

Working Building Middle East Conference

Abu Dhabi, UAE. 10 December 2007

Key note presentation delivered by Stan Mitchell, Chairman of Global Facility Management Association (Global FM).

“Sabah el kheir”, “ahlan wa sahlán” and in Scottish Gaelic can I wish you “Céad míle fáilte”.

First of all I would apologise for not being able to speak your language I hope my pronunciation was understandable!

What a fantastic conference programme you have in front of you; within this conference you will hear some key messages:

From Iman Hassan you will hear about “Breaking the barriers and shaping the future of **strategic Facilities Management**”

From Khalid al-Shekaili “driving the full **strategic value** of Facilities Management”

From Clair Watt and Graham Yates after lunch you will hear about how “Facilities Management can **lead the way**”; and “delivery of **sustainability** through maximizing **design performance**”; all about those Global issues such as **sustainability** and **corporate social responsibility**.

“**whole life costing**” from Dr Assem al-Hajj, a professor from that wonderful, top class, eminent, visionary, world renowned leading University called Heriot Watt, which just happens to be based in Scotland!!

And finally about “delivering **exceptional results**” from Mike Cairney – last on the programme, but don’t sneak away early, Mike is worth listening to.

Fantastic stuff and it all reinforces my key message to you today and that is that Facilities Management has the ‘potential’ to be the ‘BUSINESS CRITICAL’ enabler of the 21st century.

I emphasise the ‘**POTENTIAL**’.

So let’s consider why and what some of the barriers might be?

My first Facilities Management job was on the high Seas on ships of varying types and sizes.

Facilities Management was critical and essential to every aspect of the operation, maintenance, life cycle, safety, availability and value to the owner through its ability to operate efficiently. Without it there was no chance of it effectively fulfilling its function. There's not much that's different in the world of business and commerce!

It matters little whether that 'business' is in education, healthcare, leisure, manufacturing, residential etc. and it differs little irrespective of size, function, location and purpose.

- Which other function in the organisation touches and influences every aspect of its operation;
- Which other function has a vested interest in everything that's going on;
- Which other function has the level of financial responsibility where the overhead that is facilities management represents the highest (second only to salaries in some cases) for the organisation;
- Which other function has an interest in design, construction, project management, out fitting, space, move logistics, environmental control, aesthetics, operating standards, life cycle and maintenance?

I believe that we are the only profession capable of dealing with those generic 'business critical' issues that will face every organisation sooner or later. In the Middle East today perhaps 'sustainability' is not the number 1 priority, but if not it soon will be. Who else is going to drive the sustainability agenda? If there is a desire to achieve:

- a sustainable economy;
- attracting and developing the best talent;
- creating assets that will have a dependable life cycle;
- or perhaps, most important of all, a sustainable environment to make sure that this region of the world, which has such a rich heritage and history, is protected and maintained for the future generations to come as well as for the user communities of today;

... facilities management has a role to play in all of this, and without it realising such goals it will, at best, be compromised!

So what makes me think in my arrogance that we are the only people that can deal with this? Well I don't actually!

There are other professions in the 'built environment' sector who could, and most certainly will, make considerable influences in this regard and we as the Facilities Management profession will rely upon almost all of them! For design; for calculation; for experience; for competency. So what is our role?

We are in the enviable position to 'make it happen'! Not necessarily to do it but to make sure it's done, and done properly.

So where's the value in Facilities Management you might say, well it's in the cradle to grave involvement; it's in the **interpretation** role between **all the stakeholder groups** (who have different priorities, agendas and language); it's in the **understanding** of those 'business critical' interfaces that are required between the client/ the user communities/ the designers; it's in the **strategic** role that we can play as opposed to the **operational** one.

