

INSIGHT

How to Interview Facilities Management Candidates Properly



Introduction

Hiring strong Facilities Management professionals requires more than simply reviewing CVs and asking generic interview questions.

Facilities Management is a highly operational, leadership-driven discipline that sits at the intersection of:

- people,
- buildings,
- risk,
- service delivery,
- communication,
- and business continuity.

The strongest FM professionals are rarely defined by qualifications alone.

They are defined by:

- judgement,
- leadership,
- calmness under pressure,
- operational clarity,
- stakeholder management,
- and the ability to lead complex environments effectively.

Yet many organisations still approach FM interviews in a way that fails to properly assess these qualities.

This guide explores how organisations can run stronger Facilities Management interviews that improve hiring quality, reduce costly mistakes, and identify candidates capable of succeeding in demanding operational environments.

Why FM Interviews Often Fail

Many FM interviews become overly focused on:

- technical experience,
- generic competency questions,
- or CV walkthroughs.

As a result, organisations often fail to properly assess:

- leadership behaviour,
- operational judgement,
- communication style,
- resilience,
- and decision-making capability.

Facilities Management is not simply a technical role. It is an operational leadership function. Strong interviewing must reflect that reality.

Strong
hiring
processes
protect
decision
quality
under
pressure



The Best FM Interviews Focus on Behaviour, Not Just Experience

Experience matters. But behavioural indicators often reveal far more about future performance than job titles alone.

The strongest FM interviews focus on:

- how candidates think,
- how they respond under pressure,
- how they lead people,
- and how they navigate operational complexity.

The goal is not simply to hear what someone has done. The goal is to understand how they operate.

Competency-Based Interviewing

One of the most effective approaches in FM recruitment is competency-based interviewing. This means assessing candidates against specific behaviours and capabilities required for success in the role.

Rather than asking vague questions, competency interviewing focuses on:

- examples,
- behaviours,
- actions,
- decisions,
- and outcomes.

Strong FM Competencies to Assess

Key FM competencies often include:

- operational leadership,
- communication,
- stakeholder management,
- contractor management,
- crisis management,
- financial awareness,
- team leadership,
- resilience,
- prioritisation,
- and strategic thinking.

Interview questions should explore how candidates have demonstrated these capabilities in real environments.

The best
FM leaders
bring calm to
complexity



Ask for Real Examples

Strong FM interviewing requires specificity. Avoid hypothetical questions where possible.

Instead ask:

- "Tell me about a time..."
- "Walk me through..."
- "How did you handle..."
- "What was your approach when..."

The quality of detail often reveals capability. Strong operators usually speak with clarity, structure and ownership. Weak candidates often remain vague.

Assessing Leadership Properly

Leadership is one of the most overlooked areas in FM interviewing. Many organisations assess technical capability but fail to evaluate whether someone can:

- lead teams,
- influence stakeholders,
- create stability,
- and maintain operational standards under pressure.

Strong FM leadership often looks calm rather than loud.

Leadership Questions That Matter

Useful leadership-focused questions include:

- Tell us about a difficult team situation you had to manage.
- How do you maintain standards under operational pressure?
- Describe a time you had to influence difficult stakeholders.
- How do you deal with underperformance?
- How do you build trust within operational teams?
- What type of culture do you try to create?

The goal is to assess maturity, judgement and leadership style.

Good hiring is
a series of
honest
conversations



Assessing Operational Judgement

Operational judgement is critical in Facilities Management.

Strong FM leaders constantly balance:

- risk,
- cost,
- urgency,
- service levels,
- stakeholder expectations,
- and operational continuity.

Interview processes should assess how candidates think operationally.

Explore Decision-Making Under Pressure

Strong FM professionals are often distinguished by how they respond during operational pressure.

Ask candidates about:

- crisis situations,
- service failures,
- contractor issues,
- building incidents,
- compliance challenges,
- or difficult stakeholder situations.

Focus on:

- thought process,
- prioritisation,
- communication,
- and judgement.

Not simply the final outcome.

Stakeholder Management Is Critical

Facilities Management is fundamentally a stakeholder-heavy profession.

FM leaders regularly manage:

- executives,
- employees,
- suppliers,
- contractors,
- landlords,
- occupiers,
- and external partners.

Strong stakeholder management is often one of the biggest predictors of long-term success.

What Strong Stakeholder Managers Usually Demonstrate

Strong FM stakeholder managers typically show:

- calm communication,
- emotional intelligence,
- diplomacy,
- commercial awareness,
- operational confidence,
- and the ability to simplify complexity.

Interview questions should explore:

- difficult conversations,
- competing priorities,
- conflicting expectations,
- and communication under pressure.

These areas often reveal the depth and maturity of a candidate's stakeholder approach.

The right
leader
steadies
the whole
team



Culture Fit Matters — But Must Be Assessed Carefully

Culture fit is important. However, many organisations assess culture fit too vaguely.

Strong culture assessment should focus on:

- working style,
- communication approach,
- leadership behaviours,
- values alignment,
- and operational mindset.

Not personality similarity.

Good Culture Fit Questions

Useful questions include:

- What type of leadership environment do you perform best in?
- What frustrates you most operationally?
- What standards do you expect from your team?
- How do you handle ambiguity or changing priorities?
- What type of workplace culture brings out your best performance?

These questions often reveal alignment more effectively than generic "culture fit" discussions.

