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## Manage Facility in a New Way

by **Engr. Lum Youk Lee**, M.I.E.M., P.Eng.

Chairman, Mechanical Engineering Technical Division

**FACILITY** Management (FM) is commonly defined as the effort to make efficient and streamline supporting activities in a built environment which are not directly value added to the core business of the entity.

Examples of FM include cleaning services in a hospital, security services in a shopping complex or M&E operations in an office building. Therefore, we sometimes refer to a 'facility manager' as a 'maintenance' or 'operation' manager.

Conventionally, a facility manager operates equipment according to a production process (factory) or business hours (office building), and his primary role is to react towards equipment downtime responsively and adequately. A facility manager improves production rate or asset lifecycle through process optimisation and applies efficient components for better efficiencies.

He also scrutinises the supply chain management for better operation cost control. Therefore, a facility manager's KPI is typically measured in terms of savings, response time or punctuality. However, these 'cost reduction' initiatives are often constrained by existing built equipment and environment.

As 'optimisation' reaches its limit within an existing built environment, higher level of savings can be attained only by changing the 'constraint', for example, by changing existing less efficient air-cooled chillers to a water cooled system.

In order to provide a higher level of FM service, facility managers need to value add at different levels along the value chain, and making a paradigm shift from their conventional role as a cost-reducer to become a profit-creator.

Recently, we have observed a higher appreciation of a facility manager's role in a new building design process to avoid abortive construction works and improve the sustainability of building facilities for longer yield.

Modern facility managers should be dynamic and adopt a profit oriented approach to asset management. Facility managers should be responsible for the total ownership of the entire business entity, protect shareholder's interests, maximise investment yield and, most importantly, compliance to engineering best practices.

FM should not be just a new industry jargon to replace less appealing names such as 'maintenance' or 'operation' management. It should be a perceived as a new science where engineers value add in terms of marketability, technical sustainability, compliance to standards and financial viability of an investment. ■