

# Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard  
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## **X**-Factor

The role of the Facility Manager is unusually complex and demanding, requiring a convoluted set of skills, knowledge sets and personal behaviours. The BIFM Professional Standards Framework itself takes 60 pages to describe the skills that are “necessary to be a competent facilities management practitioner at all career levels”. It is not a career for which everyone is suited. The X-factor that empowers a successful facility manager is not easy to define but there are a number of common features that seem to characterise those who succeed in this most uncommon of professions.

First and foremost, the successful Facility Manager must be an expert communicator, Communication is easily 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 is further complicated by the breadth of the discipline and the variety of communication transactions required to succeed at both strategic and operational levels.

Of all the communication skills that a successful Facility Manager requires, listening is perhaps the most important. Successful service professionals thrive on feedback, seek it out and make capital from it. Really effective listening is an active process requiring genuine effort and complete focus upon the speaker. Comprehensive note taking, positive body language and intelligent questioning is required in order to completely understand not only the words but the feelings and thought processes that lay behind.

Successful facility managers are always excellent organisers. With so many different services to co-ordinate, hundreds of relationships to manage, and one of the biggest budgets in the organisation, the FM must be an expert administrator. Some people seem to be born with an innate ability to think and act in an organized fashion; for others, the skills must be acquired through training and experience. Organisational ability is a key to running a successful facilities operation and can make the difference between being reactive or proactive when the need arises.

A curious nature and a constant desire to improve are also important facets of the successful FMs make-up. George Bernard Shaw said that all progress depends upon the unreasonable man; whether man or woman it is certainly true that continuous improvement and the pursuit of innovation is key to the continued progress of the facilities profession. Creativity and the art of invention do not often co-exist with the apparently conflicting abilities required of good administrators but good facility managers are able to apply both skill sets with equal proficiency.

The daily reality of the facilities function can be one of constant challenge, frustrating about-turns and frequent disappointment. One of the X-Factor features of the successful FM is a combination of tenacity and optimism that manifests itself in good humour and a positive attitude whatever the circumstances. FM is a service function and a confident professional approach must be maintained at all times.

As with the X-Factor TV show, technical talent alone, while important for success, is not enough to be effective. Facility Managers need to have the capability to cover the scope of the discipline, they also need the range of skills and knowledge required, and they must have a passion for the role. When all of these qualities are working together, balanced and efficient, the X-Factor that makes a truly successful Facility Manager can shine through.

*The BIFM Facilities Management Professional Standards can be found at [www.bifm.org.uk/FMstandards](http://www.bifm.org.uk/FMstandards)*