

Integrated Facilities Management



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Integrated Facilities Management
and Design

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If you're providing services to any kind of facility, from a factory to an office building, you are involved in facilities services management. All facilities need a litany of services to operate. Maintenance, plant operations, Janitorial, window cleaning, business dining, supply chain management, grounds and landscaping, capital project management, and the list goes on. Pulling the oversight of all those service lines into one management group is called, "Integrated Facilities Management" (IFM) and that it is what I have been doing for nearly 40 years.

If this description sounds a little simple, anyone with a stake in the company bottom line can appreciate the ground-level improvements well run IFM can provide. Executed properly, IFM can streamline internal and vendor-facing communication, simplify the management of day-to-day operations, and improve productivity and wellness across any organization.

What does a well-run IFM program look like in practice? How do you apply the principles of integrated facilities management to your particular facility environment? There are several steps, and the challenge is to take only the steps necessary to arrive at the quality, performance, and financial outcomes desired of the program. An outcome-based approach is the best and most efficient way to line up and provide "only" the services necessary for a given facility. Developing clear goals and performance KPIs are integral to outcome-based design and will help determine how the finished program to look and function.

Performance KPIs can carry significant impact by informing minute adjustments to various procedures and deciding tasks to be outlined in service agreements to name just two. Additionally, it's important to establish and define processes for registering complaints and dealing with any conflicts; without documented procedures in place, issues can fester and spread to different parts of the operation. This process can only be done under careful collaboration with owners, occupants, administrators, and end users. Such collaboration can determine what services will be needed and at what level. Finding a balance between what is minimally needed and what is desired is not always easy and has to be done under the lens of financial reality.

IFM is an exercise in consolidation that means dropping multiple vendor contracts in favor of a single service agreement that puts the entire list of service line responsibilities, normally handled by different teams, under a single umbrella. The practice gives owners and administrators a single point of contact to resolve all service line issues and a single throat to choke if things go wrong. This means increased visibility, more effective management of teams, quicker responses to requests and less downtime for employees.

The benefits of a simplified structure through IFM don't stop there, IFM ultimately allows you to align tasks with the business's larger goals. Owners and administrators are able to step out of the day-to-day management of workflow and take that time to focus core business. Ultimately, less micromanagement means more time to look at the bigger picture.

With multiple internal teams managing different service lines, redundancy and overlap is inevitable. Costs can rise as different teams spend their resources on initiatives that don't align with larger company goals. With the greater visibility allowed through outcome based IFM, unnecessary spending becomes much easier to identify and squelch. The same also holds true for external

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vendors. Overseeing a single budget and team will reduce material and vendor costs, as well as bring about increased productivity.

Hopefully, all of the above sounds appealing. It is certainly within reach. If you partner with me, I can help achieve a more integrated approach to your facilities management.

Implementing an IFM program means making some foundational changes to operations and tweaking a lot of moving parts. My approach to IFM comes after an extensive and lean review of your current practices then, as mentioned earlier, I work with owners, occupants, administrators, and end users to determine what services will be needed and at what level. From there, we reverse engineer to find the straightest line of necessary events possible to establish and operate an IFM program that employs industry best practices in every surviving service line.

The final operating service lines are to be based on the financially viable desired outcomes as determined by the stakeholders involved in the transition. You can only create a roadmap for a quality IFM program if you can define what the acceptable outcomes will be, and if you have a clear understanding of where you are at the beginning. Looking at the current state from the point of view provided by knowing the outcomes you want to achieve, allows you to see more clearly the inefficiencies and missteps between the two points.

This could be a monumentally stressful transition, so I recommend lots of communication preceding, during and after the project. A move to IFM only works if there's clear communication between different stakeholders, so be sure to cultivate close relationships between the various teams and contractors ahead of implementation.

Technology plays a big role when it comes to integrated facilities management. IFM is all about integration, and that includes a software solution that is able to bring all the myriad components of facilities management onto one platform. By creating a single point where all systems and processes are managed, a comprehensive Integrated Workplace Management System, (IWMS) can make IFM much easier to achieve. Good software can offer a single user interface where critical FM responsibilities like space management, move management and the processing of work orders are all easily handled. It will also provide the reports and analytics essential to making IFM more effective, and make available a method that can keep all departments up to date and looped in.

Like any major change, establishing IFM within a workplace requires significant preparation and planning. I believe IFM's potential productivity and efficiency benefits make it essential. The more complex your current state is, the more likely you are to derive significant value from the simplifying effects IFM will bring.