

TEAMWORK IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Teamwork is essential to Facilities Management (FM) organisations due to the presence of various parties and multi-functional nature. However, there is a lack of published researches on teamwork with regards to FM. The consideration given in literature in discussing ways to adopt the concept of teamwork in FM was very insignificant. Therefore, the research question formulated was; “how the concept of teamwork can be adapted to FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector?” The ultimate aim of the study was to develop a guide for teamwork by understanding the nature of teamwork in FM. The research question was approached through case study research method using three cases in the Real Estate and Development sector of Sri Lanka. Semi structured interviews were conducted with FM practitioners of the selected cases. The findings asserted that the ideal team concept in general management does not go with FM team. Instead, the composition of FM team required to be flexible depending on several factors, namely; task, method of performance, facility type and size. However, few key members, who were common to any FM team, were recognised in the research as well. Further, specific requirements of teamwork in FM were identified. Based on findings, a guide for teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector was developed. This will be useful to FM practitioners who operate in similar contexts.

Keywords: Facilities Management, Teams, Teamwork, Case Studies, Sri Lanka.

1. INTRODUCTION

Facilities organisations that are seeking not only to survive but also to maximise operational effectiveness in an ever-changing environment, need to identify factors such as senior management support, training, employee empowerment and teamwork as the key elements of innovation. Team-working stems from the simple recognition that a company's outputs are likely to be maximised when the people who make up that company act as a team rather than as a collection of individuals (Santa *et al.*, 2009). Empirical research on variables influencing teamwork is vast (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006; Salas *et al.*, 2004). Many researchers have demonstrated that the relationship between teamwork and its influencing factors is a complex one, and have called for more empirical research to draw more reliable conclusions regarding its nature and strength. More specifically, some relationships between influencing factors and teamwork appeared to be moderated by other variables such as diversity or task type or appeared to have a dynamic character (Zellmer-Bruhn and Gibson, 2006), therefore requiring longitudinal research.

When considering FM, no or very little research had been carried out covering this subject area. Thus, this research anticipates filling the research gap by exploring how the concept of teamwork can be adapted in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector.

2. LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

2.1. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: PRACTICE AND FUNCTIONS

The organisational objectives normally vary by different business environment (Lee, 2002). Hence, different organisations are differently reliant on their facilities and support services. In turn, facilities as well as FM function are prioritised differently to the core businesses of different organisations. Consequently, the function, role, scope and priority of FM functions need to be designed to fit with these contingent matters. Atkin and Brooks (2009) stressed that understanding the organisational needs is the

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key to effective FM, measured in terms of providing value for money. These authors agree that FM practice needs to be tailored to specific factors of given organisations. Since the organisational objectives and environment affect the use and management of the facilities, there may be no universal approach to managing facilities.

FM covers an extremely wide field of activities (Nutt, 2000), and is responsible for the provision of many varied services (Barrett, 1995). It has embraced broader range of services, more than building operations and maintenance (Aston, 1994). Both Alexander (2003) and Payne (2000) agreed that FM cannot deviate from functions like property management, administration, housekeeping, security, building services coordination and health and safety. When considering the functions of FM, it appears that Facilities Managers need to interact with various groups of people from different educational backgrounds and people with different expertise. Thus, adapting the concept of teamwork becomes a crucial factor for Facilities Management. Before moving on to teamwork, the significance of teams in organisations is explained in the next section.

2.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF TEAMS AND TEAMWORK

Cohen and Bailey (1997) defined team as a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems and who manage their relationships across organisational boundaries. Further, according to Katzenbach and Smith (1993, p.9), “teams outperform individuals acting alone or in larger organisational groupings, especially when performance requires multiple skills, judgments and experiences.”

