

The Facilities Manager Within

How to hire for the right core traits, develop
Facilities Managers on the job and give them
ownership of your buildings.



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01

Introduction

Facilities Managers are among the most important roles in any organisation, and among the most overlooked. When everything is working, nobody notices. When it is not, everyone feels it.

From keeping buildings operational to making sure teams can do their jobs day to day, a good Facilities Manager underpins the entire workplace. Without that foundation, productivity drops, issues accumulate and small problems quickly become large ones.

Despite how critical the role is, many organisations still hire for it reactively: posting adverts, relying on job boards and hoping the right person appears. That approach is often slow, expensive and inconsistent.

Getting it right comes down to a simple approach: **hire well, develop properly and give the right level of trust**. The best Facilities Managers are not just found, they are built. You need someone with the right core traits who can then grow into the role within your organisation.

In this guide we cover the traits that make a strong Facilities Manager, practical ways to train and develop them, and how to give them the autonomy to run your building effectively.

**The best
Facilities
Managers are
built, not
found.**



02

The Most Important Manager in the Building

The Facilities Manager plays a central role in keeping an organisation running. They are responsible for the fundamentals everything else depends on: power, heating, maintenance, safety and the overall functionality of the workplace. When these are handled well, your people can focus on their work without disruption.

When they are not, the effect is immediate. An ineffective FM leads to downtime, frustrated staff and a poor working environment. Over time, that affects performance, retention and even your reputation as an employer.

A strong Facilities Manager does much more than keep things running. They:

- Manage contractors and suppliers
- Oversee compliance
- Control costs
- Make sure the workplace supports the people in it

The role sits right between **operations and people**. That is why the best FMs are as strong in communication and organisation as they are in technical understanding.

“

If your building works, your organisation works. That starts with the right FM.

03

The Traits That Make a Strong Facilities Manager

Qualifications matter, but they are not what makes a great Facilities Manager. The difference between an average FM and a strong one usually comes down to core traits. These are much harder to teach, and far more important day to day.

Strong Communication and Presence

An FM deals with people constantly: contractors, suppliers, senior stakeholders and employees across the organisation. They need to be confident, approachable and able to handle situations calmly and professionally. If they cannot communicate well, things fall apart quickly.

Attention to Detail

Facilities is built on the small things. Spotting an issue before it escalates, keeping on top of compliance and maintaining standards across a site all depend on detail. A good FM notices what others miss and acts on it early.

These traits are not easily trained. Some people have them naturally and others do not, and that is often what separates a reliable FM from someone who struggles in the role.

ASSESS THE TRAITS DIRECTLY

Use interview scenarios that show how a candidate communicates under pressure and how closely they check their work. A CV tells you where someone has been, not how they behave on site.

04

Hiring the Right Person

Finding the right Facilities Manager is not a matter of ticking boxes on a CV. It requires a clear understanding of the role and of what actually drives performance in it.

Too many hiring processes focus heavily on qualifications and systems experience while overlooking the personal qualities that make someone effective on site. This is not a role for a generalist approach.

Whoever sources your candidates needs to understand Facilities Management properly: how the role works in practice, the challenges that come with it and what good really looks like. That is how you get a shortlist that fits your organisation, rather than a stack of CVs that look strong on paper but do not deliver in reality.

Qualifications and certifications are important, but without the right traits behind them they count for little.

Get the person right first. Everything else can be developed.



Hire for **traits.
Train for
everything
else.**

05

Start at Entry Level

In many cases, the most effective approach is to bring someone in at entry level and develop them internally. If you find the right person, with the core traits and the right attitude, you can shape them into exactly what your organisation needs.

They will learn your systems, your standards and how your organisation operates from the ground up. That often leads to stronger long-term performance than hiring someone experienced who is used to doing things a different way.

It also builds loyalty. Someone who has been developed properly is far more likely to stay, grow and take ownership of the role.

Get the foundations right early and you are not just hiring a Facilities Manager. You are building one.

**When the
building
works,
nobody
notices.**



06

Developing Your Facilities Manager

Training a Facilities Manager is similar to most internal development, with one important difference: much of it is learned on the job.