Assessing Communication Quality

Communication is one of the strongest indicators of operational capability in FM.

Strong FM professionals usually communicate:

- clearly,
- calmly,
- concisely,
- and with structure.

Pay attention not only to what candidates say — but how they say it. The structure, clarity and confidence of their communication often reflects their operational style directly.

Warning Signs During FM Interviews

There are several common warning signs employers should watch for during FM interviews. These do not automatically disqualify candidates — but they often indicate areas requiring further exploration.

01 Lack of Ownership

Candidates who consistently blame previous employers, teams, contractors, or leadership without taking accountability are a concern. Look for:

- consistent externalisation of blame,
- absence of personal responsibility,
- and inability to reflect on mistakes.

02 Vague Answers

Strong operators usually provide structure, detail, and clarity. Weak answers often remain generic — look for candidates who cannot give specific examples or walk through their decision-making with any precision.

03 Overly Reactive Behaviour

Candidates who appear emotionally reactive, defensive, or highly confrontational under questioning may struggle in stakeholder-heavy FM environments where composure and diplomacy are essential.

04 Inability to Prioritise

Facilities Management requires constant prioritisation. Candidates who struggle to explain decision-making, escalation, or operational prioritisation clearly may struggle significantly under real-world pressure.

05 Poor Communication Structure

Disorganised communication can often indicate disorganised operational thinking. If a candidate cannot articulate their experiences clearly in an interview, this pattern often continues in the role.

The best
recruitment
conversations
sound more
like insight
than sales



Avoid Over-Complex Interview Processes

One of the biggest mistakes organisations make is creating excessively complicated interview processes. Strong FM candidates are often heavily in demand.

Overly slow or bureaucratic processes frequently result in:

- candidate drop-off,
- reduced engagement,
- and lost hires.

Good FM Interviewing Balances Rigour With Efficiency

Strong interview processes should:

- assess properly,
- move efficiently,
- communicate clearly,
- and maintain momentum.

Most strong FM hiring processes should create clarity — not exhaustion.

Include Operational Scenarios Carefully

Scenario-based discussions can be highly valuable when used properly. However, scenarios should be designed to assess the candidate — not to trick them unnecessarily.

Scenarios should assess:

- judgement,
- prioritisation,
- communication,
- and leadership thinking.

Good scenario questions often explore:

- operational incidents,
- leadership challenges,
- contractor failures,
- or stakeholder escalation situations.

The best scenarios feel realistic and operationally grounded — they reveal how a candidate thinks, not simply whether they know the "right answer."

Operational
excellence
is often built
through
consistency
rather than
visibility



Interview Panels Should Be Aligned

Internal misalignment during interviews creates poor hiring outcomes. When panel members have different expectations, candidates receive inconsistent signals and assessments become subjective.

Before interviewing begins, organisations should align internally on:

- role expectations,
- priorities,
- leadership style,
- decision criteria,
- and non-negotiables.

Otherwise interviews become inconsistent and confusing — both for the hiring team and for the candidates being assessed.

Strong FM Hiring Requires Clarity

The strongest FM hiring processes are usually:

- calm,
- structured,
- aligned,
- professional,
- and operationally clear.

They assess:

- competence,
- leadership,
- communication,
- judgement,
- and long-term fit.

Not simply CV quality alone.

The Best FM Interviews Feel Like Professional Conversations

The strongest interview environments often feel:

- thoughtful,
- operational,
- and commercially mature.

High-performing FM candidates typically respond well to:

- intelligent discussion,
- operational realism,
- and leadership-level conversations.

Interview quality itself often influences whether strong candidates choose to join an organisation.

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Sector
knowledge
shortens
every search

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Conclusion

Facilities Management recruitment requires far more than generic interviewing.

Strong FM professionals operate in complex environments where:

- leadership,
- operational judgement,
- communication,
- stakeholder management,
- and resilience matter enormously.

The best interview processes assess:

- how candidates think,
- how they lead,
- how they communicate,
- and how they perform under pressure.

Organisations that improve interview quality typically improve hiring quality as well. And in Facilities Management, strong hiring decisions often create long-term operational stability.

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK.

We recruit Facilities Management professionals across:

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

Our recruitment approach focuses on operational understanding, leadership assessment, and long-term organisational fit.

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

What the Data Says

The evidence behind proper FM interviewing: how structured interviews predict performance, how often hiring goes wrong and how quickly new starters leave.

- 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](#)
- 90% of UK organisations use some form of selection interview; 52% use competency-based interviews.
Source: [CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024](#)
- 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](#)
- 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

CVC Capital Partners Facilities Manager Recruitment

CVC Capital Partners appointed Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Facilities Manager for its London office, combining operations with procurement, contract management, health and safety, security and business continuity. Our assessment focused on candidates with five to ten years' relevant experience, business continuity awareness and strong stakeholder skills. The appointee, with more than eight years' experience, improved operational efficiency and strengthened procurement and contract management.

It shows the value of assessing candidates against clearly defined competencies rather than a general impression.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/cvc-capital-partners](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/cvc-capital-partners)

Related Reading

- **How to Conduct an Effective Facilities Management Interview**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/holding-a-professional-and-effective-interview
- **Competency-Based Questions Explained**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/competency-based-questions-explained
- **Facilities Management Interview Questions for Employers**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/101-questions-to-ask-in-a-facilities-management-interview

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