

Project Management an Asset to Facility Managers

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Despite requiring a diverse skill set, Facility Management is often an overlooked profession.

Although sometimes relegated to a maintenance worker or supervisor, Facility Managers (FMs) are multi-disciplined building professionals with diverse skill sets for whom Project Management is key to success.

Facility Managers are responsible for the integration of various activities in sustaining the built form. They must balance the demands of architects and engineers; general contractors; owners and operators; suppliers, clients, tenant groups, and staff. More significantly, FMs manage one of the largest assets on the organization's financial reports – the building. With the large number of stakeholders, high-cost risks, and responsibilities that directly contribute to business goals and bottom lines, any project is a daunting task.

Take, for example, a lighting retrofit from regular incandescent lighting to more efficient lighting. The purpose of this retrofit is to reduce energy consumption and ultimately save on energy costs of the building. A Facility Manager must have the skills and knowledge to successfully execute a project of this nature. For example, they will find themselves:

- Defining client requirements
- Identifying and integrating stakeholders
- Justifying options based on clear criteria
- Developing detailed work plans
- Selecting a team
- Establishing a budget
- Identifying and mitigating risk
- Maintaining adequate communication with all stakeholders, including hired contractors

- Closing out the project in a manner that ensures a smooth transition and achievement of the project goals

The application of these and other project management skills ensures a smooth process and completion of the retrofit by the target date.

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Another example of a large complex project a Facility Manager may oversee is the construction of a new facility. Projects of this nature must be approved and a location selected; the FM will oversee the planning, development of design and specifications, and work directly with the Architect and Engineer to ensure the new facility will meet the needs and demands of the tenant groups. Through the construction phase, the Facility Manager will oversee contractors and suppliers and ensure work is proceeding smoothly, within budget constraints. Owners and Operators may be another stakeholder group that will warrant continuous communication

throughout the construction process. It is essential that the building meets the requirements of the nature of the work to be performed. This is ultimately the goal of a Facility Manager – to ensure optimal performance of the facility.

Whether new to the profession or an experienced veteran, strong project management skills are vital to successful management and optimal performance of any facility. Since new technologies and new PM concepts are constantly arising, it is important to brush up on these skills. The Information Age brings with it technological and theoretical advances at lightning speed. Facility Managers, while not the only profession expected to keep up with new technologies and project management tools, are well served by refreshing their skills and adding some formal background to their project management skill set.