

Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
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ccommodation planning

An important function of facilities management is to ensure the timely availability and efficient usage of cost effective space to accommodate an organisation's needs. To fulfil this brief the facility manager needs to understand the short, medium and long term plans of the organisation as a whole and of its individual units.

Knowing what needs to be accommodated and being able to calculate how much space this will require enables the development of a space requirement forecast. This can then be compared with a real estate capacity plan to identify any needs for disposal or acquisition of any perceived shortfall or surplus.

The accuracy of such long term plans is of utmost importance given the lead time that can be required for transactions in the property market. However the criticality of this is not always fully understood by business leaders and the facilities function is often excluded from such long term strategic discussions. Businesses tend to plan in three or five year windows. UK property leases used to be much longer but have gradually reduced over recent years to a UK average of 5.3 yrs in 2010.

In planning for office portfolios there is often a disconnect between the headcount forecasts provided by the Finance function, which are generally based on budget; a different forecast produced by the Human Resources team based on approved headcount from the business plan; and a third set of aspirational numbers based on the desires of individual Department heads.

None of these plans take account of other people that need to be accommodated within the average office building. People like auditors, contractors, agency staff, outsourced partners, joint venture collaborators, project teams and so on are often unseen by such corporate plans but are highly visible to the FM department who provide them with building passes, mail, parking and other services.

As a result, the facility manager is often the only person with an accurate grasp of the actual numbers of people being accommodated by a business. This allows them to track trends and to compare them with the various business plans in order to develop an accurate forecast of future need. Once space standards have been applied a more reliable property strategy can be developed.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors has a useful Book Store at www.ricsbooks.com which has many titles addressing the issues involved in accommodation and property planning for corporate occupiers