

# C ommunication

Communication is the most important and most powerful of all management skills. That is doubly true for facilities managers who need to be expert listeners, speakers and writers. The large number of stakeholders involved in a facilities operation and the breadth of the discipline further complicate the variety of communication transactions required to succeed at both strategic and operational levels.

Facilities managers operate through communication with colleagues, management, suppliers, team members and customers. The perceptions that these stakeholders gain from these transactions and from observations made by others influence everything from credibility at budget time to the chances of career advancement. A failure to actively communicate by not responding to messages or avoiding departmental meetings still sends a strong message, but not a positive one. In short, it is impossible to not communicate so it is important to ensure that you are sending out the right messages.

It is therefore crucial that facilities managers work hard to develop first class communication skills. There are many very specific FM activities where success or failure depends completely on good communication. These include the understanding of customers needs and wants, negotiating with service providers, meetings with project teams, interviewing and one to one dealings with staff, presentations to senior management, writing reports, business cases, company notices, making telephone calls and running help desks.

The facilities manager setting out to improve their performance as an effective communicator should closely observe the techniques used by those who are experts at the art. Much can be learned from good role models. There are also many good books and self help tapes on the subject. The training market provides many excellent opportunities to learn from consultants and practitioners although there are very few who come to the subject from a facilities perspective.

The development of a facilities profession that is universally respected for its contribution to business, the economy and society at large depends entirely on the quality, attitude and reputation of its practitioners. In pursuit of that goal, facilities managers must take ownership of their personal development and improve the quality of their marketing and communication activities.

*Two useful books on management communication are "Communication Skills for Effective Management" by Owen Hargie published by Palgrave Macmillan and "Effective Communication" by John Adair published by Pan*