USGN Founder & CEO, Doug Sperr, speaks with Greg Gill, Development Manager for LA Fitness on their extensive use of the USGN product.

Q. Can you explain how the internal teams and users benefit from cloud-based collaboration at LA Fitness?

A. The most important reason is the ability to free ourselves from all the paper. We no longer need the notebooks, cardboard boxes or have to wait for Iron Mountain. It's a huge asset.

Another benefit is that accountability is greatly enhanced by our use of OPM. We can easily clarify who said what when. And the ability to quickly reach back 6 months for a key communication is so much easier in organized OPM files vs searching through email. If the team members have utilized OPM, the information is only a few clicks away. If they don't stay current in OPM then the search may take much longer.

Q. Can you explain how external teams such as architects, contractors, vendors and suppliers use USGN and what value they receive?

A. Sure, it's the advantages I already mentioned and more. To be more specific, we manage a host of documents in OPM including communications, drawings, contracts, invoices, change orders, pay requests, RFI's, etc. The value for every team member is having a system that archives all critical project documents. Once team members become familiar w/ the system it becomes automatic...almost rote. It's a good thing.

For example we used to process invoices manually. They would get mailed in, stamped, inserted in the system and handed from person to person w/ invoices sometimes going missing. There was no real accountability. Now we only accept invoices that are posted to OPM. Problem solved…. now we truly have a one stop shop for all invoices.

Q. Who uploads all of 170,000* drawings that you have on the site? How are they accessed and printed?

A. The vast majority of the drawings are batch uploaded by the various project architects. Various team members including LA Fitness upload miscellaneous drawings. For the most part the local architects handle bulk printing via their local printer. What's worked well for us is in addition to posting each drawing, the architect will also post an all-in-one .pdf that makes it easy for others to download and print large jobs.

Q. Are users in the field using mobile devices to view drawings and submit RFI's, etc?

A. Yes, GC's and consultants often access OPM with their IPads and tablets in the field. I occasionally use my cell phone when I am out of the office and need to refer to something.

Q. How valuable is it to LA Fitness to have one place for everything?

A. It's invaluable. A quick example is how we ready our purchase projects for sale. There is always a rush to get the due diligence information to the buyer.

With OPM there are no bulky files to send off any more...we merely give purchasers access to the project or send them a seamless link to the Due Diligence folder that houses all the information they need. Back in the day it was quite a chore to round up all the paper and send it off. Now we can do in 5 minutes what used to take many days to accomplish.

Q. Some companies use spreadsheets to manage projects, can you explain what it is like to manage projects in the cloud?

A. The contrast is like night and day. The major problem we had prior to the use of OPM was the inability to quickly do cross project reporting. It took too much time to individually update each project then mesh the information together in a reportable format. What we lacked was a true project database. Moving to OPM gave us the ability to build our own custom cross project reports.

Also, we are currently learning how to use the Grid Editor tool so we can update all of our projects from within the report vs accessing each project which is quite time consuming. This will be a huge timesaver for us.

Q. What would you tell prospective customers who are trying to decide if they should select USGN?

A. I would encourage them to jump in! I expect they will find other service providers with project ready "out of the box" solutions, but none w/ the flexibility of USGN. With USGN, if we can dream it up we can generally create it either internally or with USGN's support.

We initially tested and found it cost prohibitive for other service providers to customize their product for our use. Our IT Dept. was pressing for a very large service provider, but they relented when they found out the additive customization costs was in the $200,000 range. On the contrary with USGN it's a handful of hours and many of the changes we can implement internally. One of the advantages of USGN is the culture you have created where customers readily share solutions and help each other improve their work product. This sharing of information and solutions has been invaluable to LA Fitness.