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Key Words:

Business alignment, Value for Money, customer focus, clarity of purpose, connect – change - support, high performance business units, partnering & alliancing, facilities productivity and business alignment.

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FM Execution. Enabling the M in FM.

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Submitted April 2012. Final Edition.

Abstract

Facilities Management (FM) is often seen as a confusing and complex mix of people, process and technology bundled together to improve the performance of built facilities. At the same time, organisations are demanding a culture of doing more, for less, faster, from their employees and service suppliers.

Good facilities managers are able to execute in the present. Great facilities managers are able to execute in the present **and** adapt to the future.

Now, more than ever, facilities managers need to refine, hone and focus their FM value proposition. Savvy facilities managers deeply understand their customers businesses, are adept at translating organisational need into flexible facilities processes, owning and implementing those processes and demonstrating the FM value that arises.

This paper explores the background and challenges facing all Facilities Managers in today's world. It identifies and acknowledges some of the common flaws in the professions identify and considers typical profession perceptions and performance issues. To address these real FM challenges, a proposed set of guiding principles, enabled through an integrated model and underpinned by relentless customer focus is offered as a potential solution.

Introduction & Challenge Statement

The FM profession as classically definedⁱ is now entering its 4th decade. Despite the longevity of the profession, many authorsⁱⁱ continue to lament the identify crises that the profession struggles with. As a global FM practitioner, lecturer, researcher and consultant, my own empirical evidence (and workload) is littered with examples of seemingly clever and often well intentioned facilities managers missing the corporate target when it comes to demonstrating the value they add.

FM constraints that I witness range from an absence of 'connect – change – support' between the business goals and the FM teams service delivery plans, through to the perennial perception that FM is all about 'bogs & basins'.

One only has to examine contemporary FM Conference titles to see an overwhelming and repetitive theme associated with the on-going (and rather silly) property versus facilities versus asset versus maintenance manager identity, responsibility and value debate!

The “Barbeque Profession” test is always a good bellwether of the public understanding of ‘just what it is you do’. When asked at a social gathering ‘so what is it you do?’ how fluent are you at answering that question? The figure below is, in my experience not far off the reality!



Figure 1: Facilities Management - You Do What? (Rogers 2012)

Until the FM profession addresses the state of its performance, recognises the barriers to effectiveness and demonstrates the business value possible, we will remain trapped in our insular often engineering centric space. Ask just about any CEO today what they believe the biggest challenge they have with their FM team and they will almost always answer - the gap between what my business and customer wants and needs and the FM teams ability to translate these business needs, process the requirements and demonstrate the business value results that they could or should deliver.

Finally, perhaps the one of the greatest disservice our profession is responsible for, and one that could be fatal if not addressed - is the barriers, confusion and complexity our younger people try to make sense of, around this profession we call FM.

What do our Organisations Really Need from FM.

As a management and facilities consultant, my phone only rings where a client has a problem. Aside from air-miles, the biggest opportunity of responding to FM problems, over the past 20 years is the ability to capture, analyse and research the repetitive root-cause problems that organisations face from poor FM actions and behaviours.

In my experience, overwhelming the greatest problem facilities managers face and make is the disconnect between the business, business needs and the actual FM service delivery. This misalignment and line of sight failure manifests and generalises itself in several ways:

1. No tangible, measurable levels of FM service codified with explicit performance parameters, often leading to an inability to manage by fact, FM performance;
2. FM plan's not calibrated or aligned with what the business needs and wants from its FM function;
3. FM seen only as a cost centre (to be minimised) and not a value or resource generator to optimised;
4. Traditional, unresponsive FM service delivery structures;
5. Expectation that the Facilities Manager is "provider of all things" to all people, faster for less!;
6. Seen as un-commercial and often unable to communicate in any meaningful enterprise business discussion; and worst of all...
7. "Better off in the boiler room, out of sight – out of mind"!

Often our first point to reference to a facilities issue is a facilities centric approach predicated with some complex engineering or technical solution. We take delight in being able to 'fix when fail' revelling in the hero status of 'ambulance the the bottom of the cliff' yet seem oblivious to the fact that with robust FM plans and processes we probably could have predicted facilities failure and intervened at a time that didn't inconvenience the customer or tenant! Even our language often creates a barrier to our corporate colleagues. The CFO doesn't care that the new Screw Chiller Unit you are proposing has a CoP of just 2.5 compared to the old, existing Centrifugal Unit! The CFO *does* care if the NPV is positive with a 2.5 year payback.

Our organisations simply need **basic guiding principles** that:

1. Creates a line of sight between the business strategy's, goals and needs;
2. Codifies into a simple 'Plan on a Page' (or similar) basic corporate performance framework even your FM team can understand;
3. Builds in agility, responsiveness and nimble deployment AND planning practices within the FM organisation; and
4. Ensures clarity of purpose for everyone and allows you, your staff and management to manage by fact.

