Situation

The General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service (PBS) manages approximately 350 million square feet of facilities which they subsequently lease to numerous federal tenant agencies. The lease between PBS and the tenant agency defines the owner-to-occupant agreement regarding space, services and support; essentially, who pays for what and how much. PBS uses a document called an Occupancy Agreement that specifies these terms and features that ultimately become part of the legally binding lease.

Core Assessment

For several years running, PBS had been unsuccessfully trying to automate the process of creating Occupancy Agreements with the intent using of a single nationwide tool (OA Tool) that would standardize workflows and data. The efforts were unsuccessful largely because the software development attempts were undertaken as unique-to-PBS efforts and to loosely defined specifications. Two attempts had failed but even if successful, this would have PBS become the sole owner and user of a truly unique and expensive enterprise class application, having to support the total cost of development, sustainment and upgrades over time. Above failed attempts and sunk costs in programming, this approach would have clearly been unaffordable over time because there was no shared user base other than within the PBS community, estimated at only 1,000 total users, nationwide.

Solution

At the time, PBS was already using commercial facilities space assignment and management software by Facility Information Systems (FIS). The FIS product was based on Oracle® platform technologies and was in use by a large community of private sector organizations, academia and government. EIPCI was able to lead FIS to expand their footprint in PBS so that the platform technologies and commercial applications could be used to underpin the development of the OA Tool functionality. All that was needed by PBS was the single additional module of custom software for the OA Tool calculations and data stores that were not already in the commercial product, all still based in Oracle®. PBS proceeded with this option and for just over $1 million, FIS created a fully tested and functional OA Tool in under a year where prior failed efforts at custom programming the entire application had taken many years and cost over $4 million, each.

Results

For PBS, this effort created a sustainable and successful OA Tool for a fraction of what a fully customized programming effort would have cost. Furthermore, as either FIS or the underpinning Oracle® platform technology migrated to newer versions, PBS was automatically upgraded, leaving only minor changes needed for the unique OA Tool module. The cost exposure over time to PBS was greatly reduced and system performance was enhanced.

For FIS, the size of the nationwide PBS account more than tripled over a two year period with sustainable revenues from software maintenance fees and periodic minor adjustments to the OA Tool. Furthermore, this solidified FIS in its market as the leader in enterprise class commercial real property management applications software. With the maturity and multiple functions that PBS supported, FIS could factually claim that it supported more large portfolios than any other software applications and that the FIS product was used to manage more square footage of buildings space than any of its competitors. For a period of several years that followed, FIS was broadly recognized as the leader in this software applications market.