

Is FM Prepared for a Technical Labor Shortage?



FMJ EXTRA
Video

Five Trends Coming to
Work in 2019



Employers are having trouble filling millions of middle-skill jobs — which is the largest proportion of the global workforce, encompassing 40 percent of all workers. According to a 2018 Manpower Talent Survey, “global talent shortages have reached an all-time 12-year high, and more employers than ever are struggling to fill open jobs. Forty-five percent of employers say they can’t find the skills they need, and for large organizations (250+ employees) it’s even higher, with 67 percent reporting talent shortages in 2018.”¹

Lack of skilled labor

This issue extends to nearly every industry, including facility management. The survey goes on to state skilled trades, engineers and technicians are among the top five in-demand roles, and “one in four employers says filling skilled trades roles is harder this year than last.” What does this mean for the future of FM? There is a lack of trained technical and trade professionals entering the workforce. The average age of an FM is approximately 49, so more than half of today’s FM practitioners are expected to retire in the next five to 15 years.

The survey asked, “Why does this problem exist?” and discovered a third of employers cited lack of applicants. Lack of experience was cited by 20 percent of respondents, and 27 percent named lack of hard skills or human strengths as a contributing factor. “Globally, more than half (56 percent) of employers say communication skills, written and verbal, are their most valued human strengths followed by collaboration and problem-solving.”

New Industrial Revolution

In addition to the lack of skilled labor, we are in a new era called the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Driven by innovative technologies, this revolution means a fundamental change in the global economy, society, and certainly, how we operate and manage buildings. Smart cities are part of the blending of these new technologies. They require more advanced technical knowl-

edge than previous training programs offered. Maintenance workers have now taken the role of data scientists, particularly when they are getting real-time data from their Internet of Things (IoT) devices to make better decisions. This new role has been dubbed the “sexiest job of the 21st century” by Tom Davenport, a well-known analytics and business process innovation author.²

The 17 UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate change are also considered part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with many innovations happening in cities, government agencies and companies to meet these sustainability goals. FMs need to understand how maintenance and operations can impact these 17 SDGs.

In the book “Life after Carbon,” John Cleveland and Peter Platvik describe how 24 forward-thinking cities are redefining every aspect of a city. This includes buildings,

UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals

streets, neighborhoods and components of the entire city infrastructure: the supply and demand of water, energy, transportation, natural elements and waste disposal. These cities are creating Urban Climate Innovation Labs (UCIL) to tackle climate change.

Goals include the elimination of fossil fuels and adoption of alternative transportation. Buildings should minimize the amount of energy used or produce a surplus of energy for sale. The concept of “circular economy” should be adopted, where consumption is reduced, and recycling or reuse eliminates some of the massive amounts of solid waste sent to landfills and waterways. Finally, by 2050, the goal is to reduce by 80 percent global greenhouse gas emissions.

Making these changes requires new ways of thinking, new technology and skills training for maintenance and operations staff to support an organizations’ environmental, sustainable and corporate governance goals (ESGs).

Are we prepared?

Through the Global Workforce Initiative (GWI), the IFMA Foundation has identified four areas of focus to fill the maintenance and operations talent gap. They are: training and development, internship/apprenticeship programs, job shadowing programs and recruiting outside the usual sources.

Training and development

Consultants are noticing an alarming trend in FM departments. There is an increase in aging building managers and engineers who are about to retire, leaving organizations without trained replacements qualified to operate and maintain their building systems. This loss of institutional knowledge requires a robust training and development program. Of course, outsourcing these functions is always an option. Keep in mind FM vendors are also dealing with the talent shortage; however, many are working on creative workforce development solutions. For those FMs relying on outsourcing firms to manage their buildings, it’s critical to understand the vendor’s training and development program. How are they training incumbent workers and new employees? How are vendors held accountable? How are FMs specifying their requirements?

To address the challenge of insufficient wholistic guidelines for training, particularly in the technical fields, the IFMA Foun-

ation’s Global Workforce Initiative, with support from the International Facility Management Association (IFMA), has released a new Facility Management Training and Development Framework. The Framework provides needed guidance on acquiring or demonstrating mastery of specialized skillsets in operations and maintenance.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for organizations across the built environment community to share and cross-promote their training resources,” said Graham Tier, IFMA Global Board of Directors Chair. “Practicing FM professionals can use the framework to bolster their own skills, train their teams or hire qualified team members. Aspiring FM professionals can identify a career path that gets them the training they need to take the next step.”

The GWI team is working with community colleges to provide FM technical education to meet the growing workforce demands. These programs incorporate trade and technical education with IFMA’s suite of certifications and credentials, giving students a well-rounded trade, technical and business education. Using the Framework, GWI is piloting contract education programs where companies and organizations can customize their FM training curriculum. This is developed by FM professionals and faculty that can deliver the training on company premises, increasing employee attraction and retention.

