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INSIGHT

The Future of Facilities Management Leadership

Introduction

Facilities Management is changing.

The role has evolved far beyond buildings, maintenance schedules, and contractor management.

Modern Facilities Management leaders now sit at the intersection of:

- operations
- workplace experience
- organisational culture
- employee wellbeing
- sustainability
- technology
- risk management
- and business performance

As workplaces continue to evolve, the expectations placed upon FM professionals are becoming broader, more strategic, and increasingly leadership-focused.

The strongest Facilities Management leaders today are no longer simply operational managers.

They are:

- communicators
- problem-solvers
- strategists
- people leaders
- operational stabilisers
- and trusted advisors within organisations

This guide explores how Facilities Management leadership is evolving, what organisations should expect from modern FM professionals, and the qualities that will define the next generation of operational leadership.

Facilities Management Has Become Strategic

Historically, Facilities Management was often viewed as a support function.

Today, it influences almost every part of organisational performance.

Facilities leaders now contribute directly to:

- employee experience
- productivity
- workplace culture
- operational resilience
- hybrid working strategy
- sustainability initiatives
- cost management
- health & safety
- business continuity
- and long-term workplace planning

The workplace itself has become a strategic asset.

Organisations increasingly understand that environment affects:

- collaboration
- morale
- retention
- wellbeing
- performance
- and organisational identity

This has elevated the importance of Facilities Management leadership significantly.

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The best recruitment conversations sound more like insight than sales

The Workplace Has Changed Permanently

The pandemic accelerated workplace changes that were already emerging.

Hybrid working, flexible environments, employee wellbeing, and workplace experience are no longer trends.

They are now permanent considerations.

The modern office is no longer simply a location people attend.

It has become:

- a collaboration environment
- a cultural environment
- a social environment
- a productivity environment
- and a reflection of leadership priorities

This shift places Facilities Management at the centre of organisational strategy.

FM leaders are increasingly expected to help organisations answer important questions:

- Why should people come into the office?
- What kind of workplace experience supports performance?
- How should environments evolve?
- How do we balance flexibility with operational effectiveness?
- What creates a workplace people actually want to be part of?

The future workplace requires more thoughtful operational leadership than ever before.

Operational Excellence Still Matters

Despite the growing strategic focus, operational performance remains fundamental.

Strong FM leadership still depends on:

- reliability
- consistency
- compliance
- supplier management
- risk control
- responsiveness
- financial management
- and operational calmness under pressure

The strongest Facilities Management leaders combine strategic thinking with operational discipline.

This balance is increasingly valuable.

Because while organisations are discussing workplace transformation and hybrid strategy, buildings still need to function exceptionally well every single day.

Modern FM leadership is both strategic and practical.

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Built on relationships Backed by expertise

Leadership Is Becoming More Human

One of the biggest shifts in Facilities Management leadership is the increasing importance of emotional intelligence.

The modern workplace requires leaders who can:

- communicate clearly
- manage uncertainty calmly
- build trust
- support teams
- navigate pressure
- and maintain stability during change

Technical expertise alone is no longer enough.

The strongest FM leaders increasingly demonstrate:

- empathy
- adaptability
- resilience
- commercial awareness
- stakeholder management capability
- and strong communication skills

Facilities Management often operates in environments where pressure is constant and expectations are high.

Leadership style matters.

People remember how operational leaders make environments feel.

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Senior FM hiring is a judgement call

Technology and AI Will Change FM Leadership

Technology is reshaping the Facilities Management industry.

AI, automation, smart buildings, predictive maintenance, workplace analytics, and integrated systems are all changing how operational environments are managed.

However, technology will not replace leadership. In many ways, it will increase the importance of human judgement.

As automation handles more repetitive tasks, FM leaders will spend more time focusing on:

- decision-making
- communication
- strategy
- people management
- operational prioritisation
- and organisational alignment

The future advantage will not simply be more technology. It will be better judgement.

Organisations will increasingly value FM leaders who can:

- interpret data intelligently
- make calm decisions under pressure
- balance efficiency with human experience
- and adapt operational strategies quickly

Technology supports leadership. It does not replace it.

Sustainability Will Continue to Grow

Sustainability is becoming central to Facilities Management.

Organisations are under increasing pressure to:

reduce emissions

improve energy efficiency

manage waste responsibly

and operate more sustainably overall

Facilities leaders are increasingly responsible for helping organisations achieve these goals.

This means FM professionals now require:

commercial understanding

environmental awareness

supplier management expertise

and strategic operational planning capability

Sustainability is no longer separate from operational leadership. It is becoming part of it.

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Leadership is tested on the days nothing goes to plan

The Best FM Leaders Create Stability

One of the most underrated qualities in Facilities Management leadership is calmness.

Strong FM leaders create environments where:

operations run smoothly

teams feel supported

stakeholders feel reassured

and problems are solved before they escalate

This type of leadership often becomes most visible during periods of uncertainty.

