

INSIGHT

How to Retain Top Facilities Management Talent



Introduction

Attracting strong Facilities Management professionals is only part of the challenge. Retaining them is where long-term organisational performance is built.

Across the UK, demand for experienced Facilities Managers, Heads of Facilities, Workplace leaders, and operational specialists continues to rise. As responsibilities expand across compliance, sustainability, workplace experience, contractor management, health and safety, and operational resilience, organisations are increasingly competing for a limited pool of high-performing talent.

Yet many businesses still focus heavily on recruitment while underestimating the importance of retention.

The reality is simple: good retention creates operational stability. Poor retention creates disruption, rising costs, lost knowledge, and leadership gaps.

The organisations that retain strong Facilities Management professionals typically understand something important: people rarely leave purely because of salary. They leave because of culture, leadership, lack of progression, burnout, or misalignment.

Retention is ultimately about creating an environment where people feel trusted, supported, challenged, and valued.

Why Retention Matters in Facilities Management

Facilities Management is a relationship-driven discipline.

Successful FM professionals build deep knowledge, supplier relationships, site familiarity, stakeholder trust, team stability, and organisational understanding over time.

When experienced individuals leave, organisations often lose far more than a job title.

They lose:

- Continuity and institutional knowledge
- Operational consistency
- Trusted leadership

Frequent turnover creates inconsistent service delivery, reduced morale, delayed projects, increased contractor issues, rising recruitment costs, and operational instability. In senior FM roles especially, stability matters. The strongest operational environments are often built quietly over many years.

Great teams
start with
**one good
decision**



Understand What FM Professionals Actually Want

Many organisations still misunderstand what drives retention in Facilities Management.

While competitive compensation matters, experienced FM professionals are increasingly looking beyond salary.

They are looking for:

- Trust and autonomy in their role
- Leadership quality and management style
- Flexibility and work-life balance
- Career development and progression
- Operational support and proper resourcing
- Meaningful work with strategic impact

Facilities Management is often high-pressure and reactive by nature. Professionals managing large estates, compliance risk, contractors, budgets, and workplace operations need environments where they feel supported rather than constantly firefighting. The best organisations understand that retention begins with listening – taking time to understand what motivates their teams, what causes frustration, and what allows people to perform at their best.

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**Fit matters
more than
speed**
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Leadership Has a Direct Impact on Retention

People often stay because of leadership just as much as they leave because of it.

In Facilities Management, operational pressure is unavoidable at times. However, strong leadership helps teams navigate pressure without becoming overwhelmed by it.

Strong Facilities Management leaders typically create:

- Clarity of direction and expectations
- Calmness under pressure
- Consistency and accountability
- Genuine trust in their team
- Recognition of strong performance

Poor leadership environments often produce confusion, constant reactive working, lack of recognition, unrealistic expectations, and burnout. Retention improves significantly when employees feel heard, respected, trusted, and involved in decision-making. Leadership culture matters enormously.

Provide Clear Career Progression

One of the most common reasons Facilities Management professionals leave organisations is lack of progression.

