

Facilities Management from A to Z

Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
published monthly in Facilities by Lexis Nexis between 2008 and 2016

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One of the most important activities within the facilities management remit is the management of Visitors to the organisation's premises. Just how important depends on the nature of the organisation and the kind of visitor they receive. Visitors may be important clients or potential customers; they may be influential stakeholders or significant investors; they may even be potential thieves or disruptive protestors. Whoever they are, the way they are handled by facilities can have a major impact on the reputation of the organisation itself.

The facilities team should begin the visitor experience by making them feel welcome. Not all visitors feel comfortable meeting or talking with new people, especially if it's the first time they've visited or if they are applying for a job or similar. The reception team should go out of their way to make them feel at ease, greeting them with a warm smile, a cheerful voice and a welcoming persona.

A professional receptionist will make direct eye contact with visitors, will be the first to speak using an appropriate greeting and then engage with them to find out the purpose of their visit. They will be professional, confident and courteous; using their knowledge of the people and organisation to help them. The very best treat all visitors as if they are their personal guests and every caller as the most important call today.

The same applies when the visitor is leaving the site. Remembering to say Goodbye, Goodnight or other appropriate parting message, pleasantly acknowledging visitors as they depart leaves them with a final positive impression.

The safety of visitors is a critical issue. Ensuring that they are aware of fire and emergency arrangements at the site is essential. If the facility has particular hazards it may be necessary to provide a formal site Induction and record the visitor's participation. They may need to be escorted in hazardous areas and be provided with appropriate personal protective equipment.

Security is another key consideration for Visitors. Depending on the level of security required at the site, access controls procedures for visitors may include a requirement for advance notice and proof of identity; or it may simply be a case of the reception staff observing the visitor carefully until their host arrives. Visitor books provide useful records and badges offer temporary identification which can be low-tech as a simple stick-on badge or a more sophisticated affair with a colour photograph and electronic record. It may not be possible to be at a visitor's side at all times, but, when possible, guests should not be left alone. Not only is this a polite gesture, it is also a proactive security measure.

The Institute of Customer Service has many resources relevant to those looking to improve their management of Visitors www.instituteofcustomerservice.com