

INSIGHT

The Cost of **Slow Hiring** in Facilities Management



Introduction

Most organisations recognise the importance of hiring the right person. Far fewer recognise the cost of taking too long to hire them. In Facilities Management, hiring delays have become one of the most common causes of recruitment failure.

A typical process unfolds like this:

- A role is approved and a search begins
- Strong candidates are identified and interviews take place
- Then the process slows — additional approvals are required
- Decisions are delayed and stakeholders become unavailable
- Interview schedules move and weeks pass

The organisation believes it is being thorough. The candidate often interprets the delay very differently. In competitive Facilities Management markets, speed has become a strategic advantage. The strongest candidates rarely remain available indefinitely.

Slow hiring does not simply delay recruitment — it actively damages outcomes. The consequences are cumulative:

- It increases operational pressure on existing teams
- It weakens employer reputation in the talent market
- It causes candidate drop-off at critical moments
- It often results in organisations hiring from a reduced talent pool

The cost of slow hiring is far greater than most organisations realise. This guide examines those costs in full and sets out what high-performing FM organisations do differently.

Chapter 1: The Modern FM Talent Market

Facilities Management recruitment has changed dramatically. Today's FM professionals are expected to deliver across a far broader remit than previous generations. The scope of the role has expanded significantly, and demand for experienced practitioners has grown in parallel.

Today's FM professionals are expected to manage:

- Workplace experience and occupant satisfaction
- Sustainability initiatives and ESG programmes
- Smart building technology and integration
- Compliance and regulatory requirements
- Operational resilience and business continuity
- Stakeholder relationships at board level

As responsibilities have expanded, demand for experienced FM professionals has increased significantly. However, talent supply has not increased at the same pace. This creates a highly competitive market in which organisations must work harder than ever to secure the right people.

The strongest candidates frequently have multiple options available simultaneously:

- Multiple active opportunities and interview processes
- Internal progression options within their current employer
- Ongoing recruiter approaches from competitor organisations
- Strong employer relationships they are reluctant to leave

As a result, organisations are no longer competing only on salary. They are competing on speed, candidate experience, and the quality of their hiring process. The best employers understand this and structure their recruitment accordingly.

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Ask harder
questions
before the
offer

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Chapter 2: Why Delays Occur

Most hiring delays are not intentional. They emerge through a series of small decisions that individually appear reasonable but collectively extend timelines significantly. Understanding their root causes is the first step towards eliminating them.

Common causes of hiring delays include:

- Additional stakeholders becoming involved late in the process
- Interview availability creating scheduling conflicts
- Hiring managers struggling to commit to a final decision
- Organisations seeking certainty that rarely exists in practice
- Unnecessary additional assessment stages being introduced

Individually, these delays may appear insignificant. Collectively, they can extend hiring processes by weeks or even months. Each additional stage creates a new opportunity for a strong candidate to disengage, withdraw, or accept an alternative offer.

01 Multiple Approval Layers

Late-stage stakeholder involvement is one of the most common causes of delay. Characteristics include:

- Finance or legal approval required after the hiring decision
- Senior leader sign-off not confirmed until offer stage
- HR processes that duplicate rather than support the hiring manager

These layers add days or weeks without adding proportionate value to the process.

02 Scheduling Challenges

Availability conflicts compound over multiple interview stages. Typical patterns include:

- Panel members unable to align availability within a reasonable window
- Interview slots not reserved in advance, requiring reactive scheduling
- Second and third stage interviews delayed by diary availability

Proactive scheduling — reserving interview slots before candidates are identified — eliminates most of these delays.

Chapter 3: Candidate Drop-Off

One of the most immediate consequences of slow hiring is candidate withdrawal. Strong candidates often begin recruitment processes with genuine enthusiasm. They invest time, prepare thoroughly, and engage positively with the hiring organisation. However, prolonged delays gradually erode that momentum.

