

Facilities Management from A to Z



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K

ISS principle

KISS is an acronym for 'Keep It Simple, Stupid', 'Keep It Simple & Straightforward' or 'Keep It Short & Simple'. Whichever definition is chosen the broad meaning is the same and the benefit for a complex discipline like facilities management is clear. Simplification of process, design or communication avoids waste and promotes efficiency of service and expense.

The multiple stakeholders involved in facilities management appreciate direct and easy to understand transactions with their FM provider, whether in-house or outsourced. The facilities service is perceived as non-core despite its essential role in the operation of the organisation and a swift, seamless and straightforward engagement is appreciated by all.

A facility manager may find simplicity an advantage for the department as well, since it tends to shorten time and reduce cost. Where the FM is trying to use the principle on behalf of users, however, design time may take longer and cost more, but the net effect will be beneficial since products and services which are easy to learn and use tend to be cheaper to produce and service in the long run.

The KISS acronym was allegedly first coined by Kelly Johnson, lead engineer at the Lockheed Skunk Works, creators of the Lockheed U-2 and SR-71 Blackbird spy planes, among many others. While popular usage inserts the comma as 'Keep it simple, stupid', Johnson translated it as 'Keep it simple stupid'. There was no implicit meaning that an engineer was stupid, just the opposite.

The principle is best exemplified by the story of Johnson handing a team of design engineers a handful of tools, with the challenge that the jet aircraft they were designing must be repairable by an average mechanic in the field under combat conditions with only these tools. Hence, the 'stupid' refers to the relationship between the way things break and the sophistication available to fix them.

KISS is closely related to other efficiency models such as Simplification, Minimalism and Occam's Razor. Each promotes the concept of lean and efficient processes that avoid wasted effort or distraction. In facilities management time, resource and money are always at a premium and a consistent focus on delivering the desired outcome for the lowest investment of each is always a desired strategy.

The adoption of the KISS principle in the design, construction and operation of facilities and their supporting services therefore benefits the facility manager, the organisation they serve, their team and all other stakeholders.

A classic and worthwhile book on the art of simplifying complexity is 'Simplicity' by Edward de Bono, published by Penguin ISBN-10: 0141033096