Atkin and Brooks (2009) asserted that organisations consist of FM teams, which serve internal departments as well as external customers. According to Alexander (2003), key members of the facilities team will need the authority to match responsibility for managing the service delivered to customers. Nutt (2000) stressed the need of FM to widen considerably, with delegation of FM functions to working teams. Although none of them detailed the characteristics of a FM team, all these researchers implied that FM operates within a team in organisations. They provided enough evidence for existence of such a team. However, how they work as a team is not sufficiently addressed.

In general, the importance of high-quality teamwork for organisational success in today's economy is emphasised by many professional as well as academic publications (Glassop, 2002; Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006). Dahlgaard *et al.* (1998) asserted that a culture of teamwork and co-operation must be developed throughout organisations. It is becoming a common practice in organisations to produce high productive results through ensuring effective teamwork. The next section attempts to identify the requirements of effective teamwork.

2.2.1. REQUIREMENTS OF TEAMWORK

Most researchers agree that there are a few distinct qualities that set apart the high-performance teams. Although the wording may be different, the ideas are the same. Hoegl and Gemuenden (2001) conceptualised teamwork excellence as a higher order construct with six facets classified into two groups: task-related facets (communication, coordination, and balance of member contributions) and social interaction facets (mutual support, effort, and cohesion). Gustafson and Kleiner (1994), being more definite, acknowledged eight distinct qualities that set apart the high-performance teams, namely: participative leaderships, shared responsibilities, definition of purpose, high communication, a focused future, focused tasks, creative talents and rapid responses. Some researchers perceived these requirements in a specific viewpoint. Dahlgaard *et al.* (1998, p.825) affirmed that “a culture of teamwork and co-operation must be developed throughout the organisation. Education and training will play a key role in this respect.” This ascertains was further acknowledged and developed by Adebajo and Kehoe (2001) by identifying education, training, facilitation, encouragement, recognition and reward as the five key change agents for teamwork.

Thus, most researchers have identified a common set of requirements of excellent teamwork. Table 1 denotes such a set of requirements which is essential for quality teamwork and effectiveness of teams.

Table 1: Requirements of Teamwork

Requirement	Description	Researcher(s)
Role clarity	The degree to which the team members' behaviour is specified by routines, procedures, and prescribed roles	Gladstein (1984)
Goal clarity	The degree in which the goal the team has to attain is clear	Gladstein (1984)
Job design	Task variety shall be identified and task significance should be specified.	Hackman (1987) and Campion <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Leadership	The degree in which task leadership, maintenance leadership was realised and the extent of leadership influence on higher management. Furthermore, the extent to which the leader shows monitoring, feedback, coaching and influencing behaviour	Gladstein (1984) and Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006)
Interdependence	Reliance and dependence on one another in performing duty	Guzzo and Shea (1992) and Campion <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Training	Employees need to be trained in the necessary tools and techniques, which make their attempts at teamwork, successful.	Dahlgaard <i>et al.</i> (1998) and Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001)

All these requirements or a selective few could benefit the teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector, thus, becoming enablers of teamwork in FM. Hence, these were focused in the empirical study with the aim of developing ultimate guide for teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector. The next section explains the research method.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study of phenomena in their natural environment is the key to the interpretivist philosophy which assumes that the reality is subjective and interior to the people (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002). When considering the research aim and the nature of this research, it was obvious that this study needs cautious observation of human interactions and behaviours. Thus, this issue necessitated the researcher to assume that the reality which the research aim seeks was within the people who have to be observed. Hence, interpretivism research philosophy was adapted in this research.

Patton and Appelbaum (2003) stated that case studies are more suited for the studies where qualitative data predominate. This research also deals with qualitative data as generated through human interactions and behaviours in working as a team. By considering all of above reasons, case study research approach was selected for the research.

In this study, cases were selected from Real Estate and Development sector of Sri Lankan context. The three cases selected are briefed in Table 2.

