

Facilities management (FM) is a multi-faceted profession, which has been created out of a need to provide professionally managed and critical support services. Facilities managers must be able to demonstrate added value to the core business and property and facilities costs can be harnessed and be made to work for the organisation. For too long the Boardroom has been focused on the capital cost of a new building, not realising that the vast proportion of spend comes in the revenue line, maintaining the asset through its whole life.

Many businesses have recognised that critical issues like attraction, retention and motivation of staff are no longer just a problem for the Human Resources (HR) function. Staff are becoming more discerning about their working environment and want the very best in facilities in the office and at home.

FM as a maturing profession in the UK faces many challenges including a shortage of skilled people and difficulties in attracting young people into the industry, but these issues are not very different from many other disciplines.

Lack of recognition in the wider market place can pose an issue, especially when making early career choices. Many professionals have moved into FM as a second career choice leaving a perception it is not a career of choice for young people. This is slowly changing as more graduates populate the market place and move into the high profile FM roles.

FM needs to be valued at corporate level as many boardroom decisions are based on sound advice from the FM team. However, if there is no alignment of FM strategy to organisational strategy this can be difficult to achieve and may perpetuate the view that FM is just an operational function.

To match other professions where qualifications are a global passport, there is work to be done achieving recognition and global consistency of FM qualifications? Leading FM associations from around the globe including those in Hungary, France, Australia, North America and UK have collaborated in forming a new global alliance, Global FM with international qualification recognition high on its agenda.

Availability of appropriately skilled resources must be considered a key issue as facilities managers experience an increasing scope of roles and responsibilities. Training must be constantly updated to cope with the complexity of the role and ensure there is an appropriate blend of experience and knowledge across the whole spectrum of FM.

The FM community has also become increasingly aware of the growing sustainability and corporate social responsibility agenda as pressure grows from clients, customers and consumers.

We all accept that Sustainability is a way of living and working that aims to ensure that people today meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The question for the FM industry is how are we going to deliver these fine aims and objectives in a competitive and cost constrained environment?

I believe the answer is that FM professionals are determined to protect natural resources and promote social equality on behalf of their employers and clients. Sustainable FM is about minimising the negative impacts and, where possible, improving and enhancing our environment to ensure a better quality of life for everyone - now and for generations to come.

The great news is that facilities management is a fast growing profession that is enjoying recognition at all levels in industry and the economy.

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