Holistic hiring in FM

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Insight from Emma Thornton, 300 North

Demand for skilled FM professionals is only increasing in the first quarter of 2023. Many companies have unfilled vacancies and finding the best talent to fill crucial roles is a constant challenge. There has also long been a skills crisis in the sector, which, as has been much discussed, has been compounded by experienced professionals leaving the sector over the last 7 years due to Brexit, the pandemic and retirement.

To address this ongoing challenge, the FM industry needs to adopt a holistic approach to solving hiring issues. This means that instead of individual companies trying to tackle the problem alone, or relying on piecemeal government interventions, the industry as a whole should come together and work on creating a larger pool of skilled FM professionals. This approach could work to establish large training and development programmes for people at all stages of their career – from graduates and young professionals to established FMs and those coming up to retirement to really tackle the skills deficits in the sector.

Looking at the problem holistically with all areas of the sector involved allows better allocation of resources across the UK to fill the skills gaps. Companies can collaborate with each other and the IWFM to create standardised training and development schemes to target identified skills shortages. These could work alongside the existing IWFM qualifications, and would provide employers with a highly skilled workforce. This training should be aimed at all levels to bring young graduates forward, but also allow for people who would like to change career into FM.

A holistic view of the sector could also provide insight into industry-wide certifications and benchmarking, valuable to all companies involved. Skills audits to understand new trends in the FM market could be useful and could be further used to avoid labour gaps in the future. Industry adopted certification could

also be valuable in the recruitment process to allow employers to identify what skills they may need to fulfil a role or provide further training on.

An industry-wide approach would also be beneficial when creating partnerships with educational institutions to develop programmes that showcase FM to students, encourage them into careers in FM, and help them understand the value FM has on people and the built environment. It can also help with "FM into Schools" programmes and creating guidance for companies wanting to get involved. This will be crucial when reporting on ESG deliverables.

Following on from the educational piece, companies can also engage on a larger scale with charitable partners to bring in new talent. Many FM companies already work with charity partners who focus on skills and training for ex-offenders, veterans, young people and more. This can vastly improve the diversity of the sector and ensure that the industry is representative of the communities it serves. Various FMs also work closely with community groups to improve the lives of those close by with more targeted campaigns. But using a holistic approach could allow more to be done to identify those in need and help communities in multiple ways.

The benefits of looking at this problem holistically mean that a real diversity of people and experience are tackling the problem to ensure the FM sector continues to grow. Taking a wider view means that implementation of any proposals will be able to be trialled more broadly, will include more people, and can be rolled out across the sector. A collaborative approach also leaves space for smaller, more agile businesses to get involved and their successful projects can be integrated into larger companies.

This kind of knowledge sharing amongst businesses would attract more top talent, as people could see the social good they would be doing in their role, and would be attracted by both the training and mentoring opportunities. It would also increase retention in many companies, as employees would feel valued and invested in.