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Contract Education Helps Elevate Fundamental Skills of Google's Facility Managers

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In California, facility managers are in high demand. Building is booming as the aging workforce retires, a combination that has created a need for 6,000 facility managers a year, according to the [International Facility Manager Association \(IFMA\) Foundation](#). Colleges are not graduating enough candidates to meet the need: For every one applicant, there are 30 openings for facility manager jobs.

Facility managers help shape your experience every time you walk into a building. They make sure the site is secure. That the lighting is right. That the temperature is comfortable. Those are the more visible aspects of the job. Today's facility managers are responsible for so much more, including space management; information and communications technology infrastructure; utilities and energy-efficient systems integration and building maintenance; as well as administrative services; contract and vendor management; emergency preparedness; and compliance with safety, health and environmental standards and regulations in an effort toward improving employee productivity.

Recruiting new talent and bolstering the skills of existing workers is critical to meeting the goals of California's Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act (SB 350), which "calls for 5 billion square feet of commercial floor space to achieve extremely high emission reduction levels by 2030, with full implementation of SB 350 continuing through the year 2050."

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“The demand is at a point where we’ve got to take action,” said James Morante, statewide director for Energy, Construction and Utilities for the California Community Colleges. “[In the past] the role of facility managers didn’t look like it is today. Because of building automation technology, it’s not a wrench-turner technician anymore. It’s much more of a project manager skillset: troubleshooting and strategy.”

A [March 2017 joint IFMA and RICS report](#), titled *Raising the Bar: From Operational Excellence to Strategic Impact in FM*, found that, based on a 30% sample of its 24,000-plus members, the average IFMA member was 50.9 years old.

“The talent shortage is even more severe when we look at the skills and experiences needed to deliver strategic facility management – with broader skills needed to engage with functional peers and senior executives in conversations about business strategies and how the physical environment can impact those strategies,” the report states.

To help address the need, the IFMA Foundation teamed up with strategic partners to launch the [Facility Management Global Workforce Initiative](#), a program designed to recruit new talent to the field while also bolstering leadership and skills among managers already in the field.

Under the initiative, California Community Colleges, in partnership with the IFMA

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Foundation and industry, has created a statewide Facility Management Talent Pipeline Training Program that is developing various facility management training programs throughout the community college system. As part of this statewide program, several facility management training programs are being developed and launched. The programs include in-class training at the colleges, pilot programs for industry and customized Contract Education programs. ([Read more about the initiative in this case study.](#))

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One of those Contract Education programs involves Google. The IFMA Foundation has partnered with Google to deliver highly customized facility management training to facility managers at the tech company and at Cushman & Wakefield, which Google contracts to help manage its facilities. The IFMA Foundation selected San Mateo County Community College District's (SMCCCD) Contract Education unit to design and deliver the training as part of a new, creative education model that the IFMA Foundation is looking to expand around the globe, said Diane Levine, executive director of the IFMA Foundation.

"I think it's an innovative way to provide much-needed education to incumbent workers in facility management," Levine said. "It helps to stay in front of emerging trends, and it actually can impact culture and productivity."

Highly Customized Training Using an Iterative Process

The Google/Cushman & Wakefield training partnership began in late 2018. Lynn Baez, Google's head of Facilities, Real Estate & Workplace Services, said the company was looking to round out its facility managers' fundamentals so they were well-equipped to succeed in working with senior executives, as well as cross-functional pillar teams, in optimizing workplace experiences.

"That's why we need strong leaders, we need strong communicators, and we need strong business acumen to round out their fundamentals in the profession," Baez said.

Jonathan Bissell, who heads up [CCCE Corporate Training Solutions](#) – that's SMCCCD's Contract Education unit – said the first round of in-person training his team provided was High-Performance Leadership Training, in June 2019.

Bissell and his team, in consultation with subject-matter expert Carlos Santamaria, who has three decades of facility management experience and is the Bay Area regional director for the Energy, Construction & Utilities sector and California Community Colleges' statewide liaison for facility management, developed the curriculum for the leadership training. It included lessons on visibility training; effective communication; effective customer services;

critical thinking and decision-making; teamwork; and continuous improvement.

Throughout the training, Bissell and his team used an iterative process, revising the curriculum and delivery strategy at the end of each week to reflect needs identified by participants that week. While each group was taught the same concepts, the information was tailored so it was applicable to their facility management roles, with Cushman & Wakefield facility managers handling day-to-day management operations and Google facility managers overseeing that work.

Twenty-three Google and Cushman & Wakefield facility managers took the leadership training, and in December, Bissell and his team launched the next phase of training: Facility Management Professional (FMP) certification training, for facility managers who want to earn that industry certification. This training, which uses an IFMA curriculum, is also in person and will cover business and financials, communications, leadership, and operations and maintenance.

Santamaria said he sees an enormous growth in career pathway opportunities through Contract Education in many other sectors, including retail, hospitality and tourism.

“In collaboration with Contract Education, IFMA and industry, the Energy, Construction and Utilities sector is identifying innovative solutions with new and incumbent workers with meeting

the high-demand skills needed in our rising economy," he said.

A Shift to a User-Centric View

Google has seen the results of last summer's leadership training, with facility managers embracing a much more user-centric model, Baez said. For example, what in the past might have been a one- or two-sentence email announcing a power outage became a more thorough communication that explained the reason for the outage, who could be contacted for questions or assistance and ample advanced warning. And facility managers have been more comfortable going beyond their traditional boundaries to explore creative, long-term solutions that benefit users when considering designs for new Google sites.

"When you see a shift to a user-centric view, that's a win," Baez said.

The success of the training model, Bissell said, is having a strong partner like the IFMA Foundation, which has well-established industry relationships. It's made even stronger by deep industry knowledge, such as that provided by Santamaria, and experienced training professionals with the capacity to design and deliver quality training that meets employer needs, which is contract education's specialty.

"If you can help people be more effective in developing their professional skills and

interpersonal skills, the ripple of impact extends not only to their career but their immediate team, their organization and the families they go home to at the end of each day," Bissell said. "And, ultimately, to economic development through empowered organizations."

Google training will continue this year, and Bissell said SMCCD is in conversation with other companies and industries to offer them similar customized training.

Interested in facility management training for your company?

If you are a business in the San Mateo County area looking to equip your company's leaders and teams with the skills they need to communicate clearly, delegate and empower effectively, work productively or resolve conflict successfully, visit our [Get Started page](#).

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