

INSIGHT

The Modern FM Director



Introduction

The role of the Facilities Management Director has changed significantly. Historically, senior FM leadership was often viewed primarily as operational oversight.

The focus was largely on:

- maintenance
- service delivery
- compliance
- contractors
- building operations

Those responsibilities still matter. But modern organisations now expect considerably more from senior FM leadership.

Today's FM Director increasingly operates at the intersection of:

- operations
- workplace strategy
- employee experience
- ESG
- technology
- organisational resilience
- business transformation

The role has evolved from operational management into strategic business leadership. And the strongest FM Directors are no longer simply managing buildings — they are influencing how organisations function.

Facilities Management Has Become Strategically Important

Modern workplaces have changed dramatically.

Organisations increasingly recognise that workplace environments directly influence:

- employee experience
- productivity
- engagement
- retention
- wellbeing
- collaboration
- organisational culture

As a result, Facilities Management now carries greater strategic importance than ever before. The FM Director is increasingly expected to contribute far beyond operational delivery alone.

The Modern FM Director Must Think Like a Business Leader

One of the biggest shifts in Facilities Management leadership is commercial expectation.

Modern FM Directors are increasingly expected to understand:

- business priorities
- financial performance
- operational risk
- organisational strategy
- executive decision-making

This requires broader leadership capability. Strong FM leaders now think beyond buildings, maintenance and operational tasks.

They think about how Facilities Management supports wider business outcomes — and how operational excellence translates directly into organisational value.

—
Leadership
is tested on
the days
nothing goes
to plan
—



Executive Communication Has Become Critical

Technical expertise alone is no longer enough at senior FM level.

Modern FM Directors must communicate effectively with:

- executives
- boards
- investors
- stakeholders
- senior leadership teams

This requires the ability to:

- simplify complexity
- communicate strategically
- present operational risk clearly
- influence decision-making confidently

Strong executive communication has become a core leadership requirement — and a clear differentiator for the most effective FM Directors.

Board-Level Influence Is Increasing

Facilities Management is increasingly discussed at board level.

Especially around:

- workplace strategy
- ESG
- operational resilience
- sustainability
- employee experience
- business continuity

Modern FM Directors therefore require greater board-level presence and influence.

This means:

- understanding strategic language
- presenting operational insight commercially
- contributing to wider organisational conversations

The strongest FM leaders increasingly operate as strategic advisors internally — shaping direction rather than simply reporting on operations.

Good hiring
creates
momentum

Poor hiring
creates
friction



Strategic FM Is Replacing Reactive FM

Historically, many FM environments operated reactively. Modern FM leadership is increasingly proactive and strategic.

The role now includes:

- long-term planning
- workplace optimisation
- transformation
- organisational resilience
- operational forecasting

Modern FM Directors are expected to anticipate problems before they emerge.

This requires:

- data analysis
- operational insight
- strategic thinking
- commercial awareness

The ability to think ahead — and prepare the organisation accordingly — has become a defining characteristic of effective FM leadership.

Workplace Experience Has Become a Leadership Priority

The rise of hybrid working has accelerated the importance of workplace experience.

Organisations increasingly expect workplaces to:

- attract people
- support collaboration
- improve engagement
- reinforce culture

Facilities Management now sits at the centre of this conversation.

Modern FM Directors increasingly influence:

- workplace design
- office utilisation
- hospitality standards
- employee wellbeing
- workplace experience strategy

This represents a major evolution in the profession — from operational delivery to active stewardship of the human experience at work.

ESG Has Become a Core FM Responsibility

Environmental, Social and Governance priorities are now central to many organisations. Facilities Management plays a major role in delivering ESG objectives.

This includes:

- energy efficiency
- sustainability
- carbon reduction
- supplier management
- wellbeing
- operational governance

Modern FM Directors increasingly contribute directly to:

- sustainability reporting
- ESG strategy
- environmental performance improvement

The role now carries broader organisational responsibility — and FM Directors are increasingly recognised as key contributors to long-term sustainability goals.

Modern
recruitment
should feel
consultative,
not
transactional



Technology Is Reshaping FM Leadership

Technology is rapidly transforming Facilities Management.

Modern FM Directors increasingly oversee:

- smart buildings
- workplace analytics
- automation
- predictive maintenance
- AI reporting
- operational data systems

Technology is no longer a specialist support function. It is becoming central to operational leadership.

Strong FM leaders increasingly require:

- technological understanding
- data literacy
- digital confidence

The most effective FM Directors embrace technology not just as a tool — but as a core element of their leadership strategy.

Data-Driven Leadership Is Becoming Essential

Facilities Management is becoming more data-driven.

Modern FM leaders increasingly use operational data to:

- improve efficiency
- reduce costs
- forecast risk
- optimise workplaces
- support decision-making

This allows FM Directors to communicate operational performance more strategically. Data improves credibility at executive level — but leadership judgement remains essential.

Strong
workplaces
are built by
strong
operational
leaders



Transformation Leadership Is Increasingly Important

Many organisations are undergoing significant change.

This includes:

- workplace transformation
- hybrid working adaptation
- sustainability initiatives
- operational restructuring

Facilities Management often sits at the centre of these changes. Modern FM Directors are therefore increasingly expected to lead transformation projects.

This requires:

- communication
- stakeholder management
- leadership calmness
- organisational influence

Transformation leadership has become a core FM capability — and a key differentiator for the most impactful senior leaders in the profession.

Operational Leadership Still Matters

Despite the strategic evolution of the role, operational leadership remains fundamental.

