



SMART DATA. SMARTER WORKFLOW.

APPLYING TECHNOLOGY TO RACE TO THE TOP

The commercial real estate (CRE) industry has begun to see a trend: employing new technology and innovation in a way that allows firms to differentiate amongst competitors. According to CRE TechIntersect, the demand to apply technology in CRE is driven by needs for efficiency, client value, differentiation, and by new, converging innovations in mobile, cloud, and workflow solutions.

Riggs Kubiak, the founder and CEO of Honest Buildings Network, says, "We are at a crossroads in real estate today. Some very big names are already making the shift to tech solutions and we're seeing innovation flourish. Think long and hard about where you see your business in ten, or even five years from now. If technology isn't a critical part of your business, then you are truly missing out." Further, according to McKinsey & Company, CEOs are taking a more hands on role guiding their firms' decisions in applied technology, a signal that technology is growing in strategic importance.

PM Environmental Inc., a national provider of property due diligence services, recently announced their adoption of EDR's suite of workflow technology. This Q&A explores PM's decision to adopt these solutions and how they successfully implemented changes company-wide. Interviewees are Mike Kulka, PM's CEO and founder with over 20 years of experience and John Wharff, vice president and regional manager of PM's Western USA region, a recent addition to the PM team with 18 years of leadership experience.

HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THE DECISION TO USE MORE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Kulka- I have a lot of friendly competitors, strategic vendors and clients that I constantly bounce ideas off, from philanthropic directives to team building and technology. I respect all of these people and trust their candid feedback on pros and cons of the multitude of issues you have to deal with in running and growing your business. Also, new hires helped spur new ideas and challenge the status quo. These stakeholders and peers helped me come to the conclusion to adopt the next wave of due diligence technology. The notion of embracing mobile will allow our staff to provide "real time consulting" to our clients.



THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS

The PARCEL Platform is EDR's online, collaborative, project management and report authoring solution for property due diligence reports. Created in 2003, PARCEL has gone through multiple enhancements and recently underwent a complete overhaul. EDR also recently launched EDR Mobile, a field data gathering application that allows site-based information like photos, table data, and notes, to be captured on a smart phone or tablet and streamed directly into a report template. PARCEL has been in the marketplace for over a decade, so this interview will help to flush out the logic and thought process that led PM Environmental to make the fundamental change to their company's workflow process.



WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO ADOPT THE USE OF A SYSTEM LIKE PARCEL?

Wharff- PARCEL provides greater consistency for our deliverables across multiple regions. Cloud-based systems like PARCEL allow for multiple users to be working on the same report simultaneously. It eliminates multiple versions of the same report, and helps prevent remnant language from slipping through, which can happen when re-using reports in traditional word-processing software.

WHAT PRESSURES DO YOU FEEL IN YOUR BUSINESS THAT RELATE TO TECHNOLOGY?

Kulka- We have always tried to stay ahead of the curve, from early adoption of digital cameras when they first hit the market to investing in color printers in the earlier years. We even had a company website in 1993 when next to no one really knew what the internet was going to explode into. As we evolved we were always investing in hardware and software. There has never been a sense of pressure, but rather investing in technology was a necessary part of success.

WHY DID PM CHOOSE TO ADOPT PARCEL NOW?

Kulka- We have been using PARCEL for several years based on demand from some national clients we have relationships with. We have been kicking around the idea of full company-wide adoption for several of these years. With the latest upgrades to PARCEL to further improve efficiency, like EDR Mobile, our nationwide expansion and recruiting of several industry veterans who are champions of PARCEL, we determined the time was right. PM's institutional knowledge and talent combined with fresh blood also helped us to make the decision to change. We challenge the status-quo while remaining steadfast to our goal of producing a quality product.

HOW DID PM MAKE THE CHANGE?

HOW DID YOUR STAFF CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION TO CHANGE?

