

INSIGHT

The FM Talent Shortage



Introduction

The Facilities Management recruitment market is becoming increasingly challenging. Across the UK, organisations are reporting growing difficulty securing experienced FM professionals. What was once viewed as a relatively straightforward operational hiring market has evolved into a highly competitive talent landscape shaped by:

- leadership shortages
- skills gaps
- changing candidate expectations
- retention problems
- and increasing competition for experienced professionals

Many organisations still assume that if a role is advertised widely enough, strong candidates will appear. But the FM market no longer works like that. The strongest professionals are increasingly selective, passive, relationship-driven, and difficult to attract through traditional hiring methods alone. At the same time, the role of Facilities Management itself is evolving rapidly. Modern FM leaders are now expected to combine operational expertise, strategic thinking, stakeholder management, ESG understanding, technology awareness, and executive communication skills. That combination remains relatively rare. The result is a widening talent gap across the FM sector.

The FM Profession Is Evolving Faster Than the Talent Pipeline

One of the biggest drivers behind the FM talent shortage is the rapid evolution of the profession itself. Facilities Management is no longer purely operational. Modern FM leadership increasingly involves:

- workplace strategy
- employee experience
- ESG
- operational resilience
- transformation
- and executive influence

As expectations increase, organisations are searching for broader and more commercially capable leadership profiles. However, the talent pipeline has not fully caught up with this shift. Many organisations are competing for a relatively limited pool of professionals with the required combination of operational depth, leadership maturity, and strategic capability.

Strong
recruitment
businesses do
not just fill
vacancies.
They build
trusted
networks



An Aging Leadership Population Is Creating Pressure

A significant proportion of experienced FM leadership talent sits within an aging demographic. Many highly experienced professionals are:

- approaching retirement
- reducing responsibilities
- or becoming increasingly selective about future roles

This is creating succession pressure across the market. In many organisations, leadership pipelines beneath senior FM positions remain underdeveloped. As experienced leaders leave the market, replacing that knowledge and operational maturity becomes increasingly difficult.

Experience Is Becoming More Valuable

Facilities Management is a profession where experience matters significantly. Strong FM leaders often develop through years of:

- operational exposure
- crisis management
- stakeholder handling
- supplier management
- and leadership under pressure

These capabilities cannot be developed instantly. As operational environments become more complex, organisations increasingly value judgement, calmness, resilience, and leadership maturity. This increases competition for experienced professionals even further.

Passive Talent Now Dominates the FM Market

One of the biggest realities shaping FM recruitment is that many of the strongest professionals are not actively looking for jobs. High-performing FM leaders are often:

- already employed
- well-regarded internally
- and relatively stable in their current environments

This means the market has become heavily passive-candidate driven. Traditional advertising alone is becoming less effective for senior FM hiring. The strongest professionals are usually secured through relationships, reputation, referrals, and long-term market trust. Recruitment increasingly depends on access and credibility.

Strategic
recruitment
for the
people behind
operations



Candidate Expectations Have Changed

Facilities Management candidates are becoming more selective. Many experienced professionals now assess opportunities based on:

- leadership quality
- organisational culture
- operational stability
- flexibility
- career progression
- and trust in leadership

Salary still matters. But increasingly, candidates also want clarity, stability, autonomy, and environments where they can operate effectively. This shift is changing recruitment dynamics significantly.

Retention Problems Are Fuelling the Shortage

The FM talent shortage is not simply a hiring problem — it is also a retention problem. Many organisations struggle to retain experienced FM professionals due to:

- leadership instability
- excessive pressure
- lack of progression
- poor communication
- or unclear organisational direction

When experienced professionals leave, replacing them is becoming increasingly difficult. This creates a cycle of operational instability that compounds over time.

Strong FM Professionals Are Increasingly Selective

Experienced FM leaders often receive multiple approaches from recruiters and employers. As a result, they are increasingly selective about:

- who they speak to
- what opportunities they consider
- and which organisations they trust

Strong candidates frequently evaluate decision-making quality, leadership credibility, interview process quality, and organisational culture before engaging seriously. Employers are now being assessed just as heavily as candidates.



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Recruitment

People
who drive
progress



Market Competition Has Intensified

Competition for experienced FM professionals is increasing across:

- corporate occupiers
- managing agents
- service providers
- healthcare
- education
- commercial property
- and public sector organisations

This competition is particularly intense for senior FM leadership, technical FM specialists, engineering leadership, workplace strategy professionals, and ESG-aware FM leaders. The demand for high-quality talent continues outpacing supply.

Employer Differentiation Is Becoming Critical

Many organisations still position FM opportunities similarly. Generic messaging around salary, responsibilities, and standard benefits is no longer enough to attract strong leadership talent. Experienced FM professionals increasingly want to understand:

- leadership vision
- operational structure
- workplace culture
- organisational direction
- and long-term opportunity

Organisations that communicate these things clearly often perform far better in the market.

