

INSIGHT

The Biggest Hiring Mistakes in Facilities Management



Introduction

Facilities Management recruitment has changed significantly.

The role is no longer simply about maintaining buildings or managing contractors. Modern Facilities Management professionals are expected to lead teams, manage operational risk, support workplace strategy, oversee compliance, improve employee experience, control costs, and operate effectively under constant pressure.

Yet despite the growing importance of Facilities Management, many organisations still approach hiring in ways that create unnecessary risk, delays, and poor long-term outcomes.

The strongest FM hires rarely happen by accident. They are usually the result of:

- clear thinking
- realistic expectations
- strong communication
- efficient decision-making
- a genuine understanding of what the role requires

This guide explores some of the most common hiring mistakes organisations make within Facilities Management — and how to avoid them.

Hiring Reactively Instead of Strategically

One of the most common mistakes in Facilities Management recruitment is waiting until pressure has already built before beginning the hiring process.

This often happens when:

- a resignation creates urgency
- operational problems escalate
- teams become overstretched
- projects begin slipping
- compliance concerns emerge

At that point, organisations are no longer hiring from a position of clarity. They are hiring from pressure. Pressure changes decision-making — processes become rushed, expectations become unclear, and compromises are made.

The strongest hiring outcomes usually happen when organisations think ahead and plan proactively rather than reactively.

—
Quietly
building
exceptional
teams
—



Creating Unrealistic "Unicorn" Job Specifications

Many FM job descriptions attempt to combine multiple senior functions into a single role. For example — operational leadership, technical expertise, project management, sustainability, workplace transformation, procurement, health & safety, team leadership, and strategic planning — all within one position.

The result is often a specification that sounds impressive on paper but significantly narrows the available talent pool. Some of the areas typically overloaded into a single spec include:

- operational leadership
- technical expertise
- project management
- sustainability and ESG
- workplace transformation
- procurement and contract management
- health & safety compliance
- strategic planning

The strongest Facilities Managers are highly capable professionals — but realistic expectations still matter. Strong recruitment begins with role clarity.

Focusing Too Heavily on CVs

A polished CV does not always predict operational leadership capability. Facilities Management is increasingly a people-focused leadership role, yet many recruitment processes rely almost entirely on documentation rather than structured assessment.

Some of the best Facilities Managers:

- stabilise teams under pressure
- improve workplace culture
- manage operational complexity calmly
- build trust with senior stakeholders
- solve complex operational issues with composure

Yet many of these qualities are difficult to identify purely from a document. Interview processes should therefore explore:

- communication style
- leadership maturity
- emotional intelligence
- decision-making under pressure
- adaptability
- operational judgement

Strong interview design ensures that technical credentials and leadership capability are assessed in equal measure — not simply experience alone.

Strong
hiring
processes
protect
decision
quality
under
pressure



Slow Hiring Processes

Strong FM candidates rarely remain available for long. In a competitive market, the best professionals are typically managing multiple conversations simultaneously — and the organisations that move decisively are the ones that secure the best outcomes.

Yet many organisations unintentionally lose excellent candidates through:

- delayed feedback
- excessive interview stages
- internal indecision
- inconsistent communication
- slow approvals processes

Long hiring processes create uncertainty for candidates. In competitive markets, uncertainty usually benefits competing employers. Speed alone should never replace quality — but decisiveness matters enormously.

—
Good operators
make the difficult
look routine
—



Poor Internal Alignment

Another common issue occurs when multiple stakeholders have different and sometimes conflicting expectations of what the role requires.

For example:

- HR may prioritise culture fit
- operations may prioritise technical capability
- leadership may focus on strategic influence
- finance may focus on cost control and efficiency

Without alignment, recruitment processes become inconsistent. Candidates receive mixed messages, decision-making slows, and confusion increases on both sides. Strong hiring processes require internal clarity before recruitment begins — not after.

