

Upskilling in Facilities Management

Preparing for the next era of service excellence



Rakesh Kishan
CEO - Trascient Arabia and
Managing Principal of Trascient

partnerships, and delivery models focused on elevating the user experience.

The MEA facilities management market is projected to reach \$74.59 billion by 2029, driven by major investments in sectors like commercial, hospitality, and technology. Upskilling FM professionals will be essential to meet the region's rising demands for efficient, sustainable, and world-class asset management. Technology, robotics, and automation will also play a crucial role, especially in areas with high labor costs or supply constraints.

Facilities management (FM) has evolved from a reactive, labour-intensive approach focused on break-fix solutions to a more advanced, technology-enabled model adhering to global standards. While some regions lead with process-driven, experience-led FM services, others, including

the Middle East, still rely on conventional manpower methods. The industry's shift from input to output-based specifications now emphasises enhancing occupant experiences, from streamlined check-ins to personalised concierge services. Moving up the FM maturity curve will require standardised processes, innovative supplier

I believe the time for upskilling the FM workforce is now. It will be required to deliver higher-quality, experience-driven outcomes and position the Saudi Arabian FM industry as a world-class FM market. We believe suppliers, customers, and FM professionals must enhance their competencies to stay competitive and relevant

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in a maturing FM market over the next ten years.

Technical Asset & Data Management

With the rise of smart buildings and IoT, facilities managers can leverage technologies that enhance occupant experience, safety, well-being, and productivity. Modern buildings use advanced systems like facial recognition, CCTV, and sensors to improve security and asset management, creating tech-driven, experience-focused communities. Achieving this requires advanced skills and a shift from traditional approaches.

Data will be a significant challenge as fragmented data across numerous touchpoints remains a persistent issue. FM professionals must be able to consolidate and analyse fragmented data into a cohesive system for better planning, demand reduction, and service quality improvement. We believe the Saudi Arabian FM market is ready to embrace this challenge and is positioned to leapfrog the maturity curve of its current FM market.

According to Frost & Sullivan, building management systems (BMS) are a vital component of the smart building ecosystem in the GCC, projected to generate over \$500 million in revenue by 2027, and building owners and operators will increasingly adopt these automation solutions.

Effective data management can boost operational efficiency

and enhance client experiences. However, investing in technology without prioritising system architecture and user experience often leads to costly, ineffective implementations. A holistic approach is essential for smooth operations and sustainable results.

Unlocking Sustainability

With governments and private organisations across the Middle East focusing on reducing carbon footprints and optimising energy use, sustainability and energy efficiency are critical drivers in FM. Initiatives like KSA's Green Riyadh program and UAE's National Energy Strategy 2050 are driving sustainability efforts. According to a report by Stonehaven, both countries rank in the global top 10 for LEED-certified building projects.

Facilities managers must upskill in energy-efficient systems, green building certifications, and managing sustainability programs across the building lifecycle — from acquisition to service delivery. Those skilled in overseeing cleaning, maintenance, and hospitality programs will be in high demand as sustainability becomes a key focus in FM.

Addressing Skills Gap

In the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 presents a key opportunity to close the FM skills gap through targeted upskilling. As the Kingdom strives to lead in business, technology, and tourism, FM professionals

must expand their expertise in engineering, technology, hospitality, and program management to support advanced infrastructure and enable a more collaborative, efficient approach to facilities management.

Develop Soft Skills

The FM function is shifting from a tactical, task-focused role to a strategic, business-partnering role. As professionals take on these responsibilities, client-facing skills, such as communication, leadership, and customer service, will be essential for presenting and recommending solutions and enhancing occupant experiences.

For example, visitor management will become a critical aspect of FM as Saudi Arabia positions itself as a major tourism and cultural hub. Whether managing sports complexes, business districts, or cultural museums, FM professionals will need to ensure that the visitor experience is seamless and positive and that services are aligned with the facility's mission.

Investing in the Future

Today, the future of FM is brighter than ever. However, success will be in the grasp of only those who embrace change, are ready to innovate, and are prepared to abandon legacy ways of doing business. As the Middle East becomes a top-tier global hub, the demand for highly skilled FM professionals will only increase. The FM industry must invest in its skills for the future.