Internship/apprenticeship programs

IFMA continues to work to establish multiple pathways into the profession. In the past year alone, with the assistance of the Chesapeake and Capital Chapters, the State of Maryland and the Anne Arundel County Workforce Development Board established an FM Internship Program. This program, which combines classroom instruction with on-the-job learning and a pathway to employment, was a success with dozens of participants making the transition from FM student to FM professional.

This program will be replicated across Maryland and nationally through the establishment of a federally recognized apprenticeship program for FM. Now more than ever, new ways of working require new ways of learning. This includes flexibility and an ongoing commitment to prepare the workforce for the jobs of tomorrow.

Job shadowing programs

There are many trade and technical col-

leges eager to work with companies that provide internships to their students. The GWI is working with technical, trade and community colleges to increase the number of students interested in FM as a career of choice by introducing FM coursework and promoting internship programs. Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, California, USA, is one example where students learn on the job while exploring the variety of positions in the field.

“As part of the curriculum, students receive college credit for participating in their paid internship, which is a minimum of 70 hours,” said Phyllis Meng, Chaffey College Professor and IFMA Fellow. “Since the students receive college credits, there are criteria required by Chaffey College along with host organizations like ABM.”

These internships can be life changing as Elizabeth Zamora discovered after being hired by ABM. “Thanks to ABM’s internship program, I soon realized what my true passion is. I am truly fascinated with operations. I found a guided pathway to what I am beyond a doubt passionate about,” she says.

Many students are attracted to the high salaries in FM as well as the sustainability and climate change impact the industry can make. One way to expose people to the field is through a job shadowing program. The Local Bay Area Chapter of AFE and the IFMA Foundation are launching a job shadowing program called “A Day in the Life of an FM Professional.” Students start with a breakfast meeting where they are paired with an FM professional who hosts them for a day in their facility. At the end of the day, all the students and FMs meet back at a designated site for dinner and a panel discussion on FM career paths.

“Most of the hosts schedule activities at their site that expose the students to the wide variety of our work and responsibilities, along with tours of our facilities and introductions to the teams with which we coordinate” said Bob Dills, IFMA Foundation Trustee. “Job shadowing is an excellent way to expose students to the world of FM and job opportunities they might not have thought of.”

Recruiting

Talent acquisition leaders must be more creative than ever in their approaches to attract new employees. To this end, companies are recruiting from outside the usual sources. As one example, GWI advisor, Sodexo, recruits directly from IFMA conferences and partici-

pates in the Foundation's Ignite FM! Student Challenge program to gain access to Foundation scholarship winners.

In January 2019, Sodexo launched SoTogether Facilities Management as part of its drive toward gender equality. The aim of SoTogether FM is to increase gender diversity in facility management roles, especially at more senior levels. In addition, they launched an internal Yammer group, which is a go-to place for technical information, industry news, learning and development pathways, along with profiles of role models and rising stars within the company.

"Sodexo fosters an open, inclusive culture where everyone can thrive. The company's global gender balance strategy is a key driver in ensuring that both women and men have equal access to growth and opportunities in our workplace," says Deborah Rowland, Sodexo Director of Public Sector Affairs.

"Had it not been for the IFMA Greater Triangle Chapter supporting the IFMA Foundation Scholarship program and Ignite FM! Student Challenge at IFMA's World Work-

place®, I would not have the job that I have now at Sodexo," said Devin Shackelford, an IFMA Foundation 2018 scholarship recipient. "I was fortunate enough to have people from Sodexo witness and judge my Ignite FM! competition presentation. Fortunately, the Sodexo judges were impressed with my skills and abilities and offered me a position as an operations support specialist for their Walgreens portfolio. I'm excited to be in charge of their computerized maintenance management system."

Summary

Solving the skilled labor shortage will take a village of FM professionals dedicated to tackling this problem. Working with GWI advisors and partners, educational institutions, government agencies, economic and workforce development groups, veterans' organizations, and, most importantly, IFMA members, chapters, communities and councils, we can all be that village that provides new approaches to tackle the talent problem. Together, we can ensure there are skilled FM

workers today and in the future. **FMJ**

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Elizabeth Moinet.
Chaffey College, Business with FM Certificate, Hesperia, CA

Airport Facilities Council Scholarship Recipient

"I had an absolute wonderful time at World Workplace! The entire week fueled my passion like I couldn't believe. I knew WWP would be an amazing opportunity, I just didn't realize it would be this great. I'm thrilled to press forward and now I can, even more effectively and clearly, given all the contacts I've made in the last week."



Devin Shackelford,
Construction Management/FM emphasis, Kennesaw State University, Atlanta, GA

Greater Triangle Chapter's Buck Fisher Scholarship Recipient

"Had it not been for the IFMA Foundation's Scholarship program and Ignite FM! Student Challenge at World Workplace, I would not have the job that I have now. I was fortunate enough to have people from Sodexo witness and judge my Ignite FM! competition presentation. Fortunately, the Sodexo judges were impressed with my skills and abilities and offered me a position as an Operations Support Specialist for their Walgreens portfolio in charge of Computerized Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS)."

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