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INSIGHT

The Hidden Cost of Poor Facilities Management Hiring

Introduction

Most organisations underestimate the true cost of poor Facilities Management hiring decisions. The visible costs are obvious:

- Recruitment fees and onboarding expenses
- Salary and associated employment costs
- Replacement hiring costs when the appointment fails

But the hidden costs are often far greater. Poor FM hiring decisions can create:

- Operational disruption and stakeholder frustration
- Team instability and leadership problems
- Reputational damage and financial loss

Because Facilities Management sits at the centre of operational performance. When FM leadership underperforms, the impact spreads quickly across the organisation. Buildings may still function and services may still operate — but beneath the surface trust weakens, standards decline, communication suffers, and operational risk quietly increases. The strongest organisations increasingly understand that hiring strong FM leadership is not simply an HR decision. It is an operational risk decision.

Facilities Management Is Business Critical

Facilities Management influences every dimension of how an organisation performs day to day. Strong FM leadership protects operational stability, while weak FM leadership creates friction that spreads throughout the business. The function touches almost every part of an organisation, influencing:

- Operational continuity and business resilience
- Workplace experience and employee productivity
- Regulatory compliance and risk management
- Supplier management and contract performance

Weak FM leadership often creates operational friction that spreads throughout the business — because FM touches almost every part of an organisation.

Poor Hiring Decisions Rarely Fail Immediately

One of the dangers of weak FM hiring is that problems often emerge gradually. Poor hires may initially appear experienced, technically capable, or operationally confident — which is precisely what makes them so costly. Over time, deeper issues tend to surface:

- Communication breakdowns and leadership weaknesses
- Inconsistent standards and poor stakeholder management
- Operational instability that gradually erodes performance

This delayed impact makes poor hiring decisions particularly expensive. By the time the full scale of the problem is visible, significant organisational damage has often already occurred — in terms of team morale, standards, and stakeholder confidence.

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Better judgement beats more activity

Operational Disruption Is Often the First Warning Sign

Weak FM hiring decisions frequently create operational disruption before more structural problems become apparent. The initial signs are often subtle, but they compound quickly. This disruption may include:

- Delayed responses and inconsistent service delivery
- Contractor management problems and compliance gaps
- Communication failures or declining workplace standards

Operations may become reactive, fragmented, or harder to manage as a result. Teams often feel this deterioration well before leadership fully recognises it — which is why operational disruption is often the clearest early indicator of a weak hire.

Leadership Gaps Create Organisational Risk

Facilities Management leadership requires far more than technical knowledge. Strong FM leaders must also provide calm decision-making, effective communication, accountability, and operational confidence. When these qualities are absent, uncertainty spreads quickly — particularly during:

- Periods of operational pressure or business change
- Crisis situations requiring rapid, assured decision-making
- Organisational transitions or growth phases

Leadership gaps often become highly visible when environments become more difficult. This is precisely when strong FM leadership adds the greatest value — and when weak leadership creates the most damage.

Weak Leadership Impacts Team Stability

Poor FM leadership affects team culture rapidly. High-performing FM teams require trust, clarity, consistency, and calm leadership to sustain performance. Without these qualities, teams often become:

- Disengaged, reactive, and frustrated
- Inconsistent in how they deliver standards
- Less accountable as communication quality declines

When communication quality declines and accountability weakens, operational standards drift. The effects are felt across the entire team — reducing collective performance and creating an environment where talented individuals begin to disengage.

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Good hiring is a series of honest conversations

Staff Retention Problems Often Follow Weak Leadership

One of the hidden consequences of poor FM hiring is team turnover. Strong operational professionals are sensitive to the quality of their working environment. They will often leave settings where:

- Leadership lacks clarity or direction
- Communication deteriorates or becomes inconsistent
- Standards become difficult to uphold or maintain

Poor leadership frequently damages morale, engagement, and long-term retention. This creates further operational instability — especially when experienced team members begin leaving simultaneously, taking with them institutional knowledge and capability.

The Financial Cost Is Usually Much Higher Than Expected

Most organisations underestimate the financial impact of replacing a poor hire. The real cost extends well beyond the initial recruitment spend and includes:

- Recruitment spend, onboarding, and lost productivity
- Operational disruption and increased management time
- Team turnover costs and delayed project delivery
- Reputational damage with stakeholders and suppliers

There are also hidden opportunity costs. While organisations deal with instability internally, performance slows, priorities drift, and strategic progress often stalls. Poor hiring decisions consume leadership energy that should be directed towards growth and improvement rather than recovery and remediation.