Table 2: Case Briefing

Case	A	B	C
Core business	Real estate and property development	Property development and management	Property Development
Facility	Two towers with 36 levels per each. Lettable 700,000 sq.ft. and luxury apartment complex (256 apartments)	32 storeys with 598,321 sq.ft.	23 storeys with 430,000 sq.ft.
Procurement Method	In-house	In-house	In-house
Interviewees	1. Facilities Manager 2. Assistant FM 3. Civil Engineer 4. Procurement Manager	1. Manager Maintenance and Building Services 2. Electrical Engineer 3. Manager HR and Admin 4. Manager Security	1. Facilities Manager 2. Manager Electrical and BMS 3. Manager Finance 4. Procurement Manager

Cases were examined mainly by conducting semi-structured and face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted with four key participants of the FM team. Facilities Manager and three of the employee representatives involved in FM practice. These employee representatives varied with the cases as the selection was based on Facilities Managers' direction. Findings of this research are discussed in the subsequent section.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings arising from the three case studies are presented and discussed in this section.

4.1. NATURE OF FM TEAM

All the interviewees of the three cases strongly agreed without any hesitation that teamwork is an essential discipline in FM. Thus, on the whole it is clarified that FM is a discipline that requires teamwork to achieve efficiency, reasoned out by facts such as people being one of FM's main pillars, FM having a broader scope comparing to other professions and FM context comprising of different professionals from different disciplines.

According to the empirical study, it was apparent that FM cannot have a fixed team. Eleven out of the twelve respondents across the three cases agreed that it is unlikely to have a fixed FM team. It was revealed that FM team shall vary depending on the task and the facility. Further, when evaluating the people with whom Facilities Managers mostly interact in their practice, Manager – Maintenance and Building Services, Finance Manager, Security Manager and Procurement Manager were identified significant in all three cases. Further, Electrical, Mechanical and Civil Engineers are also significant. According to the empirical findings, they generally report to Manager – Maintenance and Building Services. Thus, keeping Manager – Maintenance and Building Services as a key contact person is more appropriate for FM.

The team composition of the entire FM team is not fixed as in an ordinary team. While having a few key members, the selection of other members shall be flexible according to the factors like type of facility, nature of the task undertaken and the method of performance. The key members or the people, with whom a FM keeps frequents tags, as identified in the empirical research are, Manager – Maintenance and Building Services, Security Manager, Procurement Manager and Finance Manager. Team composition identified for a FM team is presented in Figure 1.

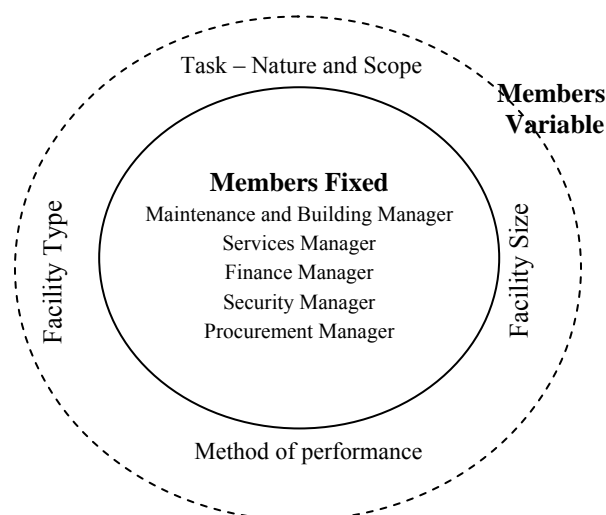


Figure 1: Facilities Management Team Composition

4.2. REQUIREMENT OF TEAMWORK IN FM

According to the empirical study, requirements of FM teamwork identified can be discussed under three main categories, namely; job design, facilitation and direction.