Entry-level hires usually fall into one of two groups:

- A strong academic background with limited practical experience
- Hands-on experience with little formal training

The aim is to balance the two. Focus on their gaps and build from there.

Learning Through Experience

Facilities Management is a practical role, and the fastest way to develop someone is to involve them early. Let them see how things really run day to day: dealing with issues, speaking to contractors, handling pressure and making decisions in real time. A classroom cannot replicate that.

Leading by Example

One of the most effective ways to train a new FM is simply to show them how you work. That includes:

- How you track tasks and priorities
- How you stay organised
- How you manage issues before they escalate

Whether you rely on a CAFM system, spreadsheets, notes or your own way of structuring the day, these habits are what make the role manageable. Make them visible to the person you are training.

Teaching Judgement

Decision-making is a large part of this too. Some decisions are straightforward, such as calling out a contractor for a fault. Others require judgement, weighing cost, time and long-term impact against what the organisation actually needs.

Talk through your reasoning on those harder decisions. That is where the real learning happens.

07

Formal Training and Your Own Framework

Formal Training

Alongside hands-on experience, formal training still has value. There is a wide range of UK qualifications and courses in Facilities Management, from short certificates to full degree pathways. These strengthen technical knowledge and give structure to a person's development.

If your organisation can support it, helping an employee access this training is a sound long-term investment.

Building Your Own Training Framework

You do not need to rely entirely on external courses. There is a great deal of knowledge available through industry resources, published guidance and the practical experience within your own team. Combine that with your internal processes and you can create a structured training plan tailored to your organisation.

For organisations with multiple sites, this can go further, creating a consistent internal standard for Facilities Management across the estate. Done properly, you are not just training someone to do the job. You are building a reliable, scalable approach to how your facilities are managed.



Get the
person right
first.

08

Building Capability on the Job

On-the-Job Training

Apprenticeships remain one of the most effective ways to develop strong Facilities Managers. FM is a hands-on role, and people learn it by doing it.

Once you have hired the right entry-level candidate, set expectations early. Be clear about what the role actually involves, not just the good parts but the reality of it too:

- **The rewards**, such as delivering a successful project or visibly improving a site
- **The pressure**, including urgent issues, out-of-hours calls and problems that need fixing immediately

If someone understands both sides from the start, they will settle into the role much faster.

Learning Through Shadowing

The most effective way to train someone is to show them how the job is actually done. Start with shadowing: let them observe, then assist, then gradually take on responsibility.

Do not limit this to one person. Exposure to different members of the team gives a broader view of how FM works in practice. Everyone has slightly different ways of working, and that variety helps build a more capable and adaptable FM.

**Support your
new FM. Don't
control them.**



09

A Simple Development Structure

A structured approach makes progression clearer. It does not need to be rigid, but a phased model works well.

Phase 1: Observe

They follow and watch. Encourage note-taking and involvement in real situations, including high-pressure ones. They need to see the full reality of the role.

Phase 2: Support

Start handing over smaller tasks such as emails, calls and contractor coordination. Let them try, step back, then review how it went and give feedback.

Phase 3: Own Tasks

They begin managing work independently, from reactive issues to small projects. You are still there, but less involved day to day.

Phase 4: Take the Lead

At this point they should be capable of running the role. You step back and offer guidance where needed, while they take ownership of decisions and delivery.

The timeline will vary from one organisation to another, but the progression stays the same.

Learning Beyond Your Organisation

You do not have to develop someone in isolation. Building relationships with Facilities Managers in other organisations can add real value. Exposure to different environments, systems and ways of working broadens their understanding of the role.

It also brings fresh ideas back into your organisation, which is often where the biggest improvements come from.

10

Releasing Your Facilities Manager

Once your trainee is ready, the next step is simple: give them ownership. This is where the real transition happens, as they move from learning the role to actually running it.

Choosing the Right First Site

If possible, place them at a location that is easy to support. Being nearby makes a difference. It allows you to step in when needed, review decisions together and give guidance in real time.

If that is not practical, regular contact becomes even more important. Calls, messages and quick check-ins act as a safety net while they build confidence.

