

Transforming Facility Management

Maximize savings and end-user well-being with a holistic, digitalized and innovative Energy & FM approach

Introduction

On 4 September 2018, Enova, a corporate member of EmiratesGBC, delivered a Technical Workshop on how to improve Facility Management (FM) services. The workshop was facilitated by Francisco Ramalheira, Tomaso Naldi, and Mazen Nasr, who elaborated on the challenges and opportunities in the FM sector in the MENA region.



Facility Management

Facility Management ensures that the operations of the building are comfortable, efficient, and safe for the occupants by integrating systems, people, and technology. The availability of good facility management services being provided is very crucial to the building occupants' comfort and aids in increasing productivity and the reduction of absenteeism. A good FM provider will also make sure that the innovation and digitization of FM will help in reducing the energy consumption levels in buildings through better system efficiencies and raising awareness of sustainability in the end-users.

For the full workshop presentation, please click [here](#).

During the workshop, the facilitators set up three working groups and the topics assigned for discussion ranged from requirements for retrofits, and indoor environmental quality in buildings, to benefits of a fully integrated FM process and the innovation and digitization opportunities available in that field.

The below outlines the group discussions that unfolded and their results.

Group 1: mandatory vs. optional?

The first group of participants discussed an optional approach compared to a mandatory one. As a first point, the attendees found that there is a lack of building benchmarking data. Such a system would allow to rank buildings from best to worst performers and therefore be an incentive for poorly performing buildings to invest in a retrofit. In addition, there could be monetary incentives for high performers. Everyone agreed that rewards for good energy performers are better than penalizing low performers.

The participants also agreed that the retrofit procedure should consider the building as a whole, including the fit-out stage, to make sure that all system interactions are included during the retrofit process.

The group also voiced their alarm over the fact that banned chemicals are still being used in buildings despite them representing a hazard. Enforcing a set of minimum requirements and regulations as well as retrofit feasibility studies for the existing building stock could help advance the sector.

The conclusion reached was that federal or governmental initiatives in the UAE have a major positive impact on the market and at least partially mandatory requirements with positive reinforcement would go a long way in convincing building owners in investing in EPCs.

Which one is the better approach: mandatory or optional?

- First step: benchmarking system to rank best to worst performers
→ incentives for high performers?
- Existing building stock: at least feasibility studies should be mandatory & enforcement of minimum equipment regulations (e.g. assets, chemicals used)
- Regulations should consider building as a whole, including the fit-out
- IEQ: input-based requirements but also output-based compliance needed (minimum level of performance with a yearly audit)

➤ CONCLUSION: PARTIALLY MANDATORY

Introduction of a set of minimum requirements and yearly reporting on environmental KPIs with incentives for high performers

Group 2: integrated vs. independent?

Group 2 listed the advantages and disadvantages of integrating facility and utility management at different stages of the project lifecycle. Due to the FM providers' deep knowledge of the building and its assets, their expertise would add value in the decision-making process, especially regarding investments with long-term ROI. The understanding of building operations and maintenance processes would allow to introduce efficiency measures and innovative equipment to contribute to the attractiveness of the building and therefore the satisfaction level and loyalty of tenants. Possible resistance from the building owners to involve FM from the start could be due to additional cost and often non-quantifiable results.

Finally, the group discussed whether the FM company should be the sole stakeholder in retrofit projects, and they reached the consensus that beside the FM company, owners and occupants are key stakeholders in building retrofit projects because of their close and personal proximity to the building.

Which one is the better approach: integrated or independent?

- Advantages of an integrated approach:
 - ❖ FM providers have deep knowledge of assets and operations
→ experts in saving utilities costs by making building more efficient and introducing innovations for long-term ROI
 - ❖ Attractive building = satisfied tenants → increased loyalty and willingness to invest in innovations (e.g. renewable energy)
- Challenges: resistance to invest by building owners as benefits are often on the long-term and sometimes not quantifiable/tangible

➤ CONCLUSION: INTEGRATED

Building owners define long-term goals, FM providers design roadmap to reach goals, end-users to be involved for awareness

Group 3: standard vs. innovative?

The third group discussed the digitalization of the FM sector. They agreed on the importance of full transparency in the contract between the relevant parties involved. Access to real-time data allows clear reporting and therefore assists in holding the parties accountable on what they promised to deliver. Moreover, user-friendly data infographics are also a great tool to raise the awareness level of the end-user. The participants were aligned on the fact that changing the technology is not enough; the end-user must be aware of how actions impact consumption levels in a positive and negative direction.

The participants also pointed out that while data is essential to evaluate performance, correct data and competent analysis is required for the data to be of use.

The final point they discussed was the inflexibility of contracts, often not allowing for the implementation of innovative solutions through variation order.

Which one is the better approach: standard or innovative?

- Transparent real-time data allows clear reporting, awareness and benchmarking of different facilities → increases accountability of provider, building owner and end-user
- Challenges: poor data quality, lack of needed skills for correct analysis, need for initial investment
- End-user engagement needed for culture change to reduce resource consumption → not just awareness but also training and advice

➤ CONCLUSION: INNOVATIVE

Data is the future if used correctly! Need for more flexibility as rigid contracts impede implementation of innovations via variation orders.