As delays accumulate, candidates begin to ask difficult questions about the organisation:

- Is the organisation serious about filling this role?
- Do they know what they want from the right candidate?
- Is this how decisions are made internally — slowly and without clarity?
- Will working here be equally frustrating day to day?

Every delay creates uncertainty. And uncertainty creates risk. Many candidates choose to remove themselves from the process before receiving a final decision — not because they are no longer interested, but because the process has made them doubt whether the opportunity is worth pursuing.

This phenomenon is increasingly common in competitive FM markets. Candidate drop-off is rarely dramatic. It often manifests as reduced responsiveness, slower email replies, and eventually a quiet withdrawal from the process entirely.

The hiring organisation is frequently unaware that a candidate has disengaged until it is too late to recover the situation. By that point, the strongest applicants may have already accepted alternative roles — leaving the organisation to restart from a significantly weaker position.

Built on
relationships
Backed by
expertise



Chapter 4: The Psychology of Momentum

Recruitment is not purely a transactional process. It is also an emotional one. Momentum matters far more than most hiring organisations recognise — and it is far easier to lose than to recover.

When communication is frequent and decisions are timely, the candidate experience is positive:

- Candidate enthusiasm increases and engagement remains high
- Confidence in the organisation grows with each interaction
- The opportunity feels increasingly attractive and credible

When communication slows or decisions stall, the dynamic reverses rapidly:

- Interest declines and doubt begins to emerge
- Alternative opportunities become comparatively more attractive
- The candidate's emotional investment in the role starts to fade

Candidates often experience an emotional journey during recruitment. Momentum reinforces positive emotions — excitement, confidence, and a growing sense that the role is the right opportunity. Delays reinforce negative ones — doubt, frustration, and the suspicion that the organisation is poorly run.

The organisations that understand this dynamic consistently outperform competitors in securing top talent. They recognise that every interaction is an opportunity to reinforce enthusiasm — and every unnecessary delay is an opportunity to undermine it.

Chapter 5: Leadership Indecision

Many hiring delays originate at leadership level. Leaders often face pressure to make the perfect decision — to identify the candidate who is beyond doubt the right choice. This pressure creates hesitation, and hesitation creates delay.

Unfortunately, perfect hiring decisions do not exist. Every recruitment process involves some degree of uncertainty. Experience, capability, and cultural alignment can all be assessed, but the performance of any individual in a new role cannot be predicted with absolute certainty. The strongest leaders understand this reality.

Decisive hiring leaders focus on the evidence in front of them:

- Demonstrated capability and relevant experience
- Cultural alignment with the team and organisation
- Long-term potential beyond the immediate role
- Credible references and consistent interview performance

Then they make a decision — informed, considered, and timely.

Weaker organisations continue searching for additional certainty through:

- Additional interview rounds that add time without adding insight
- More stakeholder opinions that create disagreement rather than clarity
- Further assessments and psychometric tests beyond what the role requires

Eventually the strongest candidates disappear. The search for certainty frequently creates greater risk than the original decision itself. The organisation that hesitates longest often ends up making a weaker appointment than it would have achieved with a timely, evidence-based decision.

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Precision
over volume

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Chapter 6: The Hidden Cost of Vacancies

Many organisations underestimate the operational cost of an unfilled role. The focus during a prolonged hiring process is typically on finding the right person. The ongoing cost of the vacancy itself rarely receives the same level of attention.

A vacant Facilities Management position creates a cascade of operational consequences:

- Increased workload distributed across an already stretched team
- Delayed projects and missed service delivery commitments
- Reduced responsiveness to occupants, suppliers and stakeholders
- Leadership gaps that affect decision-making at all levels
- Service disruption that affects both performance and reputation

These consequences affect FM teams, building occupants, suppliers and senior stakeholders alike. The pressure does not remain contained — it spreads, creating a progressively more difficult environment for the existing team to sustain.

Over time, vacancy costs often exceed recruitment costs. Every additional week without the right person creates further pressure on the organisation. Slow hiring therefore creates a double penalty: the role remains unfilled while recruitment outcomes simultaneously deteriorate.