JOB DESIGN

The empirical findings suggested that designing the job in advance is a critical requirement of teamwork in FM. According to the respondents, by designing the job in advance as a collective effort of the members of the team, it is easier to build the team spirit within them. By clarifying what is to be done and how to do it before the commencement of the work, team members will have a clear idea about the job that they are involved in. Further, all respondents agreed that the *roles and goals of the FM team shall be very specifically placed* in order to increase teamwork. As per the assistant Facilities Manager of Case A, *“although an ordinary team may have a common goal to achieve, a FM team’s common goal is the summation of specific individual goals.”* Thus, when specifying roles, the scope of the work is to be considered to allocate accountabilities and responsibilities. The findings further suggested that goals should be very clear to reduce conflicts among the team members. It implied that a FM team might have groups within the team, especially when the scope of the work is larger. Hence, individual goals, group goals and the common goal of the team shall made clear to the members in terms of time and cost constrains as well.

FACILITATION

The term facilitation is broadly used to describe any activity which makes tasks for others easy. Thus, as per the empirical evidence, the organisation should act as a facilitator for the FM team in order to enhance the teamwork. This includes allocating necessary resources, top management support and reward and recognition for the team. As per Procurement Manager in Case C *“organisation should always support teamwork. For instance a team needs financial support of the organisation. Though they are assigned with a project but with insufficient budget allocation, it’s impossible for us to proceed.”* This facilitation also includes good communication mechanisms, tools, technology and other resources which are necessary for the assigned FM tasks.

Need of a performance evaluation system for the FM team was suggested by Facilities Manager in Case A. This was further asserted by Facilities Manager in Case C. According to him, *“it is vital that the top management recognise the FM work and reward its success. Otherwise the entire team can be demoralised”* Hence, it is evident that the reward and recognition is important in enhancing FM teamwork.

Though provision for training and development was identified as a general teamworking requirement, respondents shared a subjective viewpoint on training as a requirement of teamwork in FM. Different respondents perceived the need of training to enhance teamwork in different ways. Some agreed that training helps to understand one another's perception and role in the team and therefore becomes an enabler of teamwork. But when considering the vast scope of FM and the different professionals who work in a FM team, providing FM training for the team members sounds impractical. This fact was asserted by several respondents over the cases. They suggested that as far as teamwork in FM is concerned, training the members with respects to behavioural skills is enough. However, comparatively most of the respondents stressed that a FM team needs sharing of up-to-date information of work that they are engaged in rather than training. They pointed out that it is important to brief the project to every team member before commencement.

DIRECTING

Empirical findings stressed that the effective directing is vital to enhance the teamwork in FM. This was discussed under three subtopics in the empirical study, namely; apt leadership, follow-ups and coordination.

The position of leadership in a FM team is not again fixed. It is evident that Facilities Manager shall not always lead the team. Based on the type of work and the skills required, the most suitable professional in the team shall take the lead. Further, the respondents demanded that whoever leads the team, they shall be competent, forward looking and inspiring. They also agreed that Facilities Manager should always keep the authority of coordination among the team members. Further, following-up the work having occasional progress reviews, looking into failures and celebrating success were also identified as important. As a FM project might involve people from different disciplines, respondents agreed that it is helpful to conduct frequent follow-ups and keep the team up-to-date with information about the ongoing project. They all stressed that without proper coordination no FM team can exist. As FM work usually deals with a vast set of information, if the coordination between the team members fail, the project will obviously be a failure and a waste of resources. It is the FM's job to coordinate among the team.

These requirements of teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector are comprehensively depicted in Figure 2.

