

Getting With the Program

In the solid waste facility of the future, integrated software will tie the front office to operations and drivers to customer service.

By Penelope Grenoble O'Malley

The emerging field of informal technology (IT) is making inroads in the solid waste industry with software programs to automate previously labor-intensive functions from weighing to billing to report writing. Large operations such as the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA) in New Jersey have gone so far as to install IT departments, but managers of smaller operations can take advantage of outside consultants and custom software experts to help get them what they need from off-the-shelf programs.

Both software developers and users agree that the name of the game is integration, but two other observations are also clear: No amount of software is going to solve problems you don't anticipate, and whatever you buy will be more effective if you keep your entire operation in mind. Think outside the box, says Robert Garcia of Soft-Pak Inc. in San Diego, which markets billing software that comes with features in collection, dispatching, routing, inventory, payment processing, customer service, and what Garcia describes as productivity and profitability. "It's a pretty impressive package and it all goes together," he says. "You can't buy just one part."

"The MSW operation of the future is going to be integrated via software," says Garcia at Soft-Pak. "You're not going to have a route program and a scale program. The data is going to be swapped back and forth. Sharing data eliminates redundancy and the extra work you have to do at the end of the day."



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