Treating Facilities Management as Purely Operational

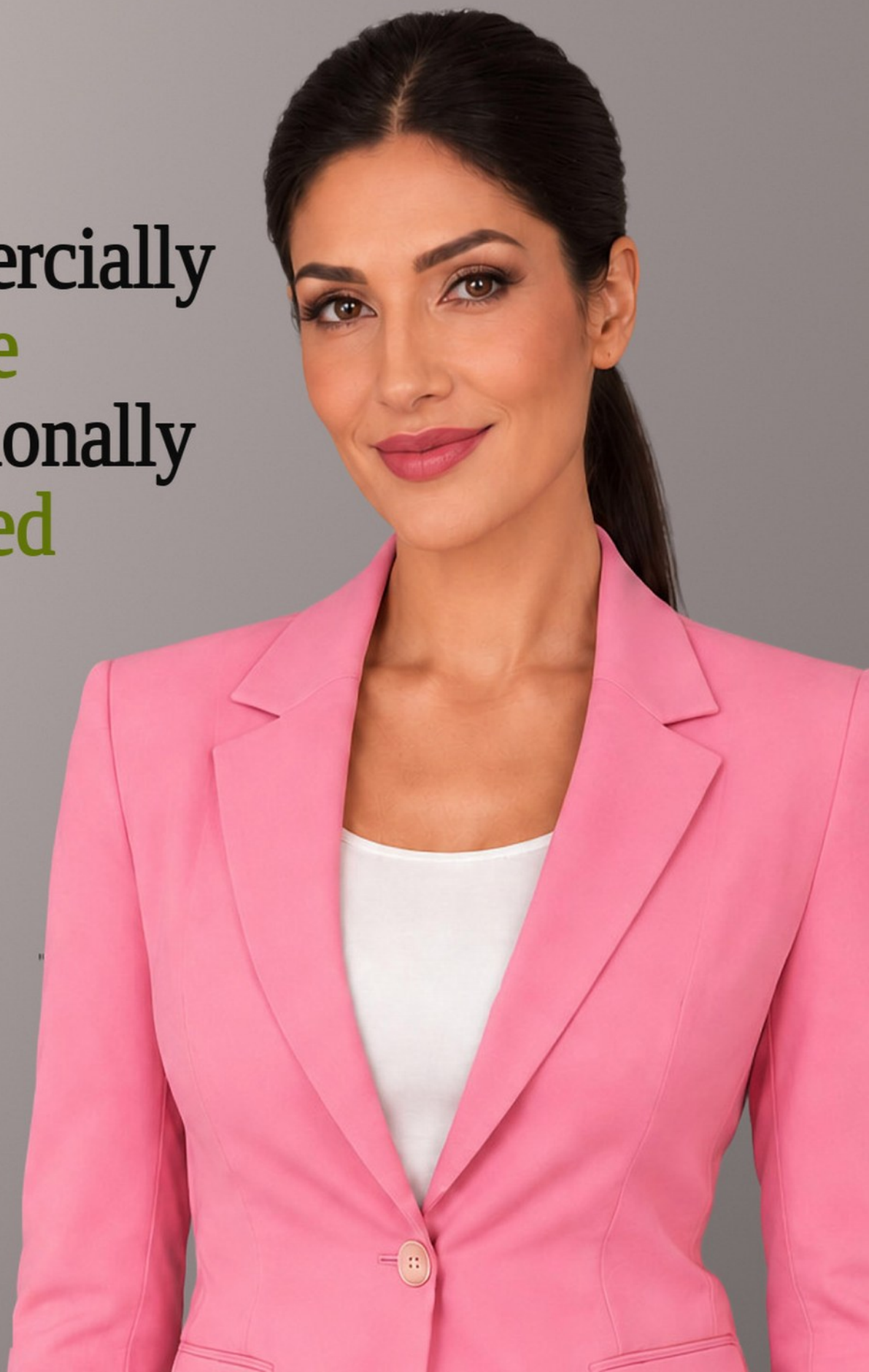
Facilities Management has evolved significantly over the past decade. The modern FM function is no longer simply an operational maintenance discipline — it is a strategic leadership role.

Modern FM leaders increasingly influence:

- workplace experience
- employee wellbeing
- sustainability and net zero strategy
- hybrid working environments
- operational resilience
- organisational culture
- leadership communication across the business

Organisations that still view FM purely as a maintenance function often struggle to attract high-performing strategic candidates. The strongest Facilities Managers now operate across both operational and strategic environments — and they expect employers to understand this.

Commercially
credible
Operationally
informed



Ignoring Employer Brand

Candidates assess employers as carefully as employers assess candidates. In a competitive market, employer brand and candidate experience have become critical differentiators in FM recruitment.

Strong FM professionals increasingly evaluate:

- leadership quality and stability
- organisational culture
- flexibility and working arrangements
- communication style and responsiveness
- employer reputation in the market
- speed and clarity of decision-making
- long-term development opportunity

Poor communication during recruitment damages trust quickly. In many cases, the candidate experience directly influences offer acceptance rates. Employer reputation matters more than ever in a specialist market where word travels fast.

Hiring Under Pressure and Lowering Standards

Urgency can create poor long-term decisions. When roles remain vacant for extended periods, organisations often feel pressure to simply move forward with the best available option — even when that option falls short of what is genuinely needed.

This usually creates additional problems later, including:

- performance concerns
- poor team fit
- operational instability
- early resignations
- repeat recruitment costs

The strongest organisations protect hiring standards even during difficult periods. Good hiring saves time. Poor hiring creates more work, more cost, and more disruption — often compounding the original problem.

—

Good hiring is
a series of
honest
conversations

—



Using Generic Recruitment Approaches for Specialist Roles

Facilities Management is a specialist industry with highly specific operational demands. Generic recruitment approaches — job board advertising, broad CV screening, standard competency interviews — often fail to surface the best candidates or properly assess FM-specific capability.

