



Importance of Interpersonal Skills in Facility Managers

Behind every office that dots the skyline or graces a boulevard is a person whose job it is to keep it running smoothly. Facilities managers are like the proverbial ducks in the lake—they glide effortlessly above the water while their legs pedal furiously underneath, unseen. Facilities managers might be comparing contracts for new janitorial services one minute and brainstorming the best workplace technology to customize various work areas the next.

But whether they're figuring out what that noise is in the ceiling, or making sure workplace security is in compliance with the law, facilities managers are a special breed. So no what it takes to become the best facility managers and amongst other skills and talent the important skill set every facility manager should possess is strong interpersonal skills and perception that "I'm a people person!"

I would here like to discuss few of the key interpersonal skills that every facility manager should posses and thus be the best.

1. Empathy

Empathy tops the list of interpersonal skills every facilities manager needs. Empathy is the ability to understand what another person may be thinking or feeling and demonstrate concern for them. Various surveys were conducted and Catalyst found workplaces with highly empathetic leaders are more innovative, inclusive, and engaged, with lower rates of employee burnout.

A few ways to demonstrate empathy in facilities management might include:

- Listening to employees' concerns about returning to the office and responding with a plan to help them feel safe
- Finding new opportunities to enable fully remote employees to take advantage of workplace amenities and activities
- Recognizing the different workstyles of introverts and extroverts and designing spaces to support both.

2. Self-awareness

Like empathy, self-awareness is a critical element of emotional intelligence (EQ). It's the ability to recognize your own strengths and weaknesses so you can become the best version of yourself. Unfortunately, many leaders lack self-awareness because they don't receive enough critical feedback from others. Facility Managers should cultivate self-awareness, including:

- Identifying a problem and working to solve it
- Going beyond the obvious to understand why someone behaves a certain way
- Asking for feedback from others often

3. Humility

When it comes to questions about the workplace of the future, today's facilities managers and workplace leaders face monumental pressure to have the answers, Instead of pretending to have all the answers, the best leaders or managers start by acknowledging what they don't know. One of the exercise that we could do as facility managers or leaders is that would be this exercise towards humility and dropping our own personal filter. Spend more time thinking about what are the critical questions we need to ask, because oftentimes if you just search for answers, you're missing that's the real insights.

4. Curiosity

Curiosity goes hand-in-hand with humility. Once you acknowledge what you don't know, you need to be willing to deep deeper and seek out insights from within and outside your organization. Listening to other industry leaders share what they've learned through podcasts, articles, and workplace management conferences can inspire you to find new solutions to long-standing problems. Talking with other employees and department leaders and asking questions to gain a deeper understanding can help too.

5. Adaptability

Facilities management is a dynamic profession where no two days are alike. Maintaining a level head and a "go with the flow" attitude is critical, not only to your success, but to your survival. Whether the workplace atmosphere stresses or excites you, the ability to constantly adapt to changes will give you a strong competitive advantage.

6. Decisiveness

Decisiveness might seem to be in conflict with other interpersonal skills like humility and adaptability, but it doesn't have to be. Being decisive doesn't mean making decision spontaneously or without input from others. It means you're able to gather all the information you need to make the most rational choice, weigh the pros and cons of potential actions and act with confidence.

7. Proactivity

Your role as a facilities manager or leader is to completely understand the needs and potential issues that your workforce is facing, even before they know it themselves. Today, that includes anticipating needs around employee health and safety, wellness checks etc.

8. Persistence

Persistence is the ability to "stay the course" in spite of obstacles. Within facilities management, those obstacles can seem insurmountable at times. You're trying to create an exceptional employee experience that attracts and retains talent while optimizing resources and costs. It often means managing change, such as encouraging leaders and employees to adapt to a new office environment or new technology, and facing resistance. Persistence means getting back up after a setback and trying a new approach.

9. Strong communication

Your success as a facilities manager or leader hinges on your ability to communicate, connect with, inspire and engage your colleagues. Identify the objectives of the people you work with, learn what motivates them and commit yourself to forging professional connections that inspire each individual to be the best at what they do. The right technology can make communication easier. Rather than sending emails employees can easily ignore, sending notifications through an app at their fingertips ensures they'll get the message.

10. Ability to empower your team

While letting go and assigning responsibilities to your teammates is not always easy, it is, perhaps, one of your most valuable assets. Build a team of diverse individuals and let them put their talents to work. Delegation shows you believe in your team's abilities, further strengthening your team and your entire organization.

As discussed above it important that the facility management professionals need to be equipped with proper knowledge, skills and capabilities to undertake the challenges associated with pursuing the concept of best workplace to work also with the above background, people-centred approaches which have a good prospective to assist facility manager in various ways.