Strong FM Directors must still ensure:

- service quality
- operational continuity
- compliance
- supplier performance
- workplace reliability

The difference is that modern FM leadership now combines:

- operational excellence
- strategic contribution

The strongest FM leaders balance both effectively — delivering flawless day-to-day operations while contributing meaningfully to long-term organisational strategy.

Calm Leadership Is More Valuable Than Ever

Modern FM environments are increasingly complex.

Senior FM leaders regularly manage:

- operational pressure
- executive expectations
- workplace transformation
- organisational uncertainty

Calmness under pressure has therefore become a defining leadership trait.

Strong FM Directors create:

- stability
- confidence
- operational reassurance

Especially during difficult periods, calm and considered FM leadership protects both people and performance.

Operational
excellence
is often built
through
consistency
rather than
visibility



Stakeholder Management Defines Senior Leadership Quality

One of the clearest differences between operational managers and senior FM leaders is stakeholder management capability.

Modern FM Directors must manage relationships across:

- executives
- employees
- suppliers
- boards
- operational teams
- external partners

This requires:

- emotional intelligence
- communication skill
- influence
- political awareness

Strong stakeholder management often determines leadership effectiveness — and is one of the most sought-after qualities in senior FM recruitment.

FM Directors Increasingly Influence Organisational Culture

Workplace environments influence culture significantly. Facilities Management therefore plays a growing role in shaping how organisations feel to work in.

Modern FM Directors increasingly contribute to:

- employee experience
- engagement
- wellbeing
- organisational atmosphere

This is a major evolution in leadership expectation — from operational delivery to active contribution to culture, identity and the lived experience of employees every day.

Commercial Awareness Has Become Essential

Modern FM Directors are increasingly expected to think and communicate commercially.

This means understanding:

- budgets
- financial risk
- investment priorities
- procurement
- operational efficiency

The strongest leaders can connect FM performance directly to:

- business outcomes
- organisational productivity
- strategic value

This commercial awareness strengthens FM credibility internally — and enables FM Directors to speak the same language as the executive teams they work alongside.

In
uncertain
markets,
clarity
becomes
leadership



Leadership Visibility Matters

In complex organisations, FM leadership that operates invisibly is often leadership that operates ineffectively.

Senior FM leaders are increasingly expected to be:

- visible
- communicative
- accessible
- engaged

Leadership visibility creates:

- trust
- operational confidence
- stakeholder reassurance

Invisible leadership often weakens confidence unintentionally. The most effective FM Directors are present, engaged and consistently visible across their organisations.

The Future FM Director Will Be Increasingly Multifaceted

The future of FM leadership will require capabilities that extend well beyond traditional operational management.

The role is evolving to demand:

- operational expertise
- strategic thinking
- technological understanding
- ESG awareness
- communication skill
- executive influence

The role is becoming broader, more commercial and more strategic. Facilities Management leadership is no longer purely operational — it is increasingly central to how organisations perform.

The best
FM leaders
bring calm to
complexity



Organisations Now Expect More From FM Leadership

The expectations placed on senior FM leaders continue increasing.

Modern organisations increasingly expect FM Directors to:

- influence strategy
- support transformation
- improve workplace experience
- manage risk
- lead operationally
- contribute commercially

This evolution is reshaping the profession rapidly. The organisations that invest in strong FM leadership increasingly gain a meaningful competitive and operational advantage.

Conclusion

The modern FM Director operates very differently from previous generations of Facilities Management leadership.

Today's role increasingly combines:

- operational leadership
- strategic influence
- executive communication
- technology
- ESG
- transformation
- business alignment

Facilities Management has evolved from a support function into a strategically important organisational capability.

And the strongest FM Directors now operate not simply as operational managers — but as business leaders. Because modern organisations increasingly recognise an important truth: the quality of workplace leadership directly influences the quality of organisational performance.

About Maxwell Stephens

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

We recruit FM professionals across:

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

Our approach combines deep sector understanding with long-term relationship-led recruitment. For more information, visit www.maxwellstephens.com or call 0207 118 4848.

What the Data Says

The data behind the changing FM Director role: hybrid working among senior leaders, board-level risk, energy efficiency regulation and AI adoption.

- 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](#)
- Just 27% of UK businesses have board members taking explicit responsibility for cyber security.
Source: [GOV.UK \(DSIT / Home Office\), Cyber security breaches survey 2025](#)
- From 2031, the Government proposes that privately rented non-domestic buildings over 1,000 m² in England and Wales must reach EPC B, where cost effective.
Source: [GOV.UK \(Department for Energy Security and Net Zero\), Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards \(MEES\) in the non-domestic Private Rented Sector: interim response, 2026](#)
- 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](#)
- For 12 permanent director-level FM and estates roles Maxwell Stephens advertised from 2023 to 2026, the median top-of-range salary was £93,000.
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

Group Facilities Director Recruitment for Penguin Random House UK

Penguin Random House UK appointed Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Group Facilities Director to lead FM across its UK and Ireland portfolio, including DK London.

Assessment went well beyond technical FM, testing senior leadership, multimillion-pound budgets, major projects, business continuity and board-level communication. The appointee brought clearer strategic direction, stronger financial oversight and greater oversight of rent reviews, business rates and lease renewals.

It shows the modern FM Director as a strategic, commercially fluent business leader rather than solely a head of operations.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/penguin-random-house-uk](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/penguin-random-house-uk)

Related Reading

- **What Makes a Great Facilities Director?**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/what-makes-a-great-facilities-director
- **Adelphine Williams on Helping FM Inform Key Business Decisions**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/there-is-an-opportunity-for-fm-professionals-to-really-inform-key-decision-makers-in-the-business
- **In-Demand Skills for Modern Facilities Management Professionals**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/in-demand-skills-for-modern-facilities-management-professionals

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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