



The new Facilities Management ISO 41001— Will the FM industry change as a result?



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The Facilities Management industry has to comply and balance the needs of innumerate rules and standards. This is largely due to the global application of FM in the context of cross border contracts (different countries with different rules). Winning a cross border FM contract today for one organisation and delivering FM services across numerous countries produces challenges in both local and international compliance! So with the introduction of ISO 41001 what might this mean for the Facilities Management Industry?

It could be easy for the untrained observer to immediately become confused, as this year the FM industry has already received ISO 41011:2017 'Facilities management

– Vocabulary' and ISO 41012:2017 'Facilities management – Guidance on strategic sourcing and the development of agreements'; so why another ISO?

Well, that's easy. The first ISO (41011) is, by definition, setting the scene linguistically. In articulating FM terms in a specific way which allows FM professionals to utilise the same language globally. This is strategically important as ISO 41011 goes a long way to setting a scene, but it was always understood that this would form part of a suite of standards – so more to follow!

And like London buses, another ISO promptly comes rumbling down the international road of standards; ISO 41012:2017 pro-

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vides guidance on the strategic sourcing and development of agreements. It is created to assist FM's in developing FM strategy and the sourcing and development of FM agreements and is a natural sibling to 41011; in fact it could be argued that as far as standards go, this has become one of the most useful guides that the Facilities Management industry has engrossed in many years, particularly when sourcing FM services. And it goes without saying, that any standard or guide that assists in getting the agreement between two contracting parties 'right' in the first instance, is worth its weight in gold.

So fast forward to the now, and the forthcoming standard ISO 41001 'Facilities management systems – Requirements with guidance for use'. During its development, it was well described by Stan Mitchell in his capacity as chair of the technical group developing the standard that, "ISO 41001 will help to clarify the 'what' as well as the 'why' facilities management is a strategically important discipline to all organisations in the management, operation and maintenance of the workplace, its assets and operational efficiencies." Wise 'Sage-like' words from Mr. Mitchell!

The challenge for the future of course, is not about establishing a worthy standard (Stan Mitchell and other have this in hand), but the adoption, application and method of assessment of that ISO within organisations. Over the years the FM industry has seen many organisations issued ISO 9001, 14001, OHSAS 18001 - stock in trade required standards, worn as badges of honour on tender submissions, corporate websites and paperwork, and certificates hanging in the reception of respective HQ's like pictures of fond family and friends. But the truth of the matter is this, if this new suite of ISO's is to be taken seriously then the industry itself needs to be clear on what FM organisations

should do to achieve and maintain them and, can expect as a result.

Alongside the award of the grand slam of ISO's 41011, 41012 and 41001 we could see FM organisations continuously assessed across all elements of their business, and not just a focus on corporate head office. Some spectators to this article may suggest the current ISO assessment under the various standards globally already provide this however, personal experience allows me to disagree with that assumption.

Institutions should also have a prima facie role to play in the future, perhaps linking Corporate Membership with these standards or, establishing a new level of membership for organisations who comply with all three ISO's. Either way, the role of the likes of IFMA, BIFM, MEFMA and now RICS cannot be ignored when considering the future impact of FM international standards management. One could suggest not individually or in isolation, but with all Institutions coming together and agreeing unequivocally that if you want to be able to achieve and comply with the requirements of ISO 41011, 41012 and 41001 then you should be answerable not only to ISO as a body, but perhaps the Institutions collectively.

All that aside, ISO 41001 will be incredibly welcome when it arrives, and I see great things for the FM Industry globally as a result. It will drive positive change in FM and assist in defining the 'what' and the 'why' especially when considering FM Management systems! As Walt Disney said, "Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly focused on the future." ISO 41001 is part of the future of FM, and any change which improves our industry is absolute change for the good. ■

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