform of choice, Group14 has seen significant gains in efficiency. They have expanded use of Facility Grid from 40-50% of projects to 85-90% of projects.

“We’ve been able to standardize our process better, and Facility Grid has been instrumental in that. Once everybody gets into the rhythm of doing things this way, it makes all of our lives better for many reasons.”

**– Nick Buike, Senior Cx Agent,
Group14 Engineering**