The cost of inaction is rarely visible in budget reports. But it is felt daily by every member of the team working around the gap — and it accumulates with every week the role remains open.

Chapter 7: Employer Reputation in the Talent Market

Recruitment processes shape employer reputation in ways that extend well beyond the immediate hire. Candidates talk. Recruiters talk. Professional networks share experiences. The FM sector is smaller and better connected than many hiring organisations realise.

A slow recruitment process sends signals to the market. Candidates often interpret delays as indicators of deeper organisational issues:

- Internal bureaucracy that slows down decision-making across the business
- Weak leadership that is unable or unwilling to make timely commitments
- Poor internal communication between hiring managers and stakeholders
- Organisational inefficiency that will be reflected in day-to-day working life

Whether these assumptions are accurate is often irrelevant. Perception becomes reality. A candidate who experiences a slow, poorly communicated recruitment process will share that experience — with peers, with recruiters, and within their professional network.

Every recruitment interaction contributes to employer brand. Efficient hiring enhances reputation. Slow hiring damages it — not just with the candidate in front of you, but with every future candidate who hears about their experience. The reputational cost of a poorly managed process is long-lasting and difficult to reverse.

Chapter 8: The Impact on Passive Candidates

Passive candidates are particularly sensitive to delays. Unlike active job seekers, passive professionals are not looking for employment. They are evaluating opportunities with a fundamentally different mindset — one in which the bar for continued engagement is higher and the tolerance for poor process is lower.

Passive professionals typically bring significant strengths to a hiring process:

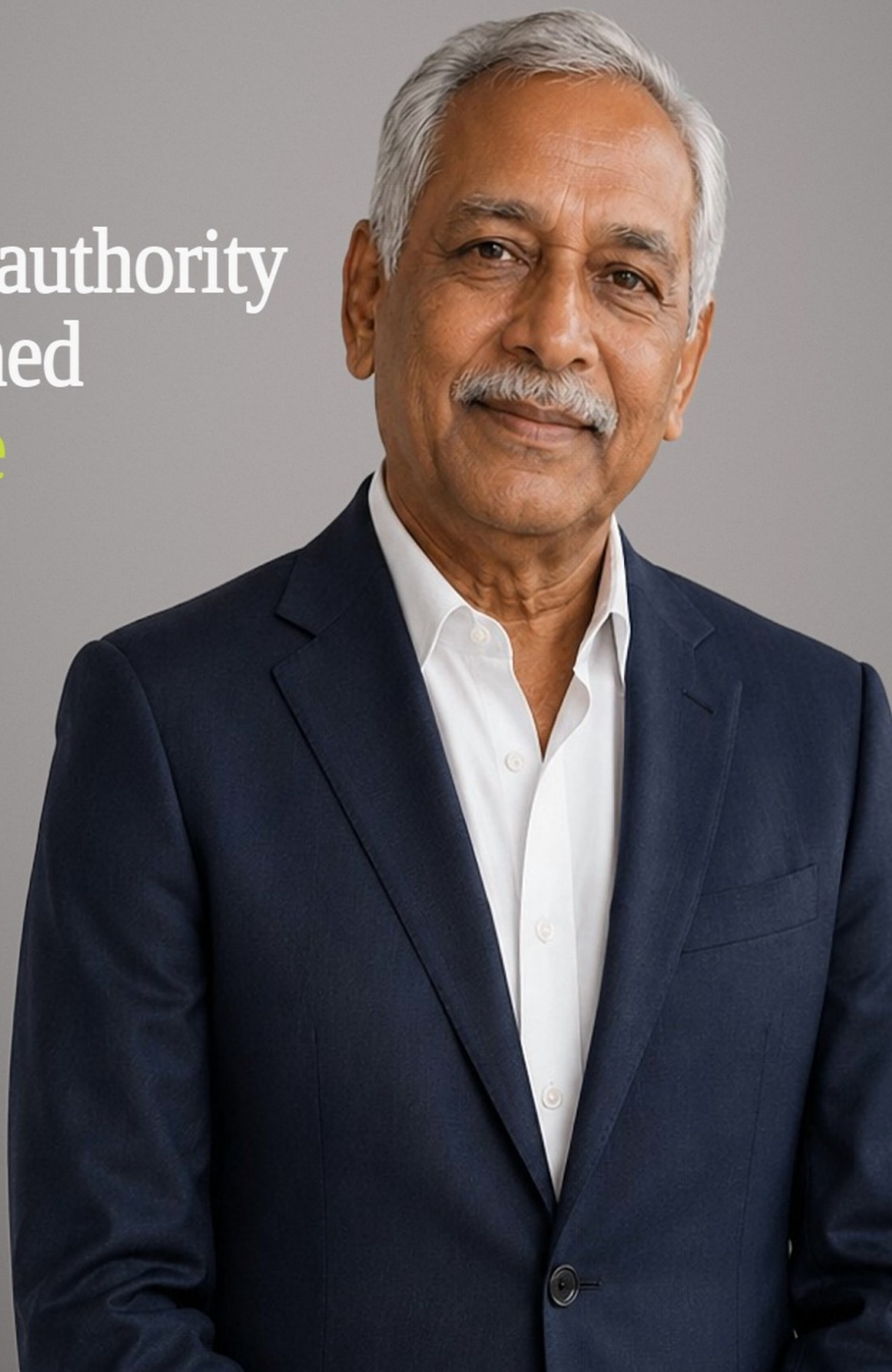
- Stable careers with strong track records in their current roles
- Strong internal reputations and established stakeholder relationships
- Existing responsibilities they are performing well and would be reluctant to leave

