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FACILITY MANAGEMENT

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In an article for *Managing Office Technology*, Kit Tuveson defined facility management as "the coordination of the physical workplace with the people and work of an organization. It integrates the principles of business administration, architecture, and the behavioral and engineering sciences." In the most basic terms, facility management encompasses all activities related to keeping a complex operating. Facilities include grocery stores, auto shops, sports complexes, jails, office buildings, hospitals, hotels, retail establishments, and all other revenue-generating or government institutions.

Responsibilities associated with facility management typically include a wide range of function and support services, including janitorial services; security; property or building management; engineering services; space planning and accounting; mail and messenger services; records management; computing, telecommunications and information systems; safety; and other support duties. It is the job of the facility manager to create an environment that encourages productivity, is safe, is pleasing to clients and customers, meets government mandates, and is efficient.

DIFFERENT BUSINESSES AND THEIR DIFFERENT FACILITY NEEDS

The term "facility" is used to refer to a broad spectrum (/knowledge/Broad_spectrum_antibiotic.html) of buildings, complexes, and other physical entities. "The only thread common among these entities is the fact that they are all *places*," wrote Alan M. Levitt in *Disaster Planning and Recovery: A Guide for Facility Professionals*. "A 'facility' may be a space or an office or suite of offices; a floor or group of floors within a building; a single building or a group of buildings or structures. These structures may be in an urban setting or freestanding in a suburban or rural setting. The structures or buildings may be a part of a complex or office park or campus."

The key is to define the facility as a physical place where business activities are done, and to make facility management plans in accordance with the needs and demands of those business activities. After all, the facility needs of a movie theatre, a museum, a delicatessen, a plastics manufacturer, and a bank are apt to be considerably different, even though there will likely be certain basic needs that all will share (furniture, office space, air conditioning systems, light fixtures, etc.). Good facility management is concerned with addressing those needs in the best and most cost-effective ways possible. Indeed, facility management encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including the following:

- **Monitoring organization efficiency**, since, as the J.K. Lasser Institute noted in *How to Run a Small Business*, "personnel, machines, supplies, work in progress, finished products, and deliveries must all be coordinated if your plant is to be successful. Production efforts must be judged by time, cost, quantity, and quality."
- **Ensuring that the business receives the most it can for its facility-related expenditures** (this is often done through standardization (/knowledge/Standardization.html) of company-wide needs so that high-volume purchases of necessary products can be made).

- **Real estate procurement, leasing, and disposal** (or facility construction, renovation, and relocation).
- **Ensuring that the divergent processes, procedures, and standards present in a business complement rather than interfere with one another.**
- **Monitoring all aspects of facility maintenance and upkeep** so that the business can operate at highest capacity.
- **Tracking and responding to environmental, health, safety, and security issues.**
- **Ensuring facility compliance with relevant codes and regulations**
- **Anticipating (/knowledge/Anticipating.html) future facility needs** in areas as diverse as fluorescent (/knowledge/Fluorescence.html) light procurement, new space for expanded assembly lines, automation, and wiring for new computer networks.
- **Educating work force about all manner of standards and procedures,** from ordering office supplies to acting in the event of a disaster.

(THE EVOLVING CHARACTER OF FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Facility management has traditionally been associated with janitorial services, mailrooms, and security. Since the middle of the twentieth (/knowledge/20th_Century_Fox.html) century, though, facility management has evolved into a demanding discipline. Factors driving the complexity of the facility manager's job are numerous. For example, **facilities have become much larger and more complicated, often relying on computerized and electronic support systems that require expertise to operate and repair.** As Randy Brown observed in *Buildings*, "personal computer networks, telecommunications systems and other technological tools have significantly increased office tenant requirements in the past 15 years." This trend is evident in manufacturing sectors as well.

Of course, many other factors have impacted on the challenges of facility management in recent years. **For example, the newfound corporate cost-consciousness** that emerged during the 1980s has generated an emphasis on **operational efficiency.** Writing in *IIE Solutions*, Steven M. Price summarized the facility manager's situation thusly: "Facilities professionals are being asked to contain costs while achieving maximum beneficial use—that is, to achieve more with less." In addition, philosophical changes such as increased reliance on teamwork, cross-functional teams, and telecommuting have created new spacing and infrastructure (/knowledge/Infrastructure.html) demands. Finally, the responsibilities of facility managers have continued to broaden into all areas of facility upkeep, including insuring that the business adheres to regulatory requirements in such areas as handicapped access, hazardous material handling and disposal, and other "safe workplace" issues.

The end result of new technology, efficiency pressures, and government regulations has been an expansion of the facility management role. By the 1990s, facility managers were often highly trained and educated and must wear several hats. Depending on the size of the complex, the manager will likely be responsible for directing a facility management and maintenance staffs. In addition to overseeing the important duties related to standard maintenance, mailroom, and security activities, he or she may also be responsible for providing engineering and architectural services, hiring subcontractors, maintaining computer and telecommunications systems, and even buying, selling, or leasing real estate or office space.