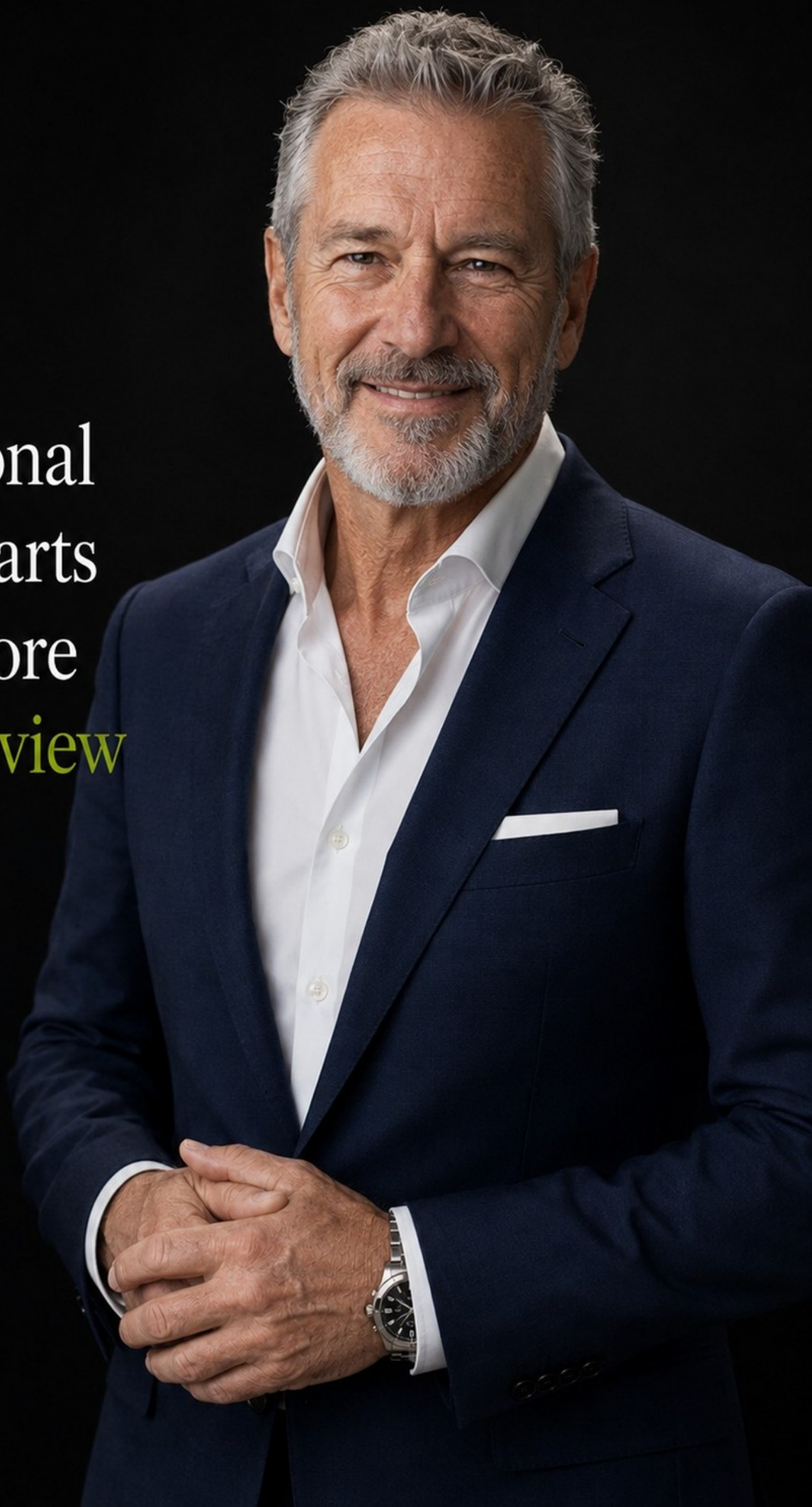
Many FM professionals are ambitious, commercially aware, and eager to develop broader operational responsibility. If growth opportunities appear limited, they will often explore opportunities elsewhere.

Retention improves when organisations provide:

- Clear career pathways and development planning
- Leadership development programmes
- Mentoring and coaching opportunities
- Cross-functional exposure and project involvement
- Visibility around future opportunities and increased responsibility

This does not always mean immediate promotion. Often, professionals simply want visibility around future opportunities, skill development, and long-term career direction. Organisations that invest in development tend to retain talent more successfully over time.

Exceptional
hiring starts
long before
the interview
process
begins



Avoid Burnout and Constant Firefighting

Facilities Management can become heavily reactive when organisations operate without sufficient structure, planning, or support.

Many FM professionals leave roles because they become trapped in cycles of constant escalation, excessive workloads, and unrealistic expectations.

Sustainable operational environments require:

- Proactive planning rather than reactive crisis management
- Proper resourcing and team support
- Investment in systems and technology
- Operational decision-making authority
- Reduction of unnecessary friction and bureaucracy

High-performing FM professionals want to solve problems and improve environments. They do not want to spend every day permanently in crisis mode. Burnout is one of the biggest hidden threats to retention, and it is also one of the most preventable.

Experience
is not the
same as
judgement



Recognition Matters More Than Many Realise

Facilities Management is often at its best when nothing goes wrong. As a result, FM professionals can sometimes feel overlooked despite carrying enormous operational responsibility.

Recognition does not need to be excessive or performative.

Simple actions often matter most:

- Acknowledging strong work consistently
- Involving FM leaders in strategic discussions
- Valuing operational insight at leadership level
- Celebrating project and team successes
- Demonstrating trust through operational autonomy

Professionals who feel invisible are more likely to disengage. Professionals who feel valued are more likely to remain loyal. Recognition costs little but its absence is consistently cited as a reason experienced people leave.

Flexibility and Workplace Culture Are Increasingly Important

The modern workplace has changed significantly, and many FM professionals now expect greater flexibility, modern leadership styles, and healthier work-life balance.

While Facilities Management often requires physical workplace presence, organisations can still improve flexibility through hybrid administration time, flexible scheduling, and operational autonomy.

The strongest retention environments are typically:

- Respectful and collaborative working environments
- Calm, accountable, and people-focused culture
- Flexibility where operationally possible
- Modern leadership approaches
- Realistic expectations around availability

Toxic, political, or overly reactive cultures rarely retain strong operational leaders for long. Culture is not a soft factor — it is one of the most significant drivers of long-term retention in Facilities Management.