Their willingness to engage is limited. They are already employed, often well regarded, and have little incentive to tolerate a process that does not reflect the quality of the opportunity being presented. If recruitment becomes unnecessarily prolonged, they often return their focus to their current role without formally withdrawing.

Many passive candidates simply disengage rather than complain. There is no resignation, no withdrawal, no feedback — just silence. The hiring organisation may not realise the candidate has disengaged until it attempts to schedule the next stage and receives no response.

This makes delayed hiring particularly costly when the target is the passive market. The strongest candidate may disappear without ever formally withdrawing — and their absence from the process may only become apparent when it is too late to recover the engagement.

Quiet authority
is earned
on site



Chapter 9: Competitive Markets Reward Speed

In today's FM market, exceptional professionals rarely remain available for long. The combination of high demand, limited talent supply, and active competition between employers means that the window for securing top candidates is shorter than most organisations anticipate.

Strong candidates often attract multiple simultaneous opportunities:

- Multiple active interviews and offer processes running in parallel
- Internal promotion opportunities from their current employer
- Counteroffers designed to retain them when a departure becomes apparent
- External approaches from other recruiters and direct employers

This means hiring speed directly affects success rates. The organisations that consistently secure top FM talent are those that move quickly, communicate clearly, and make timely decisions based on the evidence in front of them.

Organisations that secure the strongest talent share common behaviours:

- They move quickly from shortlist to interview to decision
- They communicate clearly and frequently with candidates throughout
- They make timely decisions rather than seeking additional reassurance

Those that move slowly often discover that the candidate has already accepted another opportunity. The market rewards decisiveness — not perfection. In a competitive talent environment, the organisation that acts first with sufficient confidence will consistently outperform the organisation that acts last with absolute certainty.

Chapter 10: Hiring Pressure Creates Poor Decisions

Ironically, slow hiring often leads to rushed hiring. When vacancies remain open for extended periods, operational pressure accumulates to the point where the organisation feels compelled to fill the role regardless of the quality of available candidates.

