

Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
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U pwards Communication

Communication skills are among the most important of all the facility management competences. That is especially true in the FM's dealings with senior management. The technical complexity and 'non-core' image of facilities management often means that the strategic leadership of an organisation pay little attention to their FM affairs.

Because of this, facilities management is an area where a degree of assertiveness with more senior colleagues is necessary. As workplace regulation and compliance issues become of increasing importance it is imperative that those responsible are comfortable dealing with senior stakeholders. Facility managers require a fairly robust personality and the ability to clearly state when things are right or wrong.

Communicating unpopular news is the FM's frequent lot and influencing and persuasion skills are therefore crucial. An authoritative and credible manner is very helpful especially when dealing with managers who may be much older and more experienced. When dealing with more senior people, the keys to effective upward management are brevity and appropriateness.

A short presentation by someone who knows what they are talking about, using familiar language, which is made relevant to each person's own perspective will be much more effective than a detailed explanation in technical jargon that doesn't make a strategic point.

Business leaders are not interested in asset lifecycles, COSHH reports or shift rotas. What they care about are issues like efficiency, risk, reputation and productivity. These are the outcomes of good facilities management strategies and every opportunity should be taken to promote the contribution that FM is making towards strategic goals in these areas.

Business cases should clearly demonstrate the return on investment that the proposed expenditure will achieve even if that has to be couched in terms of cost avoidance rather than income generation.

Facility Managers must accept that their senior leadership really will want to know about the things that matter but that they do not want to waste their time on irrelevant detail. The FM must develop the necessary skills for identifying and delivering the right information in the right way at the right time. Face to face meetings are important for this. Email is a useful tool but is very restricting due to the lack of visual feedback, tone and emphasis.

The most popular communications self help book of all time written in 1936 and still very relevant today is Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People published by Vermilion ISBN-10: 0091906814.