

What the SFG20 Report Tells Us – and What It Doesn't

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By Greg Ward, CEO, [PTSG](#)

I started my working life as a mechanical and electrical apprentice at Ford Motor Company. That experience taught me things no boardroom ever could: that quality is built in, not inspected in; that the people doing the work are usually the first to know when something is going wrong; and that a system is only as reliable as the people maintaining it. I have carried those lessons through every role since, from Heathrow to the UAE, from construction to facilities management. They are why the SFG20 State of Facilities Management 2026 Report makes such important reading to me.

Nearly 200 professionals surveyed. A clear picture of pressure across budget, technology and staffing. An industry that knows what it needs to do but is finding it increasingly hard to do it. The findings reflect conversations we have with clients every week. The challenges are real. But so are the solutions, and for those willing to take a different approach to how they procure and manage building services, there is a genuine path through.

Budget pressure is a procurement problem as much as a finance problem

Sixty-nine per cent of respondents cited budget constraints as their biggest challenge. That figure will surprise no one working in FM right now. But what strikes me is that budget pressure is often amplified by the way services are procured. When you manage ten specialist contractors across a building portfolio, you are not just paying ten sets of fees. You are absorbing ten sets of mobilisation costs, ten separate administration burdens and a significant amount of duplicated effort. Gaps between contractors become nobody's problem until they become everybody's problem.

PTSG was built on a different premise and has grown with purpose to provide a compliance solution. With over 170 services delivered across five specialist disciplines, we operate as a single integrated partner rather than a collection of suppliers. One contract, one management relationship, one point of accountability. Our 88% contract renewal rate suggests this model does not just reduce complexity; it reduces cost too.

I would add a caveat here that I think matters. Consolidating suppliers only works if the partner you consolidate around is genuinely capable across the disciplines that count. Breadth without depth is just a different kind of risk. The question FM professionals should be asking is not simply how few suppliers can we use, but which partner has the specialist capability to deliver everything we need to the standard buildings and the people inside them deserve. For those facing the same or reduced budgets, the most effective lever is finding fewer, better partners, not just cheaper ones.

Technology adoption needs to solve a real problem first

The report highlights a significant gap between ambition and readiness on AI and automation. Fifty-one per cent see it as the defining trend, but only 24% feel their organisation is ready for it. That gap is not surprising. Technology adoption in FM has often been led by product rather than problem, organisations investing in platforms before they have established what those platforms need to deliver.

The more pressing technology challenge, as the report rightly notes, is integration. The jump from 20% to 52% of respondents citing integration with existing systems as a barrier reflects something we hear consistently: FM teams are not short of data. They are short of data that connects.

Our Clarity platform was developed with this in mind. Engineers complete worksheets, certificates and documentation in real time, on site. The moment a job is finished, clients have full visibility, no delays, no chasing paperwork, no uncertainty about whether a building is compliant. It is not AI for its own sake. It is technology that solves a specific, tangible problem: the gap between work completed and work evidenced.

Organisations considering their technology strategy in 2026 would do well to start with that question: what problem, specifically, does this need to solve? The answer tends to cut through the noise considerably.

The skills gap is structural, and the consequences are serious

Over half of organisations report understaffing, with compliance and safety expertise identified as the most significant skills gap. This is the finding that concerns me most, because it is the hardest to solve quickly and the consequences of getting it wrong are not just commercial. They are human.

When a compliance inspection is carried out by someone under-qualified, overstretched or working under time pressure because the sector simply does not have enough trained people, the risk does not stay on a spreadsheet. It lives in the building. It affects the people inside it. I came up through the trades. I know what it looks like when craft is taken seriously and what it looks like when it is not. The difference matters in ways that no audit trail fully captures.

At PTSG, we have invested heavily in addressing this at source. Our nextgenFM programme is designed to bring new talent into the specialist trades through structured development, mentoring and clear progression routes.

Sign-on bonuses have become more common across the sector as a response to immediate demand, and we have used them too. But they address the symptom, not the cause. The sector needs a sustained commitment to developing people from the ground up, and that takes time, investment and patience. Not every business is prepared to commit to it. But every building that relies on specialist compliance, and every person inside that building, needs it to happen.

For clients, the implication is clear: when you select a specialist contractor, ask not just about current capability but about how they are building it for the future. A business with 3,200 certified specialists and an active talent pipeline is a materially different proposition to one relying on a small team and market availability.

The common thread is accountability, and it belongs to all of us

What connects all three challenges in the SFG20 report is accountability. Budget pressure eases when a single partner is responsible for the whole picture. Technology delivers value when someone is accountable for making it work across a portfolio. Skills gaps matter less to a client when the organisation serving them carries the responsibility for having the right people in place.

PTSG was founded on the belief that buildings deserve better than fragmented, reactive maintenance and that the people inside them deserve better still. The SFG20 findings reinforce that this approach is not just commercially sound. In a sector under the pressures the report describes, it is the only model that is genuinely sustainable.

But I want to be direct about something. That is not just an argument for PTSG. It is a challenge to the sector. The FM industry is too important to be allowed to drift into a state where compliance is treated as a cost to be minimised rather than a responsibility to be taken seriously. The buildings we maintain are hospitals, schools, homes, workplaces. The standards we hold ourselves to are not just commercial decisions. They are commitments to the people who depend on us.

The SFG20 report is a useful mirror. What we choose to do with what we see in it is the only question that matters.

Greg Ward is CEO of PTSG (Premier Technical Services Group), the UK's leading independent specialist in building compliance and maintenance services.