As a vacancy extends, pressure builds across multiple dimensions:

- Operational pressure increases as the existing team absorbs additional workload
- Stakeholder frustration grows as the role remains unfilled without explanation
- Workloads escalate, increasing the risk of error, burnout and attrition

Eventually organisations become desperate to fill the role. The quality threshold that was so important at the start of the process is quietly lowered. Assessments become less rigorous. Hiring standards flex. Compromised decisions are made that the organisation would not have accepted at the outset.

The consequences of pressure-driven appointments are well documented:

- Reduced assessment quality leads to weaker candidate selection
- Lower hiring standards result in appointments that underperform expectations
- Compromised decisions increase early attrition and the cost of re-hiring

The organisation that initially moved slowly may ultimately make a weaker hiring decision than if it had acted decisively at the outset. Slow hiring therefore generates a compounding effect: it increases costs at every stage — from the vacancy period to the compromised appointment to the eventual re-hire that follows.

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Every senior
hire is a
risk
decision

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Chapter 11: What Great Hiring Organisations Do Differently

High-performing organisations approach recruitment differently. They recognise that speed is a strategic capability — not simply an operational convenience. They build their hiring processes with the same discipline they apply to other critical business functions.

Common characteristics of high-performing hiring organisations include:

01 Clear Ownership

Decision-makers are identified early and given genuine authority to act. Approval layers are minimised. The hiring manager leads with confidence and support.

02 Defined Timelines

Interview stages are planned in advance. Diary slots are reserved before candidates are identified. The process has a clear rhythm that candidates can understand and trust.

03 Stakeholder Alignment

Expectations are agreed before the process begins. All stakeholders understand the role requirements, the assessment criteria, and the decision-making authority of each participant.

04 Fast Feedback

Candidates receive updates promptly after every stage. Communication is proactive, not reactive. Candidates are never left wondering what is happening or when they will hear next.

05 Decisive Leadership

Leaders are willing to make informed decisions based on the evidence available. They do not seek additional reassurance beyond what the role requires. They understand that timeliness is part of quality.

These organisations rarely eliminate rigour. They simply eliminate unnecessary delay. The result is a faster, better candidate experience that consistently secures stronger talent outcomes.

—
The right
people change
buildings,
teams and
businesses
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Chapter 12: Building a Faster Hiring Process

Improving hiring speed does not require sacrificing quality. The two are not in conflict. A well-designed process is both rigorous and efficient. Several practical improvements can dramatically enhance outcomes without compromising the quality of assessment.

01 Define Requirements Early

Align all stakeholders on role requirements before launching the search. Ambiguity about the ideal candidate profile creates delays at every subsequent stage.

02 Reduce Interview Stages

Focus on meaningful assessment. Two well-structured stages are more effective than four poorly coordinated ones. Each stage should have a clear purpose and decision point.

03 Schedule Ahead

Reserve interview slots in advance, before candidates are identified. This eliminates the scheduling delays that routinely extend timelines by one to two weeks per stage.

04 Maintain Communication

Keep candidates informed throughout — even when there is no update to share. Regular communication maintains engagement and signals that the organisation values their time and interest.

05 Empower Decision-Makers

Avoid unnecessary approval layers. The hiring manager should have the authority to move the process forward without requiring sign-off at every stage.

06 Measure Time-to-Hire

Track recruitment efficiency consistently. What gets measured gets managed. Organisations that monitor time-to-hire identify bottlenecks faster and improve processes more effectively.

The Future of FM Recruitment

As Facilities Management talent becomes increasingly scarce, hiring speed will become even more important. The organisations that move effectively will secure stronger talent. Those that move slowly will continue losing candidates to faster competitors.

Future recruitment success in FM will depend on four interconnected capabilities:

- Decisive leadership that is willing to commit on the basis of evidence
- Efficient processes that eliminate unnecessary delay without removing rigour
- Strong communication that maintains candidate engagement throughout
- Positive candidate experiences that enhance employer brand in the talent market

In many sectors, recruitment is becoming less about finding talent and more about securing talent before someone else does. The FM sector is no exception. The pipeline of experienced professionals is finite, and competition for the strongest candidates will only intensify.