For example, suppose that a company has decided to consolidate five branch offices into a central computerized facility. It may be the facility manager's job to plan, coordinate, and manage the move. He or she may have to find the new space and negotiate a purchase. And he or she will likely have to determine which furniture and equipment can be moved to the new office, and when and how to do so with a minimal disruption of the operation. This may include negotiating prices for new furniture and equipment or balancing needs with a limited budget. The facility management department may also furnish engineering and architectural design services for the new space, and even provide input for the selection of new computer and information systems. Of import will be the design and implementation of various security measures and systems that reduce the risk of theft and ensure worker safety. The manager will also be responsible for considering federal, state, and local regulations. For example, he or she will need to ensure that the complex conforms with mandates associated with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), clean air and other environmental protection regulations, and other rules. The ADA dictates a list of requirements related to disabled employee and patron access with which most

facilities must comply, while clean air laws (/knowledge/Emission_standard.html) impose standards for indoor air quality and hazardous emissions. Similarly, other laws regulate energy consumption, safety, smoking, and other factors that fall under the facility manager's umbrella of responsibility.

(FACILITY MANAGEMENT IN THE FUTURE

Price and other analysts have suggested that evolving business realities in the realms of process improvement, cost containment, speed-to-market accelerations, quality control, and workplace arrangements and concepts will all have a big impact on future notions of facility management. Price argued that "the challenge for facilities planning will be to integrate knowledge workers into a dynamic business environment of global competition, technological developments, and changing values." He laid out four primary precepts that will likely form the underpinnings of future financial management planning:

1. **Understanding the evolving nature of knowledge-based business**—"The new workforce and the content of its work is migrating from a bureaucratic control of resources and the movement of materials through a process toward a highly flexible and networked organization whose added value is exploiting specialized knowledge and information to solve complex problems," wrote Price.
2. **Understanding workspace trends**—Price and other business analysts believe that computing and communications technologies are fundamentally transforming the workplace landscape. As shared jobs, telecommuting, home-based businesses, flexible work hours and other trends make further inroads in the business world, facility management philosophies will have to keep pace.
3. **Understanding how new technologies have removed old restrictions on conducting business**—This, said Price, basically entails (</knowledge/Entailment.html>) recognizing that "the removal of physical limitations caused by transportation and communications technology has changed the scope, strategy, and structure of the business world."
4. **Understanding "Job Factor" basics**—Price noted that IBM (</knowledge/IBM.html>) and other companies have developed facility management philosophies that study the interaction of all job factors, including those of physical environment and job content.

(CONTRACT FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Increasing numbers of business owners are choosing to contract out their facility management tasks to specialized facility management companies that operate the complex for the owner on a contract basis.

This arrangement has become more common in part because of the increasing scope and complexity of facility management. Companies that hire contract managers prefer to focus on other goals, such as producing a product or providing a service. Many of those firms find that outsourcing facility management duties to a specialist reduces costs and improves operations.

Contract facility managers may be hired to manage an entire complex or just one part of a large operation. For example, some companies hire contract managers that specialize in operating mailrooms or providing janitorial services. In any case, the company expects to benefit from the expertise of the manager it hires. A contractor that manages data processing systems, for example, may bring technical know how that its employer would have great difficulty cultivating (</knowledge/Tillage.html>) in-house. Likewise, a recreation facility owner that employs a facility manager specializing in the operation of sport complexes may benefit from the contractor's mix of knowledge related to groundskeeping, accounting and reporting, and sports marketing, among other functions.

Besides expertise and efficiency, several other benefits are provided by contract facility managers. For example, they reduce the owner's or occupant's liability related to personnel. By contracting a firm to manage one of its factories, an organization can substantially reduce its involvement in staffing, training, worker's compensation expenses and litigation, employee benefits, and worker grievances. It also eliminates general management and payroll responsibilities—rather than tracking hours and writing checks for an entire staff, it simply pays the facility management company. In addition, a company that hires a facility management firm can quickly reduce or increase its staff as it chooses without worrying about hiring or severance legalities.

Whether a small business chooses to outsource or maintain internal control of its facility management processes, however, the ultimate goals are the same. As Raymond O'Brien commented in *Managing*

Office Technology, "both the in-house facility management department and outsourced services must recognize that the facility management business is changing. While, traditionally, interior planning has been driven by preconceived notions of what is appropriate, business today increasingly is not being conducted in a traditional manner or in traditional locations.... Changing roles, combined with changing technology, drives the environment of the future."

Although he concurred that the field of facility management is in a state of flux at the moment, O'Brien argued that quality facility management could become an even greater advantage for attentive businesses in the future: "[Facility management] offers those with entrepreneurial spirit enormous opportunity. Whether working within a corporation or as an outsourced service provider, imaginative facility managers can find myriad ways to improve service to the company or the client while creating an interesting, challenging position for themselves."

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