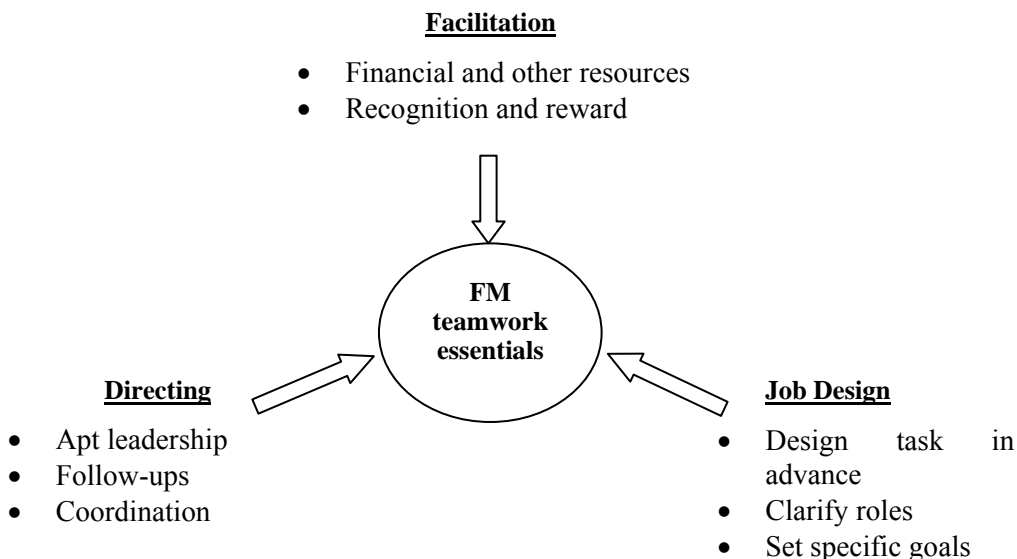


Figure 2: Facilities Management Teamwork Essentials in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development Sector

5. CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of the research are summarised under this section in order to set up conclusions and recommendations. As far as the Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector was concerned, it was observed that no empirical studies had been undertaken to explore the way to adopt the concept of teamwork to enhance effectiveness of FM practice. This study, thus, was mainly focused on requirements of teamwork in FM.

The aim of this study was to explore the nature of teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector. The results indicated that the concept of FM team heavily deviate from the fixed concept of a generic team. A FM team has several permanent members and few variable members as well. These variable members depend on the task, its performance method and the facility in which they operate. The requirements of teamwork in FM are similar to the generic requirements of teamwork, but with apparent deviations. However, as a whole, it can be concluded that the concept of team or teamwork is not yet largely adapted in the context of FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector. Though every member involved in FM understands and agrees that teamwork is an essential for FM practice, empirical results suggest that FM is more of a group of people who work together than an effective team.

Based on the findings, the following guide can be suggested for teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector.

Guide for Teamwork in FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development Sector

Step 1: Study the Task

FM should first study task in terms of its nature, scope, skills and expertise requisition and time, quality and cost constraints

Step 2: Job Design

The assigned task should next be designed in advance getting all member participation/contribution. There the most suitable method of performance shall be decided upon.

Then the team should be formed based on task, facility size and type and the method of performance

Step 3: Set Roles and Goals

Roles in the FM team shall be clarified to the team members. Responsibilities should be assigned and authorities should be laid down properly so there would be no confusions about the roles.

Goals should be clarified goals to each member of the team. - Every member should have a clear idea of the common goal, the individual goals and the time, quality and cost constraints of each goal

Step 4: Appoint Leader

Leader of the team should be appointed according to the task undertaken, required skills and expertise. However, the authority of coordination shall be kept with the Facilities Manager.

Step 5: Facilitate

Team should be facilitated in terms of financial and other resources, top management support, recognition and reward.

Step 6: Follow-up the Work of FM Team

Before the commencement of each FM project, the task should be briefed to entire team. Conduct periodic progress review meetings is advisable. Evaluating individual performance as well as the team performance and sharing results and celebrating success are also essential.

This guide can be recommended to be followed in order to achieve effectiveness in FM as a team. But it should be taken in to consideration that the generalisation of the study is limited to the FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector. Further, as all the three selected cases' procurement method of FM was in-house FM. Hence, the guide developed is mainly applicable to in-house FM in Sri Lankan Real Estate and Development sector. Moreover, as FM is still a new profession to Sri Lanka, the researcher was unable to study the research problem deeply within the empirical settings. In order to encourage and broaden research on this subject more case studies on different context are required. Further, the nature of FM team in a broader context and requirements of teamwork based on its impact could be considered as future research areas arising from this study.

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