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The best candidates are rarely looking

Stakeholder Confidence Can Decline Quickly

Facilities Management leadership relies heavily on stakeholder trust. Internal stakeholders expect responsiveness, professionalism, and communication clarity from their FM leadership. Weak FM hires often damage stakeholder confidence through:

- Inconsistency in service delivery and decision-making
- Delayed communication and lack of visibility
- Poor judgement on issues requiring swift resolution

Once confidence weakens, rebuilding trust can take significant time and considerable management effort. The consequences of weakened stakeholder confidence extend beyond FM itself — affecting how the entire function is perceived across the organisation.

FM Reputation Matters Internally

Strong FM functions usually operate with high internal trust. People feel confident that operations are under control, that issues will be resolved efficiently, and that leadership will remain calm under pressure. Weak hiring decisions can erode this reputation over time, until FM becomes perceived as:

- Reactive rather than proactive in managing operations
- Inconsistent in how it handles issues and stakeholders
- Unreliable when quality and responsiveness are expected

This damages organisational confidence in the function itself — which can persist long after the original poor hire has been replaced. Rebuilding a strong FM reputation internally requires sustained high performance over an extended period.

Poor Hiring Creates Cultural Damage

One weak leadership hire can significantly affect culture. This is especially true in operational environments where leadership behaviour heavily shapes team psychology. Poor leadership may create:

- Defensiveness and blame culture within teams
- Communication breakdowns and reduced transparency
- Emotional instability that spreads through the function

Culture deterioration often happens quietly at first — but over time operational performance usually declines alongside it. The cultural consequences of a poor hire are frequently the hardest to repair, and the most underestimated in cost assessments.

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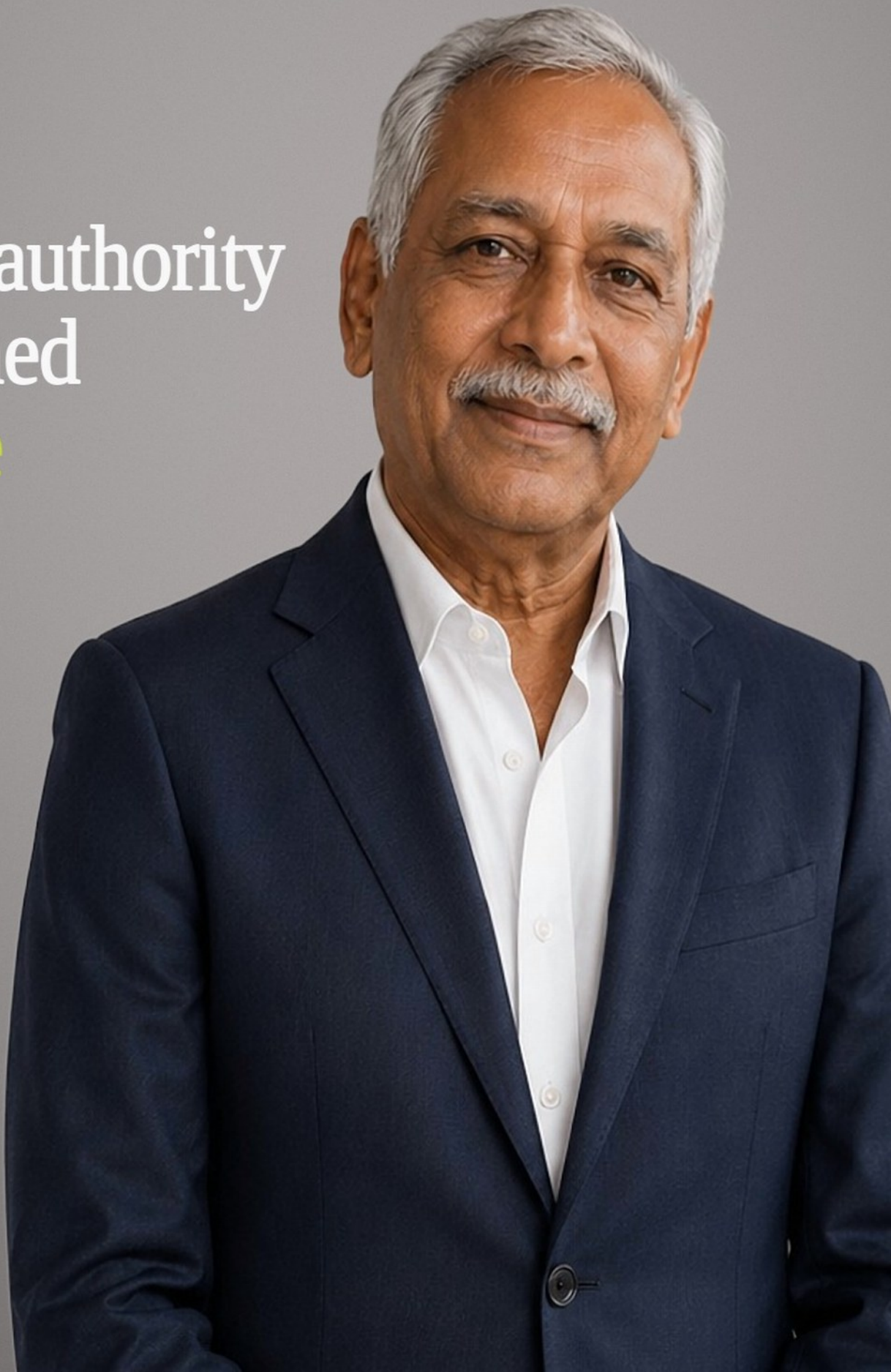
Quiet authority is earned on site