Strong
workplaces
are built by
strong
operational
leaders



Recruitment Speed Has Become a Competitive Advantage

One of the clearest trends in FM hiring is the importance of decisiveness. Strong candidates move quickly. Organisations that delay interviews, prolong approvals, or create overcomplicated hiring processes often lose talent to competitors. The strongest employers increasingly combine:

- structured assessment
- with fast and confident decision-making

Slow hiring processes now create commercial risk.

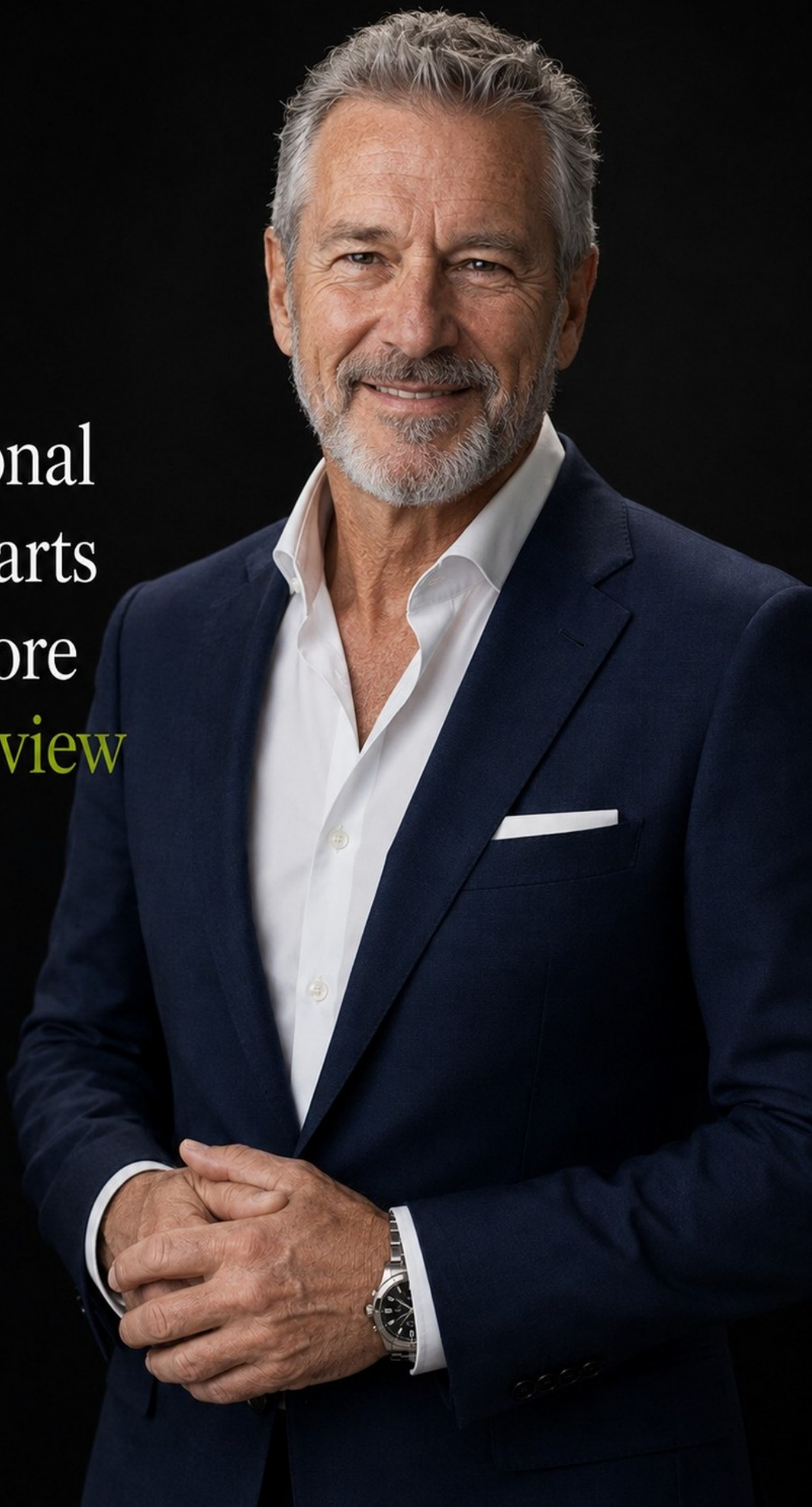
Overly Complex Hiring Processes Are Damaging Outcomes

Many organisations unintentionally weaken hiring outcomes through excessive process complexity. Common problems include:

- too many interview stages
- repetitive questioning
- delayed feedback
- and internal indecision

Strong FM professionals often disengage from processes that feel disorganised, overly bureaucratic, or unclear. Candidate experience now matters strategically.