Generic recruitment processes often struggle to:

- identify passive talent who are not actively applying
- understand the technical demands of FM environments
- assess operational capability properly
- recognise cultural and leadership fit
- communicate credibility within the FM community

Specialist recruitment knowledge matters because Facilities Management itself is highly nuanced. The strongest FM candidates are often relationship-driven rather than actively applying to job advertisements — which is why specialist market knowledge makes a measurable difference.

—
If search
is not the
answer,
we say so
—



Overlooking Leadership Capability

Technical competence alone is no longer enough. As FM has evolved into a leadership function, the ability to manage people, communicate with senior stakeholders, and operate calmly under pressure has become just as important as operational knowledge.

The best Facilities Managers also:

- create calm during operational pressure
- communicate clearly at all levels of the organisation
- build trust internally and externally
- lead teams effectively through change
- manage stakeholders confidently
- maintain operational consistency under pressure
- think commercially about costs and outcomes

Leadership capability increasingly separates good FM professionals from exceptional ones. Organisations that assess leadership maturity alongside technical credentials consistently achieve stronger, more durable hiring outcomes.

What Strong FM Hiring Looks Like

The strongest Facilities Management hiring processes usually share several core characteristics. Organisations that get this right tend to attract better candidates, make faster decisions, and achieve stronger long-term outcomes.

01 Clear role definition

The organisation understands exactly what it needs before approaching the market — and has documented those requirements clearly.

02 Realistic expectations

The role specification matches the salary, support, and operational scope being offered. Candidates know what they are walking into.

03 Efficient decision-making

Candidates experience clarity and momentum from the first point of contact through to offer. Delays are minimised and communication is consistent.

04 Leadership alignment

All internal stakeholders are aligned on requirements, priorities, and assessment criteria before interviews begin.

05 Strong communication

The candidate experience at every stage reflects the professionalism and culture of the organisation. First impressions are lasting.

06 Long-term thinking

Hiring focuses on sustainable success and genuine fit — rather than short-term urgency or the path of least resistance.

We take pride
in what we do
and are renowned
in the industry
**for our integrity
and honesty**



Final Thoughts

Facilities Management recruitment is becoming more complex because the role itself is becoming more important.

The strongest Facilities Managers now sit at the centre of:

- operations
- workplace experience
- leadership
- culture
- compliance
- resilience
- organisational performance

Hiring well requires more than simply filling a vacancy. It requires clarity, judgement, communication, and long-term thinking.

In increasingly competitive markets, organisations that approach Facilities Management recruitment strategically will continue to outperform those that rely on reactive hiring processes.

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK with Facilities Management, Workplace, Estates, Property, and Operational leadership recruitment.

We believe strong recruitment is built on:

- trust
- understanding
- long-term relationships
- and specialist market expertise

For more information, please visit www.maxwellstephens.com or call 0207 118 4848.

What the Data Says

What the evidence says about common hiring errors, from unstructured interviews to early resignations, and why they matter in FM appointments.

- Unstructured interviews predict job performance far less well: a mean operational validity of .19, versus .42 for structured interviews.
Source: [Sackett et al., Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2023](#)
- 85% of UK HR decision-makers admit their organisation has made a bad hire; a third believe these mistakes cost nothing.
Source: [Recruitment & Employment Confederation \(REC\), Hiring mistakes are costing UK businesses billions each year, 2017](#)
- 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](#)
- 90% of UK organisations use some form of selection interview; 52% use competency-based interviews.
Source: [CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024](#)
- 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

Head of Facilities & Operations Recruitment for Sotheby's Institute of Art

Following a number of unsuccessful recruitment campaigns through several agencies, Sotheby's Institute of Art appointed Maxwell Stephens exclusively to recruit a Head of Facilities & Operations for its Georgian campus on Bedford Square. Working with the Institute's leadership team, we developed a detailed profile of the ideal candidate and ran a targeted executive search. All four shortlisted candidates progressed to interview, and one was appointed.

It shows how a detailed candidate profile and one accountable search can break a cycle of failed recruitment campaigns.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/sothebys-institute-of-art](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/sothebys-institute-of-art)

Related Reading

- **5 Recruiting Red Flags to Watch for When Hiring**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/5-recruiting-red-flags-avoid-hiring-candidates-with-these-traits
- **How to Hire a Facilities Manager: A Complete Employer Guide**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/how-to-hire-a-facilities-manager-complete-guide-for-employers
- **5 Steps to Shortlisting the Right Candidate**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/5-steps-to-effectively-shortlist-candidates

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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Recruitment

Maxwell Stephens Recruitment is registered in
England and Wales No. 02660883



CONTACT

t: 0207 118 4848

w: www.maxwellstephens.com
e: info@maxwellstephens.com



LONDON

Golden Cross House
8 Duncannon Street
Strand
London
WC2N 4JF