

Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
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Management Information

Information is an essential tool for all managers in planning and decision making and is particularly powerful when captured in a structured management information system (MIS). For those responsible for the management of facilities such information is vital because of the diverse nature of the role, the sheer volume of transactions and stakeholder interfaces and the geographic spread of many facility portfolios.

A good manager has to know what is going on in the operation under their control and in the organisation that they serve. Senior management will expect the operational manager to have key numbers and issues at their fingertips. People in the team rely on their line manager understanding how the detail of daily activities relates to the bigger picture. Decisions about long term strategies and sound business case decisions depend on robust management data.

The challenge lies in sifting through reams of operational records to select the key pieces of data that can be converted into useful management information. This is where the use of information technology can be extremely effective. MIS systems can be used to transform data into information useful for decision making. Computers can provide financial statements and performance reports to assist in the planning, monitoring and implementation of strategy.

An MIS system operating as part of an integrated Computer Aided Facility Management system provides a valuable function in that they can collate into coherent reports unmanageable volumes of data that would otherwise be broadly useless to decision makers. By studying these reports the FM can identify patterns and trends that would have remained unseen if the raw data were consulted manually.

MIS systems can also use these raw data to run simulations – hypothetical scenarios that answer a range of ‘what if’ questions regarding alterations in strategy. For instance, MIS systems can provide predictions about the effect on operating costs that an increase in building occupancy would have. These Decision Support Systems (DSS) enable more informed decision making within an enterprise than would be possible without MIS systems.

The British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) has published a useful Best Practice Guide to Selecting FM Software and has an Information Management Special Interest Group and an Information Management Discussion Forum. All of these can be found at www.bifm.org.uk