Get these four principle factors aligned and your facilities managers can identify business needs, translate strategy into workplaces, own the processes of providing those workplaces and demonstrate their impact on organisational outcomes and above all else achieve real customer value.

Sustaining and Enabling your FM Principles

FM enablement is driven by two factors. Firstly, you need to be able to translate, process and demonstrate FM success in the current environment, to survive today's challenges and secondly, you need to adapt those workplace strategies and processes to survive tomorrow's challenges.

Since executing and adapting require resources, facilities managers face an unending competition for money, people and time to address the need to deliver facilities services in the short run and the equally vital need to invest in the longer lifecycle run. Being simultaneously "tight" in executing and "loose" in adapting often creates tension and complexity.

Mitigating tension and complexity takes an agile but connected model that somehow must seamlessly link the FM service delivery value chain. The model below 'FM Connect – Change – Support' has been successfully trailed by two of our clients.

TRANSLATE				PROCESS				DEMONSTRATE			
Connect				Change				Support			
Linking proven approaches to Organisational outcomes for best effect				Working collaboratively with the business to embed methodology change and adopt new, robust FM processes				Consistently delivering on agreed client expectations on all areas of FM support and demonstrating the results.			
OWNERSHIP.											
Engine Room: The Business attributes improvements to proactive FM Service solutions											
	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3		Yr1	Yr2	Yr3		Yr1	Yr2	Yr3
Degree of early contractor engagement				# new robust FM collateral & artefacts				No. of requests for advice performed on behalf of the business			
FM Influencer, provider of choice, go-to subject matter expert.				% of initiatives delivered on time, to budget, in scope with no rework				% of requests for advice resolved at within agreed timeframes			
Relationship management				% of initiatives where the step change benefits are realised				Endemic PCG/CCG ownership, management with robust reporting.			
CUSTOMER.											
Best in the World: Leading conversations on leveraging proven strategies to deliver step change											
Integrated View <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive Insight Cross-Disciplinary Business View Strategic Alignment Influencer and Subject Matter Expert Role 				Disciplined Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplicity Implementable Results Consistent Compliance Robustness 				No Fuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timeliness Ease of Use Reliability / Accuracy VfM 			
PROCESS (KRA's)											
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify proven FM strategies aligned to Organisational needs. Convince the business to invest in proven FM strategies. Prioritise, monitor and update FM work programme Decision based on TCO and whole of life concepts 				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Transparently engage on business requirements. Develop integrated methodical solutions Robust codified processes and templates agreed – adopted and implemented. Implement changes & handover system 				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Log assistance requests, resolve straightforward immediate calls & escalate others Resolve complex requests. Track resolution timeframes. Monitor and close. 			
LEARNING & GROWTH											
Passion: Empowering managers to accelerate the achievement of organisational outcomes through the use of FM strategies											
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Systemise approach to evaluate proven methodologies Alter planning approach to include FM early in all construction/building initiative. Improve linkages between the Organisations Strategic Plans and Unit Business Plans to inform priorities around applying improved methodologies to both new & 'BAU' work. 				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improve clarity of engagement with business on their requirements and initiative status Improve solutions governance for all developments Improve ownership & implementation of FM services. Implement approaches to encourage voluntary compliance with policies & procedures. 				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Inject rigour into all PCG/CCG processes Align & embed customer service principles Improve tracking & close out of requests for support, advice etc Robust reports tailored to specific needs, issued on a frequency basis as agreed 			

Figure 2: FM Connect – Change – Support (Rogers 2012)

FM Connect Change Support (FMCCS) is based on similar models originating from the ICT world where clarity and agility are valued highly. The **connect** function works best when FM has an organisational profile based on accessibility, are known as subject matter experts and seen as the provider of best value choice for FM services. This is where organisational business needs are assembled, verified, checked and discussed creating a clear impact profile on the FM service delivery options.

The **change** phase is about the effective translation of business needs into the FM processes. It requires facilities to have an intimate understating of their assets, their condition, remaining life and functionality, as well as a clear view of the facilities' demand and necessary service levels to better enable the enterprise.

The **Support** function ensures the 'lights are kept on' and Business as Usual (BAU) flourishes. It provides calibration back to the change function as and when new growth or additional facilities are necessary. It also picks up the 'change' outputs in the shape of service level agreements, rigorous contract control group (CCG)ⁱⁱⁱ facilities management plans and similar FM processes. Being immersed in the day to day business means Support is also often the first spotter of impending organisational change, sending a signal to Change that additional or less facilities capacity, functionality or capability will be required.

The FMCCS is in its infancy but does provide an answer to the dilemma of maintaining that line of sight between business and FM. Time will be the judge of the efficacy of such models.