The Wrong Hire Often Creates More Work, Not Less

One of the ironies of poor hiring is that organisations often appoint new FM leadership in order to reduce pressure. But weak hires frequently increase it instead. Senior leaders may find themselves:

- Escalating issues that should be resolved at FM level
- Managing around problems or correcting repeated mistakes
- Compensating for leadership gaps that should not exist

This creates organisational drag. Instead of solving problems, leadership attention becomes consumed by operational recovery. The additional burden placed on the wider organisation often represents a significant hidden cost — one that rarely appears in any post-hire cost analysis.

Poor Hiring Decisions Affect Employer Brand

FM markets are highly relationship-driven. Poor leadership environments often become known quietly through industry conversations, supplier relationships, and informal reputation. Strong FM professionals typically avoid unstable environments, meaning that:

- Future recruitment becomes more difficult and more costly
- The quality of applicants for future roles may decline
- Employee turnover signals instability to the wider market

This makes future hiring more difficult — and more expensive. The reputational consequences of poor hiring extend far beyond the individual appointment, affecting the organisation's ability to attract strong FM talent for years to come.

Recruitment Failure Often Starts Earlier Than Expected

Many poor FM hires begin with weak recruitment processes rather than poor candidates. The root causes are often structural — embedded in how the organisation approaches the hiring process. Common problems include:

- Unclear briefs and rushed hiring under operational pressure
- Poor assessment processes and unrealistic expectations
- Overreliance on CVs rather than leadership capability evaluation

Technical capability is often prioritised over leadership quality, emotional intelligence, communication, and operational judgement. This creates hiring risk at the very foundation of the process — before a single candidate has been interviewed.

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The best recruitment conversations sound more like insight than sales

Hiring Under Pressure Increases Risk

Many organisations hire FM leadership reactively — after resignations, operational problems, or periods of instability. Urgency often increases hiring mistakes. Pressure can lead organisations to:

- Lower hiring standards to fill the role quickly
- Rush decisions and overlook important warning signs
- Focus purely on short-term relief rather than long-term fit

Strong recruitment processes protect decision quality even during urgency. The temptation to prioritise speed over rigour is understandable — but it consistently produces worse outcomes. The additional time invested in quality assessment almost always pays back many times over.

Interview Processes Often Miss Leadership Quality

Many FM interviews focus heavily on technical knowledge, operational systems, and task-based questioning. But leadership capability is often harder to assess through standard interview formats. Strong FM leadership requires qualities that structured questioning frequently fails to surface:

- Calmness and sound judgement under operational pressure
- Communication clarity and emotional intelligence
- Resilience and the ability to lead through uncertainty

Weak assessment processes frequently fail to evaluate these qualities properly. The result is that technically capable candidates are selected over genuinely strong leaders — precisely because the interview format was not designed to distinguish between them.

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The right people change buildings, teams and businesses

Weak Hiring Decisions Damage Momentum

Strong FM leaders create operational momentum — a sense of progress, confidence, and direction that drives performance across the function. Weak hires often slow this momentum significantly. The effects tend to compound over time:

- Projects stall and decision-making becomes slower
- Operational clarity declines alongside team confidence
- Wider organisational performance is affected as a result

This loss of momentum can affect wider organisational performance significantly — especially during periods of change or growth, when strong FM leadership is most needed to maintain standards and keep operations running smoothly.