Wharff- Several members of the due diligence and leadership teams evaluated the system and the need to embrace new technology as part of our day-to-day operations. The staff also contributed to the design of our template, which was recently introduced.

HOW DID YOU GET EVERYONE INTERNALLY ON BOARD? WHAT STAKEHOLDERS WERE INVOLVED?

Kulka- It is no secret that people do not like change. It took a lot of work and will continue to be a work in progress as we continue implementation. Unlike past considerations of PARCEL, EDR laid out a new onboarding plan this time around. They introduced a concept they refer to as the "blueprint for success", an implementation agreement. The agreement was very helpful in establishing expectations and keeping us on schedule. I think this agreement affected both the speed and smoothness of our PARCEL adoption.



WORKFLOW THAT WORKS

PARCEL's report authoring, review and delivery system allow for more efficient and accurate due diligence reports, from ESAs to PCAs and beyond.

- Spend more time analyzing and less time writing using your company's default language library
- Easily assemble completed reports and appendices
- Finalize and deliver reports in a snap, without worrying about file size



OVERSIGHT, OVERHAULED

Managers have access to advanced tools for monitoring projects and reviewing reports while business leaders can keep a pulse on the entire company.

- Innovative features to streamline staff communication, catch errors and typos, and prepare reports for delivery
- Intel to help you visualize your entire business through data on property type, project costs and more



WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF THE CHANGE?

HOW WILL YOU MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS DECISION?

Wharff- We expect to see improved efficiency for all phases of environmental site assessment. The reduced level of effort should help us meet the increased market pressure for faster turnaround times. Less measurable, is the increased benefit of reviewing and managing projects more effectively.

YOUR COMPANY HAS BEEN ACHIEVING REMARKABLE GROWTH. HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY PLAYED INTO THAT GROWTH PLAN?

Kulka- Technology streamlined our expansion and allows for a universal product “touch and feel” from coast to coast. We have not had an issue with continuity prior to PARCEL; however, the bigger we get, the easier the onboarding of new talent has become.

WHAT KIND OF VALUE HAVE YOU SEEN THUS FAR?

Kulka- This will clearly save time in research time, report writing/prep and administrative support for document preparation. How much is yet to be determined. Ideally, the labor and associated overhead saved will be far greater than the fee for the platform per report. However, even at a breakeven PARCEL is a plus as this allows our professionals and administrative staff to take on more capacity given the technological efficiencies.

Thus far, we’ve already experienced benefits like speed, elimination of errors in redundant data entry, streamlined workflow, consistency and a happier workforce.

HOW DOES PARCEL HELP PM DIFFERENTIATE ITSELF FROM COMPETITORS?

Wharff- I hope that it shows we are not resistant to change or afraid to evolve. With EDR and PARCEL constantly looking to technology to improve the due diligence process, we want to be part of that team. PM’s image and brand are very valuable to us.



EDR MOBILE

PARCEL can also be paired with the new EDR Mobile field data collection app for iOS and Android to make site visits more reliable and efficient.

SUMMARY

Making the decision to adopt technology solutions within your company may seem like a large undertaking, as there are many factors to consider. PM's decision to adopt technology illustrates how many of the perceived roadblocks to change that companies face are minor and easily overcome.

For PM, their expansion and forward thinking staff, in combination with EDR's investments and enhancements to PARCEL, made adopting the solution

company-wide an easy decision, and they instantly recognized the benefits. While it is too early to report back on increased profit margins and time savings, the efficiency and process obtained for this growing company provide great value.

With PM's rapid expansion, both in geography and size, the use of technology, specifically PARCEL and EDR Mobile, has allowed for better communication, streamlined workflow, consistent reports and overall happier employees.

EVERY COMPANY IS UNIQUE. EDR HAS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS TO ADVANCE YOUR WORKFLOW. SET UP A CONSULTATION WITH ONE OF OUR EXPERTS TO LEARN HOW AT [EDRNET.COM/WORKFLOW](https://edrnet.com/workflow).

