

Facilities Management from A to Z



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Maintaining a network of business contacts is an important task for all professional managers in today's environment. For those working in facilities management it can be a vital source of business information, market knowledge and even personal career advancement. Facility managers are often the only FM professional within their own organisation and the benefits of meeting with other likeminded people to share knowledge, swap ideas and catch up on industry news can be enormous.

Facility managers generally have more stakeholders than other people in the organisation and knowing the right people can be a huge advantage in stakeholder management. Successful project and contract management depends on developing good relationships with those with the right people. Networking can be an effective marketing activity, not just for those who have services to sell but also for enhancing the reputation of the FM team and of the individual FM.

Building a personal network from regular and past contacts is a relatively straightforward task requiring little more than some diligent management of business cards and the commitment of some time for keeping in touch even if only by the occasional email. Dedicating a short period of time to this activity each week makes the undertaking manageable despite the busy diary of a facility manager.

Growing the network requires more commitment. It may involve joining an established networking group or spending sometime on social networking sites like Facebook or LinkedIn. There are many business networking groups and several dedicated to the world of FM. A group will often they set joining criteria to take members with common attitudes or requirements like size of business or professional background.

Attending such a group for the first time can be a daunting prospect but this can be made easier by some pre event preparation. If a guest list is available in advance it is possible to research the other attendees and create a target list of people to meet. It is also a good idea to prepare a very short personal introduction that gives background and objectives without sounding like a presentation

Facilities trade association The FMA www.fmassociation.org.uk runs industry networking events every month. The FMAs Young Managers Forum www.youngmanagers.org.uk provides excellent networking opportunities for new FM's. BIFM www.bifm.org.uk regional events are an excellent way to meet local peers.