Exceptional
hiring starts
long before
the interview
process
begins



Leadership Quality Influences Attraction

Strong FM professionals increasingly evaluate the quality of leadership above them. Candidates often want confidence in:

- executive stability
- organisational direction
- communication quality
- and leadership maturity

Weak leadership environments struggle to retain and attract strong people. Trust in leadership has become a major recruitment factor.

The FM Sector Has a Visibility Problem

Facilities Management remains critically important operationally. Yet many FM careers still lack visibility externally compared to other professions. This can create challenges around:

- talent attraction
- succession planning
- and graduate pipeline development

The sector increasingly needs stronger leadership visibility, career positioning, and employer branding – especially as younger professionals assess long-term career pathways.

ESG and Technology Are Creating New Skill Demands

Modern FM leadership increasingly requires understanding of:

- sustainability
- ESG
- smart buildings
- automation
- workplace analytics
- and technology integration

This is expanding the skills required within senior FM positions. The market for professionals who combine operational FM, commercial awareness, ESG, and technology understanding remains highly competitive.

Modern
recruitment
should feel
consultative,
not
transactional



Relationships Matter More Than Ever

As the FM market becomes increasingly passive and trust-driven, relationships are becoming central to successful recruitment. The strongest recruitment outcomes increasingly come through:

- long-term networks
- trusted conversations
- market insight
- and relationship-led hiring approaches

Transactional recruitment methods are becoming less effective for senior FM hiring.

The Best Organisations Think Long-Term About Talent

The strongest employers increasingly treat talent strategy proactively. They focus not only on hiring, but also on:

- succession planning
- leadership development
- retention
- and employer positioning

Organisations that invest consistently in leadership quality usually experience stronger long-term recruitment outcomes.

The Future Talent Market Will Become Even More Competitive

Many of the trends shaping today's FM market are likely to intensify. Over the coming years, organisations will continue competing for professionals who can combine:

- operational leadership
- strategic thinking
- resilience
- communication
- and business awareness

The FM profession is becoming more commercially important. As a result, leadership quality will become increasingly valuable.

Every search
starts with
the brief



Conclusion

The FM talent shortage is being driven by multiple long-term market shifts. These include:

- an aging leadership population
- evolving skill requirements
- passive candidate markets
- retention challenges
- and rising competition for experienced professionals

At the same time, Facilities Management itself is becoming more strategically important inside modern organisations. This is increasing demand for leaders who can operate effectively across operations, strategy, workplace experience, ESG, and organisational leadership. The organisations that secure the strongest talent will increasingly be those that move decisively, communicate clearly, build trust, and position themselves effectively within the market. Because ultimately, the FM talent shortage is not simply about recruitment. It is about leadership scarcity. And leadership scarcity creates operational risk.

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK. We recruit FM professionals across:

- Facilities Management
- Estates
- Workplace Management
- Property Operations
- Building Services
- and FM Executive Leadership

Our approach combines deep sector understanding with long-term relationship-led recruitment. For more information, visit www.maxwellstephens.com or call 0207 118 4848.

What the Data Says

The scale of the FM talent shortage: what sector and national data show about staff shortages, skilled trades and labour supply.

- 51% of organisations surveyed by SFG20 in 2026 reported a shortage of FM staff.
Source: [SFG20 State of FM survey, reported by TWinFM, 2026](#)
- 93% of UK employers have faced skills shortages in the last 12 months, according to Hays' 2026 salary guide.
Source: [Hays UK Salary & Recruiting Trends 2026](#)
- Skilled trades had the highest skill-shortage vacancy density in 2024: 48% of UK skilled trades vacancies were hard to fill due to a lack of skills among applicants.
Source: [Department for Education, Employer Skills Survey, Calendar year 2024, 2025](#)
- Almost two thirds (62%) of FM professionals surveyed by IWFM in 2023 cited access to EU workers as a negative impact on the sector.
Source: [IWFM, Market Outlook 2023 research: how EDI measures can help the FM skills crisis](#)
- Maxwell Stephens has a network of more than 50,000 FM professionals across the UK and Europe.
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.

See It in Practice

Recruiting Engineering Leadership for the Royal Household

The Royal Household's Property Section appointed Maxwell Stephens to recruit two specialist engineers: a Senior Operations Engineer for Windsor Castle and an Operations Engineer for Buckingham Palace. Because engineers with this profile are rarely on the market, advertising alone would not reach them, so we ran an executive search targeting heritage, critical infrastructure and complex M&E experience, assessing both technical and behavioural requirements.

A clear example of a scarce technical skill set that needed direct search, not advertising, to reach.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/the-royal-household](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/the-royal-household)

Related Reading

- **Why Good Facilities Managers Are Hard to Recruit**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/why-good-facilities-managers-are-hard-to-recruit
- **How Apprenticeships Are Closing the FM Skills Gap**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/the-value-of-apprenticeships-in-facilities-management-bridging-the-skills-gap
- **What the IWFM Market Intelligence Report Reveals About FM's People Challenge**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/iwfm-market-intelligence-report-insights-from-peter-forshaw

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