The strongest operational leaders bring:

structure during pressure

clarity during complexity

and consistency during change

Modern organisations increasingly value leaders who can stabilise environments while still driving progress.

Recruitment Within FM Is Becoming More Competitive

As the role of Facilities Management evolves, competition for experienced leadership talent continues to increase.

Many organisations are searching for professionals who can combine:

operational expertise
workplace strategy
leadership capability
commercial understanding
technical knowledge
and people management

These individuals are highly sought after.

The strongest candidates are often:

passive
selective
relationship-driven
and carefully evaluating organisational culture before moving roles

This means organisations must increasingly focus on:

employer brand
leadership quality
workplace culture
candidate experience
and long-term career opportunity

The recruitment market itself is becoming more relationship-led.

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Quiet operators, visible results

What Organisations Should Look For

The next generation of Facilities Management leaders will likely share several common characteristics.

01 Operational Discipline

They maintain strong operational standards consistently.

02 Adaptability

They can evolve alongside changing workplace expectations.

03 Communication Skills

They build trust across multiple stakeholder groups.

04 Commercial Awareness

They understand cost, efficiency, and organisational priorities.

05 Emotional Intelligence

They lead people effectively under pressure.

06 Strategic Thinking

They understand how Facilities Management supports wider business performance.

07 Calmness Under Pressure

They bring stability during complexity.

The future of FM leadership is increasingly multidisciplinary.

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Better leadership decisions under pressure

The Workplace Experience Factor

Employee expectations around workplaces have changed.

People increasingly want workplaces that support:

- wellbeing
- flexibility
- collaboration
- comfort
- productivity
- and human connection

This places Facilities Management at the centre of employee experience.

FM leaders are increasingly shaping:

- how workplaces feel
- how people interact
- and how organisations are experienced internally

The office is no longer simply functional. It is experiential.

Why Long-Term Thinking Matters

One of the biggest challenges in modern business is short-term decision-making.

Facilities Management leadership often requires the opposite.

Strong FM leaders think long term.

They understand:

preventative maintenance
operational resilience
sustainability investment
workplace planning
and team development

Long-term operational thinking protects organisations from unnecessary risk.

The strongest workplaces are rarely built through reactive decisions.

They are built through consistency, planning, and thoughtful leadership.

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Good hiring creates momentum

Poor hiring creates friction

Final Thoughts

Facilities Management leadership is becoming increasingly important because the workplace itself is becoming increasingly important.

Modern organisations require operational leaders who can:

- manage complexity
- communicate clearly
- adapt quickly
- lead calmly
- and support both people and performance

The future of Facilities Management is not simply about buildings.

It is about creating environments where organisations function effectively and people can do their best work.

The strongest FM leaders will continue to combine:

- operational excellence
- strategic thinking
- emotional intelligence
- and long-term judgement

In increasingly uncertain environments, calm and capable operational leadership becomes a genuine competitive advantage.

Maxwell Stephens

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

We believe strong recruitment is built on:

trust

long-term relationships

specialist understanding

and calm professional judgement

For more information, visit **www.maxwellstephens.com**, call **0207 118 4848**, or email **info@maxwellstephens.com**.

What the Data Says

The data behind changing FM leadership: hybrid working among senior managers, AI in FM operations, existing building stock and leadership training gaps.

- Close to half (45%) of managers, directors and senior officials in Great Britain followed a hybrid working model in April to June 2024.
  Source: Office for National Statistics, Who are the hybrid workers?, 2024
- 28% of organisations worldwide have embedded AI in their FM operations, rising to 46% for organisations with 100,000+ employees.
  Source: JLL, Global State of Facilities Management Report 2025
- 80% of the buildings that will be occupied in 2050 already exist, making decarbonising existing stock a major priority.
  Source: UK Green Building Council, Climate Change Mitigation
- 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
- 16% of the FM vacancies Maxwell Stephens advertised from 2023 to 2026 were Head of or Director-level leadership roles.
  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

Delivering Strategic Facilities Leadership for EPAM

EPAM engaged Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Head of Facilities Management for a significant multi-site property portfolio, leading hard and soft services while maintaining compliance, sustainability and stakeholder satisfaction. We ran a targeted search across our FM and property network and appointed a leader with extensive multi-site and managing-agent experience, strong health and safety expertise, and a record of delivering sustainability initiatives and ISO 14001 standards.

It reflects how FM leadership now spans sustainability, compliance and multi-site stakeholder management, not just service delivery.

Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/epam

Related Reading

- What Makes a Great Facilities Director?
  maxwellstephens.com/blog/what-makes-a-great-facilities-director
- How Facilities Management Is Changing the Workplace
  maxwellstephens.com/blog/how-facilities-management-is-changing-the-workplace
- Cross-Functional Skills Every Facilities Manager Needs
  maxwellstephens.com/blog/cross-functional-skills-every-facilities-manager-needs

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