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Precision
over volume

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Retention Begins During Recruitment

Retention often starts before someone even joins the organisation. Poor hiring processes frequently lead to cultural misalignment, unrealistic expectations, and early attrition.

The strongest long-term hires usually happen when organisations are honest during the recruitment process.

Organisations should be transparent about:

- Operational realities and day-to-day challenges
- Leadership expectations and management style
- Team structure and existing dynamics
- Growth opportunities and career trajectory
- What success genuinely looks like in the role

Facilities Management professionals value transparency. When expectations align properly from the beginning, retention improves significantly. Rushing recruitment to fill a gap often creates a larger gap further down the line.

The Cost of Losing Strong FM Talent

Replacing experienced Facilities Management professionals can be expensive and highly disruptive to an organisation.

Beyond recruitment costs, organisations often face a range of compounding consequences.

Beyond recruitment costs, organisations often face:

- Operational instability during transition periods
- Onboarding delays and ramp-up time
- Disruption to stakeholder and supplier relationships
- Loss of institutional knowledge and team trust
- Reduced momentum on projects and initiatives

In many cases, replacing a strong operational leader takes months rather than weeks. Retention is often significantly more cost-effective than repeated recruitment cycles. The strongest organisations focus not only on attracting talent, but on creating environments where strong people genuinely want to stay.

Every senior
hire is a
risk
decision



Key Takeaways

Retaining top Facilities Management professionals requires a consistent, intentional approach across leadership, culture, and career development.

The key principles for retaining top FM talent:

- Retention is critical to operational stability and long-term performance
- Facilities Management professionals value trust, leadership, progression, and culture
- Poor leadership and burnout are major drivers of attrition
- Career development and recognition significantly improve retention
- Calm, well-structured operational environments retain talent more effectively
- Retention often begins during the recruitment process itself
- Strong FM professionals are increasingly selective about where they work

The organisations that do this consistently build stable, high-performing operational teams that deliver results over the long term.

The right
leader
steadies
the whole
team



Conclusion

Retaining top Facilities Management talent requires more than competitive salaries or reactive counteroffers.

It requires leadership, clarity, trust, development, and operational environments where people can perform sustainably over the long term.

The organisations that retain exceptional FM professionals are usually the ones that understand a simple principle:

People stay where they feel valued, supported, and able to grow.

Facilities Management is fundamentally about people, operations, and environments working together successfully. The same principle applies to retention itself.

Maxwell Stephens – FM Recruitment Specialists

Maxwell Stephens partners with organisations across the UK to recruit high-performing Facilities Management and workplace leadership professionals.

We support businesses in identifying, attracting, and retaining exceptional FM talent across operational, strategic, and leadership-level appointments.

For more information and to speak with our specialist recruitment team, visit www.maxwellstephens.com or contact us directly on 0207 118 4848.

What the Data Says

What UK research shows about why people leave, and the leadership, culture and flexibility factors that keep good FM professionals in post.

- 56% of UK organisations say talent is more difficult to retain.
Source: [CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024](#)
- Half of UK workers who rate their manager as ineffective plan to leave within 12 months, versus 21% of others.
Source: [Chartered Management Institute \(CMI\), Better Management Report: Take Responsibility, Take Action, 2023](#)
- Around 1.1 million UK workers say they left a job in the last year because of a lack of flexible working.
Source: [CIPD, Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2025](#)
- One in three UK managers and workers have left a job because of a negative work culture.
Source: [Chartered Management Institute \(CMI\), New study: Bad managers and toxic work culture causing one in three staff to walk, 2023](#)
- 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.

See It in Practice

Facilities & Projects Manager for Boston University London

Boston University London asked Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Facilities & Projects Manager for its campus, someone able to run day-to-day operations and drive improvement projects. After a thorough evaluation, we presented a shortlist of strong candidates. The appointee managed critical projects, including infrastructure upgrades and energy-efficient solutions, and within two years was promoted to Head of Facilities on the strength of their performance.

It demonstrates how the right appointment, given room to grow, becomes long-term retention and internal progression.

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

Related Reading

- **Employee Retention Strategies for 2026: How to Keep Your Best People**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/employee-retention-strategies-in-2026
- **Why Do Good Employees Quit?**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/why-do-good-employees-quit
- **Why Facilities Managers Change Jobs and How to Improve Retention**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/navigating-the-evolving-fm-landscape-understanding-the-reasons-behind-job-changes

Talk to Maxwell Stephens

Planning an FM, estates or workplace appointment? [Contact us](#) for a confidential conversation, or [browse more case studies](#).



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