—
Quietly
building
exceptional
teams
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Conclusion

Slow hiring creates significant costs. Some are visible in budget reports and vacancy metrics. Others remain hidden — accumulated in team burnout, reduced candidate quality, and reputational damage that takes years to reverse.

Delays increase risk across every dimension of the hiring process:

- Candidate drop-off rises as momentum is lost
- Recruitment risk increases as timelines extend
- Vacancy costs accumulate with every week the role remains unfilled
- Employer brand is damaged in the talent market
- Hiring pressure builds, leading to compromised appointments

At the same time, delays actively reduce competitive advantage:

- Candidate engagement falls and alternatives become more attractive
- Recruitment momentum is lost and difficult to recover
- Competitive advantage is surrendered to faster-moving organisations

In Facilities Management, where experienced talent remains scarce, speed has become a critical component of recruitment success. The strongest organisations understand that hiring is not simply about making the right decision. It is also about making the decision at the right time.

Because in competitive talent markets, delayed decisions are often decisions made too late.

Key Takeaways

The ten most important principles from this guide:

- Slow hiring is one of the leading causes of recruitment failure in FM
- Candidate drop-off increases significantly as recruitment timelines extend
- Leadership indecision often creates the most damaging and preventable delays
- Vacancies generate significant operational costs that accumulate over time
- Employer reputation is shaped by every recruitment interaction
- Passive candidates are particularly sensitive to prolonged and poorly managed processes
- Competitive FM markets consistently reward speed and decisiveness
- Hiring pressure increases as vacancies remain open, leading to weaker decisions
- Fast hiring does not require sacrificing rigour or assessment quality
- Organisations that move quickly consistently secure stronger talent outcomes

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK. We help employers secure exceptional Facilities Management professionals through specialist search, relationship-led recruitment, and deep market expertise.

For support with Facilities Manager, Head of Facilities, Estates Manager, Workplace Leader, and Facilities Director recruitment, contact the Maxwell Stephens team.

Visit **maxwellstephens.com** or call **0207 118 4848** to speak with a specialist consultant.

What the Data Says

What UK data says about hiring speed, candidate drop-off and unanswered applications, and the cost of a slow FM recruitment process.

- The average time to hire in the UK climbed to 12 weeks in spring 2026, up from 10 weeks in autumn 2025.
Source: [Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026](#)
- Over a quarter (27%) of UK organisations that recruited in the past year reported challenges with counteroffers or dropouts after offer acceptance.
Source: [CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024](#)
- UK applications submitted are up 16% and interviews needed to land a single role are up 18%, Totaljobs found in 2026.
Source: [Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026](#)
- British job-seekers do not hear back from 55% of the jobs they apply for, according to Indeed research.
Source: [Indeed research, reported by HRreview, 2024](#)
- Across 63 permanent Facilities Manager roles Maxwell Stephens advertised from 2023 to 2026, the median top-of-range salary was £50,000.
Source: [Maxwell Stephens analysis of 497 advertised vacancies, May 2023 – September 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

Multi-Role Facilities Management Recruitment for Derwent London

Following a significant organisational restructure, Derwent London appointed Maxwell Stephens exclusively to fill four Property and Facilities Management roles. We combined executive search, our specialist database and market mapping with competency-based assessment and rapid interview coordination. Because we already knew many of the strongest candidates, all four positions were filled within two weeks, helping maintain operational stability through the restructure.

It shows how a fast, well-coordinated process avoids prolonged vacancies and protects operations during change.

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

Related Reading

- **How to Speed Up Your Recruitment Process Without Losing Top Talent**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/streamlining-the-recruitment-process-overcoming-common-challenges-and-boosting-efficiency
- **Five Ways to Make Recruitment Faster and More Efficient**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/creating-a-speedy-and-efficient-recruitment-process
- **The Ghosting Epidemic in Recruitment**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/the-ghosting-epidemic-in-recruitment

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