“

The goal is to support, not to control.

11

Ongoing Development

Training does not stop once they take over. The first few months are where most of the real learning happens, so how you support them during this period matters.

Avoid Seagull Management

Dropping in only to point out problems, then leaving again, helps nobody. If you are reviewing their work, keep it balanced. Recognise what is going well, not just what needs fixing.

Stay Connected

You do not need to be overbearing, but regular contact helps. A quick daily or weekly check-in can stop small issues from becoming bigger problems.

Encourage Continued Learning

Courses, industry events and further training all add value. Give them the time and support to actually attend. It pays off over the long term.

Hold Structured Reviews

For the first six months, regular check-ins are key. Keep them informal but consistent: monthly works well. The aim is not to criticise. It is to:

- ✓ Review progress
- ✓ Talk through challenges
- ✓ Adjust where needed

Small improvements over time make a big difference. With the right support, this is where a good FM becomes a strong one.



**Good FMs
become
strong ones
with **support.****

12

Building Strength Within Your Organisation

Once you have successfully trained and developed a Facilities Manager, you have done more than fill a role. You have created a standard. From there the process becomes repeatable: bring in the next person, develop them the same way and keep building strength within your organisation.

This approach can apply to many roles, but it is especially valuable in Facilities Management. The impact of a strong FM is immediate, and developing someone internally often leads to better alignment, stronger performance and long-term stability. You are not relying on luck in the hiring market. You are building capability from within.

Get the person right. Invest in their development. Give them ownership. Do that consistently and you will have more than a Facilities Manager. You will have a reliable foundation for your organisation to operate and grow.

If you are looking for entry-level or experienced FM talent with the right core traits, our specialist team can help. Visit maxwellstephens.com, call 0207 118 4848 or email info@maxwellstephens.com.

**Build your
capability
from within.**



THE EVIDENCE

What the Data Says

What UK data shows about skills, management development and retention.

51%

51% of organisations surveyed by SFG20 in 2026 reported a shortage of FM staff.

Source: SFG20 State of FM survey, reported by TWinFM, 2026

82%

82% of people entering UK management roles have had no formal management and leadership training, CMI found.

Source: Chartered Management Institute (CMI), Better Management Report: Take Responsibility, Take Action, 2023

41%

41% of UK organisations that selected candidates in the past year said new recruits always, mostly or sometimes resigned within their first 12 weeks.

Source: CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024

**1.26
million**

UK employers judged 1.26 million employees to have a skills gap in 2024.

Source: Department for Education, Employer Skills Survey, Calendar year 2024, 2025

95%

95% of candidates placed by Maxwell Stephens remain in role one year after appointment.

Source: Maxwell Stephens, 2026

Sources were checked in September 2026. Select a source to open the original research. Maxwell Stephens figures are drawn from our own published vacancies and placement records.

CASE STUDY

See It in Practice

Apax Partners Facilities Assistant Placement

Apax Partners appointed Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Facilities Assistant for its London office, a junior role spanning office services, building services support, health and safety and administration. We ran a targeted search for candidates early in their FM careers, assessing organisation, attention to detail, interpersonal skills, a proactive attitude and genuine interest in a long-term Facilities Management career. The appointed candidate brought relevant office and mailroom experience and the interpersonal skills to integrate into the team. The placement gave Apax dependable day-to-day support and a motivated junior professional able to build broader FM skills over time.

It shows the entry-level approach this guide recommends in practice: hiring for attitude, core traits and appetite to learn, then building FM capability over time.

[Read the full case study](#) · [Browse all case studies](#)

FROM THE BLOG

Related Reading

- [How Apprenticeships Are Closing the FM Skills Gap](#)
- [How to Identify the Intangible Skills That Make a Great Candidate](#)
- [How to Create an Effective Onboarding Programme](#)

MAXWELL STEPHENS INSIGHTS

Continue Reading

- [How to Retain Top Facilities Management Talent](#)
- [How to Reduce Staff Turnover in Facilities Management](#)
- [How to Build a High-Performing Facilities Management Team](#)

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Planning an FM, estates or workplace appointment? Talk to us in confidence, or read how comparable searches were run.

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