It's in the difference between Facilities Services and Facilities Management! We should know the difference. Please don't get confused between the two, there are many in the sector that will confuse you, and perhaps because they themselves do not understand that there is a huge difference between Facilities Services providers (specialists in M&E, Security, Cleaning etc who, in their own right, are critical and essential to us all) then there are those who are Facilities Management professionals (whether in-house or outsourced); who are focused upon the **strategic** and **tactical** management activities. The real value proposition (for the long term) comes through that **strategic and tactical awareness and implementation**.

The customer/ user experience comes through the operational delivery and that's where those Facilities Services specialists bring their **significant** and **important value**. We all need each other in this market and it matters not whether you are in-house or contracted out, the role 'should' be the same, it's the measurement that's usually different!

So let's get back to what makes us so special as the 'business critical enabler' of the 21st century?

Just think where we find ourselves here in the Middle East? Real Estate that has developed at a fantastic rate; sales that have been going through the roof; iconic developments that have become world news. When the client or customer experience does not live up to expectation; when the fabric does not look good after 5 years; when maintaining the utilities and services causes major disruption and cost every time you want to maintain it; when the security has had little or no thought other than to install lots of guards and stick up a few CCTV cameras; when the choice of chemicals for the cleaning is doing irreparable damage to the environment... I exaggerate of course, **or do I?**

A recent discussion with the General Manager of a developer in the Middle East whose flagship development had opened to its first residents and with whom I had had a conversation about 6

months earlier regarding Facilities Management, informed me that his phone would not stop ringing because the customer(s) were not happy. Perhaps he built the best development in the whole of the Middle East – so what!

We are, I would suggest in a unique position in the Facilities Management world:

- the **only post occupancy profession involved in the design** (or at least we should be!)
- the **interface** between the client and the built environment professions
- the **interface** with the user community
- the **interface** with the supply chain

The **pivot** around which all the stakeholder groups interface.

The **translators** that need to understand and interpret the different languages used by all of these stakeholder groups (and I'm not talking about Arab V's English)

The group that needs to **better understand** the cultural differences not just from country to country but from discipline to discipline, within any organisation.

So what can we do about it – we can **lead!**

We can **challenge** the norm!

We can **re-write the rules!**

We can **demonstrate the value** – we need to do more than just talk about it!

We can take **ownership and responsibility!**

We can **develop a profession** that helps us all do that!!

So let me tell you a little about the Global Facility Management Association and why it has emerged...

Let me quickly tell you a story. When I was chairman of the British Institute of Facilities Management I spoke at a property management conference in Europe. It was a gathering of Global Property and Real Estate Managers from some of the largest Corporate Organisations in the world. I was the only speaker from Facilities Management. I thought at the time; I have to say it as I see it!

I informed them that in the future Real Estate or Property Management will become a part of Facilities Management!!

Not surprisingly perhaps I got zero response from the audience. However at question time one very senior guy stated clearly that he totally agreed with me, but... he added, until the Facilities Management profession got its act together on an International level no one would take us seriously. I thought at the time, and I still do, that he was right.

Global FM exists to do just that.

It is a not for profit International Organisation based in Brussels Belgium.

It was born July 2006.

Its purpose in life is to share knowledge; improve standards; help 'professionalise' this profession of ours; address common International issues; elevate up the National issues that are worthy of International focus and cascade down the International knowledge that exists to share at National level; and to assist in the emergence of Facilities Management Associations where none exist.

We have been holding International Workshops around the world to assist in our understanding of what the issues are and more importantly what the common issues are. This has resulted in identifying 6 'hot topics':

1. Sustainability - sustainable communities, business case (model) for sustainability, lifecycle sustainability
2. Innovation – encourage Facilities Management action from continuous improvement, step change or strategic change of direction
3. Education and Training - compare and contrast current member Facilities Management qualifications; develop an International set of core competencies
4. Risk Management - develop International glossary of Facilities Management terms and best practice guidelines
5. Facilities Management now and in the future – coordinate a greater understanding and access to developments across the world
6. Economy and Cultures Across Borders – understand and develop tactics to address the issues and effects of the application of Global standards within diverse cultural environments; consider and contrast both in-house and globally and/ or regionally outsourced service provision

Each of these topics will be addressed and developed from these initial thoughts through specific projects with clear outputs which in turn will be disseminated through our Member Associations to their members and through our Sustaining Members through their networks.

