

CoreNet Global UK Chapter FM and Workplace Community event

3 December 2014

FM in relocation

Our Knowledge Exchange events exist to help our members - occupiers and industry experts - to share experiences and learn from each other.

Our second session, facilitated by the Facilities Management Community, took place on 3rd December 2014 at Deutsche Bank's London headquarters and explored the role of FM in relocation.

Led by Mary Louise Gray, who heads up the Strategic FM community for CoreNet UK, the session started with some brief presentations by a range of speakers, including an end user, FM provider and property consultant, to give an insight into the different perspectives on the relocation process and the role that FM should play.

Together attendees then explored and debated how FM could evolve to:

- Add more value
- Become more strategic
- Support business better

We hope in this white paper you will find some solutions and ideas to help your business.

Thanks to our speakers – Andrew Mawson of AWA, Craig Owen of Friends Life, Jack Buckley of Citrica, Jeanie Chuo who heads CoreNet UK's Workplace Community, Simon O'Reilly of Cushman & Wakefield – for their time and input, and to everyone who attended, without whom we would not have had such an impassioned debate and learnt so much.

James Maddock

President of CoreNet Global UK Chapter

Introduction

FM has always played a critical role – keeping our workplaces functioning smoothly. But with workplace, people and technology converging, change is afoot and there is an opportunity for FMs to play a far more significant role.

In this CoreNet Global UK Chapter Knowledge Exchange event for end users and service providers, our speakers shared their experiences of FM and explored key themes including:

- The role of FM in the relocation process
- The potential role for FM
- The relationship between FM and the business
- Achieving best practice

Where should FM fit into the relocation process?

Historically, FM is a role driven by custom and practice. It has always been focused on asset management, operations, and design & construction projects.

As a result, there are a number of schools of thought on the point at which facilities managers should be engaged and consulted during the relocation process. At one end of the spectrum are those who think FM should continue in its historical role focused on 'business as usual' and, at the other those, that want it to become more strategic and supportive of change.

Here are some of the views of our speakers:

- The in-house FM function currently comes in too late in the process. Earlier engagement would allow management to understand how the premises currently supports or hinders the business and plan for improvement wherever the company locates
- In-house FMs tend to be more operational and engineering-based than strategic. Those who are proactive tend to move into a different role, more focused on change management. This is a shame as FM could provide great insight within its current role and therefore should contribute to relocation decisions

- The FM team has the benefit of the overall picture and should initiate and volunteer information. As holders of vast banks of data, it should and ought to be much more proactive
- FM service providers tend to be consulted two thirds of the way through the process, when the cost of FM support is needed. It is a reactive relationship and prices often have to be based on unfinished buildings, reducing accuracy. It's also far too late in the process for the provider to help with the planning phase or identify opportunities to add value

The potential of the FM role

FM is perceived as a 'business as usual' role, responsible for the smooth operation of the business day to day. It's a critical function. And its focus is primarily on cost and quality.

The teams that look after our workplaces and make sure they run smoothly take a long term view – over the lifespan of the building. They collect masses of data that can inform significant and costly real estate decisions. They are the closest to the business and yet often the farthest away.

So how do and should businesses harness all of this knowledge and experience? How do we broaden the FM role for the benefit of businesses?

1. First, FM should be involved in the beginning, middle and end of a relocation process or indeed any process that will fundamentally change the way the business operates - because it can provide valuable insight at every stage. They know operations better than anyone – the challenges, the little things that matter to staff, the opportunities to improve and so on.
2. Roles and responsibilities need to be clear i.e. what does the business expect from the FM function?
3. Alongside cost and quality, there needs to be a focus on improvement – driving efficiency and effectiveness – and enhancing the workplace experience for staff. This means interrogating and interpreting data and translating it into actions that will help the business. It's not about how much data there is, it's about collating the right data

and taking the time to understand what it means, and then arming the right people with the information they need to make a difference

4. FM processes can be highly complex, quashing creativity and limiting the opportunity for lateral thinking. They need to be simplified where possible with some flexibility built in. Empowering the FM to design the process best suited to generating ideas and solutions that help the business will push the relationship in a more strategic direction
5. Education and training is required, in business, finance, strategy and change management, to allow the FM to align its work with achieving the business' vision

All of these things elevate the standing and position of the FM and would do wonders for their confidence. They would be empowered to add value.

A new relationship and language

Having considered the role of FM, our groups at this Knowledge Exchange event then considered the need for a new relationship coupled with a new way of communicating.

Currently the business management and FM relationship is akin to parent-child, where the former tells the latter what to do. Confidential agreements in place during the relocation process mean that FM isn't 'let in' or allowed a seat at the table. By the time they are consulted, the decisions have been made and the FM just has to make it work.

So the new relationship we propose is a mature one – a partnering relationship, where the FM has the permission to challenge, provide insight based on their data and proactively make recommendations that will help the business achieve its vision and strategic objectives.

This relationship is based on some key principles:

1. The FM team should not work in silo. In-house FMs are usually aware what's happening but not necessarily engaged, so if they see an issue, they might not raise it. There should be a structure in place, perhaps along with incentives, to give them a route to proactively help streamline and standardise operations. They should also be

encouraged to engage and collaborate with suppliers and other internal teams such as IT, HR, finance and legal, to develop the best solutions

2. Business training provided for the new FM role will help with communication, arming the FM with the language of business and helping them to discuss their ideas with management in the context of business outcomes. When making the case for an improvement, the story needs to be a compelling, commercial one. Cost will be part of the conversation, but not the only factor. For instance, say management is considering cutting staff biscuits to save money, but the FM knows the negative impact this is likely to have on morale and that staff may leave as an ultimate consequence. He or she consults HR and together they make the case to the business that it's a false economy with the cost of replacing people far greater than the money saved on biscuits. It's a simple example but the FM here has the opportunity and indeed responsibility to speak up for the benefit of the business overall
3. Lastly, but most important, is that FM needs to engage with the human dimension of what they do. It's less about operations and more about people and the workplace experience. It's about how the environment works culturally

In short, FM becomes more strategic, integrated, proactive and business-led.

BOX OUT

Best practice - a new Workplace Management Framework for managing best practice

One of our speakers at the event, Andrew Mawson, brought industry experts together to develop a new framework that would set out best practice for the management of any workplace – office environments, hospitals, retail etc. At this Knowledge Exchange event, we saw how it worked.

The Workplace Management Framework is based on four principles:

1. Strategic management – defining the workplace experience, how it meets the business objectives – so it has a purpose – and what needs to be in place to make it successful
2. CRM – clients who pay for the space and customers who use it
3. Performance – maintaining the experience at an economic cost

4. Operational – capacity, constraints, how the space is used, maintaining it

In short, it introduces a common language and is aimed at increasing comprehension between the various disciplines involved. It can also act as an online assessment tool that can be used for the accreditation of suppliers.

See it here: www.wmframework.com

Conclusion

The key drivers for businesses today are driving down costs, improving performance, and staff retention and attraction. Relocation provides a company with the blank piece of paper, the ultimate opportunity to support all of these things, but only if senior management makes the right informed decisions.

The FM has the potential to proactively arm the management team with invaluable information and the insight to drive improvement, but only with the right relationship.

The current disconnect between the FM as service provider, engineer and operations manager and the potential of the FM as consultant and strategist – people, workplace experience and business-focused – needs to be addressed if the FM is to add more value.

FM needs to undergo a rebranding exercise and move from a ‘parent-child’ relationship to that of ‘trusted advisor’ and ‘critical friend’. It needs to start to make its voice heard, using the language of business to show how it can help a business achieve its vision. Then and only then can it make a real difference.