Adding value through facilities management
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A Partners in Innovation project
BRE has just completed a three year study aimed at raising the profile of the facilities manager within their organisations and with members of other professions, in particular promoting their potentially valuable role during the design process. Funded by the DETR’s Partners In Innovation Scheme, and supported by the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM), the project has produced outputs at three levels:
• A strategic report looking at the high level issues surrounding the facilities profession gaining greater recognition, with an emphasis on actions for the BIFM itself.
• A best practice guide to overcoming some of the technical and process related barriers to a facilities manager’s needs being considered during the design process.
• Three case studies of projects where the facilities team has been intimately involved, demonstrating the benefits that have resulted.

What does the Facilities Manager have to offer?
The greater involvement of a facilities manager in the design process can offer a number of benefits. For the client - a building that is more economic to run, or one that is easier to maintain and manage to the benefit of the end-user. For the developer - a building that is more attractive to potential tenants. For the project team - a smoother design process facilitated by effective briefing, more informed decision making, a design which is easier to construct or commission, a better product with increased customer satisfaction, and useful informal education and feedback through greater interaction with building operators.

Barriers to the Facilities Manager’s involvement
There are numerous reasons why the facilities manager may not be as involved in the design process as is desirable, or why facilities related issues are not considered during the design process. A key practical consideration, for example, is that the project team’s client is often not the occupier. Although even here it can be argued that the team should still consider bringing in facilities expertise.

The following issues are drawn from discussions with facilities managers themselves:
Proving the value of the facilities profession internally: there needs to be a wider recognition of the contribution made by facilities managers to the success of the business. Organisations should understand the contribution made not just to the ‘hard’ bottom line issues of operational costs, but also the ‘softer’ issues of people’s productivity.
Making a case for financial support for facilities: facilities managers must be able to ensure buy-in to their decisions from the purse-string holder. Should budget cuts be initiated, the facilities manager must be involved in discussions before any design features are eliminated.
The perception of the end user: the importance of proactive facilities management in ensuring end user satisfaction with buildings cannot be underestimated. The facilities manager is often in the front line for complaints and probably often has to refuse users’ requests due to a lack of resource. Hence they are often seen as the cause of problems within a building.
Design team priorities do not always lie with achieving functionality: it is felt that sometimes design teams walk away from a project on handover having given little thought to its subsequent operation. However the presence of a source of best practice knowledge of these issues should increase the notice taken of them.
Conflicting commercial priorities: sometimes the requirements of the facilities manager may clash with the commercial priorities of the property developer. For example, the latter may not be inclined to invest heavily in items that they expect might change when occupants move in, or might not wish to provide facilities that they perceive will add little intrinsic value to the building.
Training requirements: coming from a broad range of backgrounds, facilities managers may appear to be, or feel they are, unqualified to comment on or get involved with, the design
process. The training or experience they need might be either in technical subjects or in the more managerial aspects of their role.

**Access to information:** in order to contribute fully to any decision making the facilities manager must ensure that they have access to strategic information regarding their organisation, eg business plans, and be able to interpret it in the light of facilities provision.

**How can the project outputs be used?**
The strategy document considers:
- New roles for facilities managers within the design process;
- Opportunities and threats for the future of the BIFM; and
- Ways of increasing the influence of the BIFM’s members

Based on interviews with leading members of the BIFM and associated professions, the strategy document makes recommendations in two main areas of activity – awareness and profile raising, and education and training. Issues discussed include:
- The need to publicise facilities management to other professions and the business world.
- An increase in lobbying tactics either within pan-industry bodies or in response to government initiatives.
- Targeting non-affiliated members within smaller organisations to increase membership.
- The sharing of training courses with members of other professions.
- The production of BIFM best practice publications.
- The role of BIFM as a source of cost information.

Based on a series of workshops held within 5 BIFM Regions, the best practice guidance document provides facilities managers with:
- An overview of where they can become involved in the procurement process and the activities they could undertake, with a particular emphasis on issues of maintenance, flexibility and environmental policy.
- An introduction to a number of design assessment techniques with which a facilities manager should be aware eg whole life costing, risk management, value management.
- A list of key communication aims for a project team that can be achieved with the assistance of the facilities manager.
- A series of simple design check lists that can be used to highlight and resolve commonly occurring faults or lack of consideration of the facilities manager that impact on the subsequent operation of a building.
- A self assessment check list enabling a facilities team to judge their current level of engagement within their organisation in terms of input into corporate policy, performance data gathering, internal communication, internal and external marketing, and financial responsibility. This can be used to develop idealised facilities team role profiles.
- Lists of useful information sources in terms of organisations and reference material.

The case studies were undertaken with the kind agreement of BT in Glasgow, Novartis in Frimley, and Glaxo Wellcome in Greenford. They pass on experience to those clients who are less familiar with the procurement process in terms of how they should interact with the design team.

Each describes the history of a construction project in terms of:
- How the facilities team interacted with the design team ie communication routes and processes.
- How the facilities team informed technical aspects of the design.
- Post occupancy feedback from staff and the facilities team.
- Lessons for other facilities managers from the case study facilities teams themselves.

**Where can I find out more?**
The strategy report resides with BIFM, but members of the project team and BIFM Steering Group hope to tour the BIFM regions to present the key findings within their schedule of evening events in order to further the debate.
The best practice guide will be published by CRC in the early summer (available through BREBookshop.com), with associated lectures at BIFM events.

The case studies will be available for viewing or downloading from the BRE projects website, www.projects.bre.co.uk. It is also hoped to publish them as a series of journal articles to broaden their readership.

For further details of the project and its outputs please contact the BRE Project Manager, Denice Jaunzens on 01923 664522 or Valerie Everitt at the BIFM on 01799 508609.