We recognise however that the **knowledge** to be successful in this endeavour does not just rest with the Member Associations who represent our core community (i.e. the practitioner who is out there making it happen), hence the reason we have Associate Members who are also stakeholders in the wider facilities management community but who's interest is perhaps from a different perspective e.g. Universities, Trade Associations, other Professions, Business and Commerce in general.

But we also have a category of Sustaining Member within Global FM which is **critical** to our success. They are the Corporate Organisations involved in the Facilities Management Industry who want to give something back; to assist and help the development of the knowledge and understanding that exists, wherever in the world. They are needed to provide the seed corn to **develop the knowledge and best practice**; to **stimulate the understanding**; to **bring their expertise and share it** with the wider community; to consider the **greater good and long term benefits** as well as their bottom line (they actually are compatible!); to be, and be seen, as **the organisations who 'made it happen'** through their support and leadership.

So, how did we arrive at our 'Hot Topics'? They were identified through indirect consultation with over 30,000 Facilities Management practitioners; through consultation with over 11 Corporate Organisations; and through engaging with over 10 Countries from across the World, not enough perhaps but a good start!

The sustainability project was launched in New Orleans in October this year and the Education project will be launched in Oxford in March next Year.

Many people have been involved and worked hard to make Global FM happen. My challenge to every one of you, whatever the reason you are here, is to get involved and make it a success, it won't happen if you don't.

If you are a practising Facilities Manager create your Association if none exists – Global FM can help. If it does exist make sure it joins Global FM.

If you are a Corporate Organisation and you want to associate yourself with this fast growing and emerging profession of ours please do so, it's to your own advantage.

If you are a business involved in the Facilities Management sector why are you not involved already, you no longer have the excuse that you didn't know!

So in conclusion:

You are just about to hear about the market here in the Middle East and the fantastic opportunities that exist for those in the Facilities Management and Facilities Services sector.

If you are a Facilities Manager, whether you realise it or not, you don't have all the answers; engage with your peers as some of them have the knowledge that you don't.

You are just about to hear about the **strategic advantages** that Facilities Management can offer.

You are hopefully just about to hear about Facilities Management as a **strategic enabler** - it offers much more than simply delivering some services, it's actually more about how you do that whilst meeting the needs of the core business and all of its stakeholder groups!

You now know about the Global Facility Management Association and the work it is doing to **'make a difference'**, don't just sit there, join us, because if you don't, no matter which interested group you represent, ultimately we will not become that '21st century business critical enabling profession' that is currently in our grasp.

Let's make the POTENTIAL a REALITY together!

Thank you

Stan Mitchell

Chairman Global FM

stan.mitchell@keyfm.co.uk

Avenue Marcel

Thiry 204

B-1200 Brussels

Belgium

Tel: + 32 2 774 91 48

Fax: + 32 2 774 96 90

www.globalfm.org

Stan Mitchell is CEO of Key Facilities Management (www.keyfm.co.uk) the longest established facilities management company in the UK. Key provides consulting, management services, interim management and project management services to organisations large and small, public and private sector across the UK, Europe, Middle East and North Africa.

He has been involved in the development of the facilities management profession since the 1980's. He is a Past Chairman of the British Institute of Facilities Management (www.bifm.org.uk) and Convenor of WG2 within the CEN348 Technical Committee which established the European Standard for guidance on Facilities Management agreements.

He is Chairman of the British Standards Institute Facilities Management Committee and Chairman of Global Facility Management Association (www.globalfm.org) that is an International not for profit organisation based in Brussels which describes itself as a 'worldwide alliance of facility management organisations, providing leadership in the advancement of the FM profession'.