The Best FM Leaders Reduce Organisational Friction

High-performing FM leaders often reduce operational complexity rather than adding to it. They bring clarity, calmness, stability, and confidence to the environments they lead. In contrast, weak hires tend to increase friction. Problems escalate more frequently, communication becomes harder, and teams become reactive. The difference becomes highly visible over time, in four key ways:

- Strong leaders create clarity; weak leaders create confusion
- Strong leaders build stakeholder confidence; weak leaders erode it
- Strong leaders develop team capability; weak leaders reduce it
- Strong leaders reduce escalations; weak leaders increase them

The cumulative difference between strong and weak FM leadership compounds over months and years — making the quality of the initial hiring decision one of the highest-leverage choices any organisation can make.

Strong Hiring Is Risk Protection

The strongest organisations increasingly view recruitment strategically — particularly in Facilities Management leadership. Hiring is not simply about filling vacancies. It is a risk management decision. Strong hiring is about:

- Protecting operational continuity and organisational resilience
- Reducing the risk of costly leadership failure
- Strengthening culture and improving long-term performance

Strong hiring decisions compound positively over time — building capability, confidence, and operational strength year on year. Poor hiring decisions often compound negatively. Understanding this distinction is what separates organisations that consistently perform well from those that repeatedly absorb the hidden costs of weak appointments.

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Strong facilities management is invisible when done well, critical when missing

Prevention Is Far Cheaper Than Recovery

Recovering from poor FM hiring decisions is expensive and time-consuming. Operational recovery often requires:

- Rebuilding trust with internal stakeholders and teams
- Stabilising operations and repairing supplier relationships
- Restoring standards and rehiring leadership capability

This can take months or even years. The cost of prevention — investing in better recruitment processes, more rigorous assessment, and specialist hiring expertise — is almost always significantly lower than the cost of recovery. The question is not whether strong FM hiring is worth investing in. It is whether an organisation can afford not to.

Conclusion

Poor Facilities Management hiring decisions create far more damage than most organisations realise. The true cost often extends well beyond the obvious financial impact to include:

- Operational disruption and stakeholder frustration
- Leadership instability and long-term retention problems
- Reputational damage and cultural deterioration
- Significant financial loss across multiple dimensions

Because Facilities Management sits at the centre of operational performance, strong FM leadership creates confidence, stability, resilience, and trust — while weak leadership often creates the opposite. The strongest organisations therefore treat FM hiring as a strategic business decision rather than simply a recruitment exercise. Because ultimately, the quality of FM leadership directly influences the quality of operational performance across the entire organisation.

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK. Our approach combines deep sector understanding with long-term relationship-led recruitment. We recruit FM professionals across:

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

For over a decade, Maxwell Stephens has supported some of the UK's most respected organisations in making better FM hiring decisions. We bring specialist knowledge, genuine sector relationships, and a rigorous approach to every appointment we handle. To discuss how we can support your next FM leadership hire, visit www.maxwellstephens.com, call 0207 118 4848, or email info@maxwellstephens.com.

What the Data Says

What the evidence says about the true cost of poor hiring: financial loss, early resignations, staff churn and turnover costs that go unmeasured.

- A poor hire at mid-manager level on a £42,000 salary can cost a business more than £132,000, the REC found.
  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
- Only 31% of UK organisations aware of their turnover data calculate the cost of labour turnover.
  Source: CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024
- Average annual churn among UK workers is 34%: 27.4% move to a new employer and 6.6% are not working a year later.
  Source: CIPD, Benchmarking employee turnover: What are the latest trends and insights?, 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 Building Management Recruitment for Man Group

Following several unsuccessful recruitment campaigns with other agencies, Man Group sought a specialist partner to find a Head of Building Management. Invited alongside a small number of specialist firms, Maxwell Stephens secured the assignment and ran a targeted executive search, assessing every shortlisted candidate on leadership style, operational expertise, regulatory knowledge and cultural fit. The appointee has since led the operational management of Riverbank House.

It illustrates the drag of repeated failed searches on a critical role, and how rigorous assessment ended the cycle.

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

Related Reading

- Recruiting Facilities Management Leaders: Judgement, Risk & Decision Quality in a Tougher World
  maxwellstephens.com/blog/recruiting-facilities-management-leaders-judgement-risk-decision-quality-in-a-tougher-world
- Managing Underperformance: How to Support Employees
  maxwellstephens.com/blog/how-employers-can-spot-and-support-an-underperforming-employee
- Why Do Good Employees Quit?
  maxwellstephens.com/blog/why-do-good-employees-quit

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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