

Service beyond the expected

Brigadier Harpreet Singh Kaura, senior vice president, national administration, KPMG, explains how facility management has now evolved as an enabler for businesses

INTERVIEWED BY RASHMI NAICKER



This is KPMG
and this is
our story

Earlier, it was easy to summarise facilities management (FM) as a set of disciplines solely focused on the maintenance of functionality within a built environment. What this omits, however, is a range of services that directly support the human element.

Having carved out a critical position for themselves within a company, facility managers are expanding their repertoire to go above and beyond traditional operations and maintenance. They are now becoming more

involved in business infrastructure development, strategic planning, real estate management, auxiliary functionality as well as budgets and financing.

These value-added services are today being incepted as a means to create additional revenue streams and efficient ROI for the company, and also to remain distinct within a highly competitive market. Individuals and professionals who have recognised this potential are effectively evolving the expectations of the FM industry as a whole and successfully established benchmarks. One such individual, who has made significant

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headway, is Brigadier Harpreet Singh Kaura, senior vice president, national administration, KPMG.

For the veteran, who served in the Indian Army’s Aviation segment for nearly three decades, facilities management was a natural extension, given management of infrastructure has been intrinsic across all ranks in the military.

Having been with KPMG for over seven years now, Brigadier Kaura has seen both the profession and the company grow manifold through this duration. He asserts, “Facility managers are playing a pivotal role in business operations, acting as business ‘enablers’ rather than just as ‘support’. They need to play a balancing role between employee expectations, which are always increasing, and optimising the ever-increasing operational costs. In addition, they also need to support the organisation in its long-term strategic goals, as real estate costs are a large part of a structure’s long-term capital planning. This is a continuous and evolving process, wherein one needs to keep abreast with the latest developments in office space infrastructures as well as the evolution of technology relevant to FM.”

CRUX OF THE PROFESSION

When it comes to a commercial establishment, the facility manager’s customer is the end user i.e. employees of the organisation. Thus, his activities and processes should primarily aim to provide the best possible service to ensure that employees operate in a safe, healthy and productive work environment.

Another key aspect of facility management practices in a workplace are the adherence to processes and transparency in the functioning. Since there are multiple stakeholders in FM operations, it is imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of what can or



cannot be done, with clearly defined escalation procedures. There are Standard Operating Procedures, which need to be tweaked to site-specific requirements, and site-specific guidelines need to be put in place

and strictly adhered to.

ROLE OF A FACILITY MANAGER AT THE CONCEPT STAGE

More often than not, facility managers are usually involved

in the later stages of the projects; and at times only after completion of the entire project at site. Brigadier Kaura sheds light on changing the norm. "Considering that the early involvement of the FM team could potentially help reduce the efforts for maintenance during the operational phase of facilities, we are now consulted much earlier in the process. Our contributions aid in reducing the needs for major divergent requirements and alternations that will otherwise occur at the operational phase. We carry out due diligence services through our design partners – during the initial phase itself – to evaluate the selected tenancy for floor efficiency and to ascertain if the tenancy meets all code compliances with respect to fire safety, etc. We, then, engage with stakeholders and end-users in the design process so that their aspirations are met. The office layout and designs prepared by designers are then presented for approval. During the construction, our team attends all project meetings and coordinates with all external and internal stakeholders. Upon project

completion, the team observes testing and commissioning of all equipment as well as reviews close-out documents such as warranties and service contracts. The FM team has an important role in any project – we represent stakeholders' interest, the utilities that are installed through commissioning and turn-over," affirms Kaura.

With the increase in complexity of workplace, technology to manage the FM workflow is essential to ensure an efficient and effective delivery of service to end-users as well as organisations. Kaura states that there are various technologies available that provide an enhanced level of automation in the FM operations. Computerised Facility Management (CFM) is one of the most commonly used tools, which provide both monitoring and control of operations. They also provide senior management dashboards of facility performance that can be used to improve operations as well as plan for future facilities.

BUDGETING IT RIGHT

Cost pressures are an intrinsic part of a facility manager's role, as he/she controls large parts of the operating budgets. In difficult times, there is even more pressure to manage the costs as FM budget is the first one to be impacted. The key to managing the costs is to identify where the inefficiencies lie and how they can be optimised. Reviewing deployments, service levels, procurement costs, third party service levels, etc, on a regular basis can help to proactively manage costs and keep the organisation's bottom line in the green.

Today, the FM vertical is being viewed as an essential business asset – for example, the importance of the working environment for staff productivity, or being an enabler for the image and culture of the firm. The facility management team's performance is constantly being

THE METHOD OF PROGRESSION

- Before any project is initiated, the team sets up a project governance framework to identify accountabilities and responsibilities. This is fundamental to ensuring project success and control
- They then engage with stakeholders and end-users in the preliminary stages of the project to understand business requirements and aspirations. These inputs are shared with design partners, who prepare layouts and design concepts for stakeholders' approval and sign-off
- In order to achieve design consistency and delivery of office spaces, the team has developed standards for the office fit-out. This design guideline assists in the spatial planning of all KPMG India offices
- When designing a new workspace, multiple aspects are considered – the design vision, business requirements, employee engagement, financial outlay, etc

The facility manager has to integrate the requirements and needs of all stakeholders, with the aim of providing a workspace that enables staff to be productive as well as for the space to be functional. Sharing data and benefits of new design elements, and how the evolving innovations in the workspace will benefit business are approaches that can be used to align all stakeholders.





measured based on employee feedback surveys on services and parameters.

SUSTAINABILITY QUOTIENT

Sustainability is an essential element of KPMG's business strategy and the firm is dedicated towards reducing their impact on the environment, while addressing local environmental challenges and working with stakeholders to advance eco balance. Some of these initiatives are:

- Being selective that new facilities are LEED certified
- Retro fitting all existing lightings

with LED and all new offices are LED enabled

- Occupancy sensors and Koolite devices
- Achieving ambitious emissions reduction targets by using advance electrical components
- Enhanced AV experience in offices to promote virtual meetings
- Undertaking major plantation drive as part of the commitment to green initiatives

THE DILEMMA OF SCARCITY

Commenting on the development of the FM profession, Brigadier

CRITICAL PARAMETERS FOR SPACE PLANNING

- Minimising the number of system furniture standard modules allows for maximum flexibility, a significant reductions in cost and disturbance when reconfigurations are required
- Minimising has another effect: It leads to work benches that can easily be converted from general staff to manager, or even senior manager work benches, as they all share the same typical planning module
- For enclosed areas, conversion of cabins and meeting rooms are made easy by using the same module, thus reducing cost and time during reconfiguration or expansion
- The adoption of controlled quality standards for basic building material and supply items will result in a higher quality level for construction as well as greater safety
- By setting a minimum standard for materials such as carpet and furniture, it is understood that the initial cost/budget may be affected, although lifecycle cost benefits far exceed this initial consideration

Kaura states that, "One of the key challenges the FM industry faces is the availability of trained professionals. With the increased complexities of the workplace, required personnels need to understand cost, organisational dynamics, and think from a long term perspective. Now there are industry forums that have been created to address this scarcity and other issues effecting the

FM industry. Many prestigious institutions have included FM as part of their regular curriculum, which is a very encouraging step for times to come." Kaura concludes, "It's imperative for all organisations to devise ways and means to get the FM service standards under a measurable matrix and ensure performance audits by professional firms as a mandatory practice." 📺