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Bridging the gap between government and FM industry

By Bader Salmeen

Governments across the region are one of the largest property owners with real estate portfolio encompassing a wide variety of built environment from ministry campuses to military bases, from government offices to large public parks and prisons. Managing these wide ranges of properties is definitely a significant task. Without a comprehensive and integrated facilities management approach, the task is somewhat impossible or at least will not yield efficiency and effectiveness. Clearly the need to bridge the gap between government property owners and the facilities management industry is never more important than today.

With the continuation of mega projects construction for government campuses and other infrastructure projects, the discipline of integrated facilities management can no longer be ignored. Governments' decision makers need to consider that the discipline of facilities management is as crucial as any other engineering disciplines involved in the development of any built environment. After all, it is the responsibility of the governments to maintain service and track both people and assets within their facilities. They need to do so with sustainability in mind, with tight budgets and full public accountability. Without the adoption of facilities management, effective maintenance, service and support management of government facilities cannot be achieved.

In addition, the increasing complexity within buildings in terms of technology integration and challenging architectures, the silo approach to servicing such facilities simply breaks



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down. Governments are obviously aware of this at varying degrees depending on countries in the region.

However, the general trend is full steam adoption of integrated facilities management. The FM industry ought to leverage such momentum and be proactive in raising awareness not only about the benefits that facilities management brings to the table but also about the imperative need to adopt facilities management in order to proactively and efficiently maintain and service governmental facilities. The FM industry needs to reach out to government officials and decision makers and engage them with serious discussions about FM to identify the gaps between current approaches to

maintaining buildings and facilities management.

With governments actively pursuing sustainable programs, effective management of facilities is a prerequisite to any environmental sustainability and green initiatives. Therefore, governments are ready to welcome FM as a discipline and as an operational method in looking after their facilities.

In addition, they are aware of the increased complexity of their facilities as a result of requirements for high-level security, specialized infrastructures and secure interconnectivity. It is through the adoption of facilities management that governments can effectively promote and deliver sustainability programs and environmentally green solutions. Delivering such programs at governmental facilities will make them showcases and success stories that can then be used to influence the private sector.

The gap is indeed bridgeable and serious work has already been done in engaging governments. Sustained efforts are though needed to raise further the awareness of facilities management within governments' decision-making apparatus both at the national and municipality levels. The FM industry shall continue to aim at reducing the gap and build on success to finally anchor FM in the thinking process of government property owners. ■

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