Guiding Principles + Enabling Model + Customer Focus = FM Success!

Guiding principles and an enabling model alone do not constitute a shift in value. The third critical success factor is a relentless customer focus

Deep customer focus is about an attitude that lies at the core of the FM business unit. It is a team that knows this and does it well. Facilities service providers that differentiate their service offerings through deep customer focus are constantly thinking about better, quicker and easier ways of doing things that customers need, they ultimately become indispensable. They create compelling reason for their service and have positioned themselves to deliver well on it.

In my experience, regardless of their specific areas of facilities expertise, every Facilities Management Business Unit (FMBU) can be set up to deliver across four key domains. To greater or lesser extents, they possess four core competencies in *delivery, clarity of purpose, efficacy, and relationships*. These four elements are integral and embedded within the FMCCS model. In fact they are the glue that binds the Connect – Change – Support together.

1. *Delivery Competency* – encompasses how well the FMBU can respond to the customer’s requirement for day to day operational and tactical services. It reflects the FMBU’s scope and complexity of services. What levels of cost, quality, robustness and flexibility is the FMBU able to meet?
2. Focus by definition demands clarity, in particular, clarity of purpose. *Clarity of purpose*, in a FM service provider relationship can only be formed through alignment and deep understanding of each other’s, roles and responsibilities. For the FMBU, this often means engaging in a formal ‘partnering process’ with their clients, facilitated by a skilled independent session leader determining the key business processes. The process activities and tasks are then assigned to owners and supporting roles and responsibilities are agreed. Partnering becomes the process style in which parties engage in mutually beneficial activities.
3. *Efficacy* is the FMBU’s ability to best leverage productivity. Productivity is generated by many means, but facilities managers who achieve deep customer focus are always proficient in tuning, balancing and optimising their financial capital, people, processes and technology to determine the most effective blend of capacity and capability.
4. Many FMBU’s charge a service fee through either formal or informal service level agreements or contracts, which separate the price the customer, pays from the costs the service provider incurs in providing the services. his seemingly straightforward arrangement can lead to serious conflicts, especially when the contracts extend for many years, when service providers take control, once the contract is signed and seek to exploit the relationship or lower the service for short term profit gain. For this reason, savvy customers attempt to gauge the FMBU’s *relationship competency* – the extent to which the facilities manager is willing and able to cultivate a “win-win” relationship that will align and leverage client and service provider goals and incentives over time.

Facilities managers who make the effort to articulate and quantify the real benefits of their service offering prior to commencement (through perhaps a Business Plan, Service Level Agreement or Contract), and then engage in deep customer focus through clear alignment of their core competencies with their customer’s most pressing needs, are well rewarded with positive and loyal feedback, higher margins and longer, more profitable relationships through these difficult times.

With remarkable consistency, facilities managers whose customers rate them highly credit the benefits they get from their deep customer focus as a key source of their motivation to do their best. This closer business relationship helps both parties implement more effective practices through being co-dependent and reliant upon each other.

Throughout the facilities management supply chain, customers are seeking alignment of demonstrated capability, professionalism and experience.

Successful facilities managers, within agile organisational models intuitively understand the demands of their customers and anticipate in advance, opportunities for continuously adding value to their customers bottom line. They will sacrifice short term gain for long term value benefits based on strong, positive relationships.

That is because the linkages between the facilities manager and their customers are so tightly bound that they withstand the usual internal politics, market variables, staff changes, and other pitfalls and, continuously deliver enhanced value through collaborative service delivery processes that drive the organisations Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) down, and value up.

Summary

Articulating the FM value proposition, then delivering that value through a simple, robust framework is essential to FM success. Addressing the FM confusion and complexity through guiding principles, enabling models and a relentless customer focus will bring you and your FM team much closer to an alignment between business needs and FM service delivery.

Enduring principles and models also address the challenge of being simultaneously excellent doers and thinkers. Executing FM processes and adapting appear to be irreconcilable opposites, and the empirical data suggest that most companies are destined to favour the former over the latter. But understanding the sources of this schism can help us to see the outlines of a potential solution.

By creating a model, based on guiding principles that marries a flexible structure to a cooperative, performance driven and customer centric culture, FM teams can overcome the age-old problems that keep organisations from adapting to an ever changing environment through the enablement of the M within FM.

ⁱⁱ 'a profession that encompasses multiple disciplines to ensure functionality of the built environment by integrating people, place, processes and technology'. www.ifma.org

ⁱⁱ See <http://www.fmlink.com/ProfResources/> for many examples

ⁱⁱⁱ See also Rogers, P. (2005) "Optimising supplier management and why co dependency equals mutual success." Journal of Facilities Management. Vol. 4 No. 1. March 2005.