

Putting Facilities Management (FM) on the map



With a sector value of £40-95bn, it's no wonder that a number of FM standards have been published in recent years. BSI hosted a free one-day conference on raising standards in facilities management on 15 October 2013.

What exactly is it that FM standards deliver and why should Facilities Managers get involved?

These were two of the key questions tackled at the conference. The conference aimed to spread the word on the role of standards in FM and to push for more engagement, because, as Chairman Stan Mitchell put it, 'more engagement leads to better standards'. The event also looked at the contribution that standards are making to putting facilities management – still a relatively young discipline – on the built environment map.

Some of what we covered during the day:

- FM is a 25 year-old-discipline – very new in comparison with other professions in the built environment. This 'youth' means that for now FM is still a relatively immature industry. The conference discussed the fact that a key role standards can play is to help accelerate recognition of FM, and the maturing process.
- The conference was told that the international standards body, ISO, now has a facilities management committee in place. Its formation attracted a great deal of international interest and 29 countries are now involved. The committee (ISO TC 267 Facilities Management) is currently working on two international standards: Terms and Definitions; and guidance on how to prepare FM agreements.
- In addition, an ISO working party is currently putting a business case together on a proposed facilities management system standard. This would give organizations the opportunity to have their facilities management provision independently audited and certified against the requirements of the standard. The working party will submit its case to ISO early next year. Anyone with a point of view on this is encouraged to contribute their thoughts to ISO TC 267.
- FM is massively important in the design process – a fact that's regularly overlooked, according to Steve Maslin, Director at Building User Design Solutions. Designers, he said, are too often like aircraft builders who don't speak to pilots. The degree of fragmentation in the process, from initial design to operation, is a challenge, but FM needs to get involved early on to make sure that buildings deliver on the practical needs of their users. Moreover, Facilities Managers can use standards to provide authoritative arguments as to why they should be listened to.

- It was noted that the FM industry is collaborating much more than ever and that this is a very good thing. FM is now at a juncture where we can begin to get recognition for the business value of maintenance. Facilities managers now have the tools to prioritize work programmes and defend their budgets. Maintenance programmes can become a meaningful part of business planning and can be genuinely strategic. Standards have a significant role in supporting the continuing progress that FM is making as a recognized discipline within the built environment.

What does 'lifeing' mean to you?

The conference attendees had a discussion about 'lifeing' – the art of determining the life expectancy of a particular asset, plant, equipment or system. The experts advised that life tables need to be used pragmatically as an indicator, but that lifeing still remains more art than science. Attendees were advised to have a conversation with clients around what matters to them, and then to 'life' conservatively those assets that are business critical.

Standards update:

BS 8892 – Transition Management of Facility-related Services is being drafted for publication in early 2014. It will help the transition process from one service arrangement to another (typically when a contract ends) – making it more efficient, cost-effective and minimizing the risks involved.

Meanwhile, BS 8544, Guide for life cycle costing of maintenance during the in use phases of buildings is newly published. The standard was described as 'a key piece of the jigsaw for the facilities management and maintenance industries'. It provides a standardized way to capture the right asset information, evaluate and prioritize maintenance work, and integrate maintenance and renewal plans. It will help Facilities Managers to establish and defend budgets, drive maintenance priorities, and target investment in asset renewals. It's also entirely compatible with both BCIS and CIBSE guidance.

What do Facility Managers need?

- More structure in the industry
- Commonality of basic activities
- Common standards from the supply chain
- Guidance covering:
 - Checklists and processes
 - Specifications
 - Contracts
 - Pricing models
 - Performance measurement
 - Procurement techniques

Find out more about key standards for facilities management at shop.bsigroup.com/fm