



Facilities & HVAC/R Strategies

Your Ultimate Guide for 2025



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INTRODUCTION

What challenges are shaping facilities and HVAC/R operations in 2025?

In 2025, [facilities management](#) and [HVAC/R management](#) leaders are navigating rising costs, tariffs, skilled labor shortages, evolving sustainability mandates, and shifting regulations. These pressures demand smarter strategies that go beyond cost control — strategies that protect compliance, brand reputation, the demands of proper [refrigerant management](#), and operational resilience. To meet these challenges, leaders are increasingly relying on integrated technology platforms — especially [Computerized Maintenance Management Systems \(CMMS\)](#) — to improve visibility, align teams, and drive efficiency.

The teams that are winning? They're not just reacting. They're building systems, processes, and partnerships that make them ready for whatever's next. That includes upgrading how they track assets, manage vendors, lead their teams, and communicate with the C-suite.

At a recent industry event, Fexa hosted two expert panels featuring facilities, maintenance, vendor, and HVAC/R leaders from brands like L'Oréal, Valvoline, and Bath & Body Works to share what's working — and what's not.

This guide distills their best insights. Let's dig in.



How to Lead Through Change (Without Losing Your Mind)

Disruption isn't the exception anymore. It's the job.

From supply chain issues to workforce burnout to store closures, facilities leaders are navigating high-stakes environments with no clear playbook. The ones who thrive? They lead with calm, clarity, and consistency — starting with communication.

"At Addilan Group, our mantra is 'keep calm'—and it's not just a t-shirt slogan," said Steve Vollrath, Senior Leader at Addilan Group. "We know who we are, we know our value, and we listen to what our clients need."

His team uses steady, proactive communication to build trust, reduce confusion, and help partners weather unpredictable challenges — whether it's a labor shortage or a delayed project.

Angela Tolmasoff, Director of Facilities & Maintenance at L'Oréal USA, agreed:

"Monday morning warm-up: carve that time out. No long conference calls. Keep them under 45 minutes. Give 48 hours' notice before dropping something on someone's calendar."

In other words: intentional communication isn't a soft skill — it's a survival skill. Especially in facilities, where everything is urgent, leaders who build rhythm and stability into their team's week give everyone a better shot at doing their best work.

Takeaways:

- Set a weekly cadence (like "Monday warm-ups") to reduce chaos and build consistency. Use structure to create calm: recurring huddles, clear handoffs, and no surprise meetings.
- Protect your team from unnecessary stress and don't add to the noise
- Keep communication predictable, proactive, and respectful of people's time
- Lead with transparency, even when you don't have all the answers

Leadership isn't about having all the answers. It's about giving your team the stability to move through change with confidence.



Building and Managing Your Facilities Team

Hiring's hard. Keeping people is harder. And scaling without losing quality? Building for complexity? That's the real trick.

Facilities teams are often understaffed and undervalued. But the leaders who are doing it right? They're playing the long game—building people-first teams with scalable systems behind them.

"We brought on three new people to elevate our service levels," said Donnie Geyer, Senior Leader of Facilities Operations at Bath & Body Works. "That's helped us be more people-friendly, more connected with stores, and more consistent in communication."

The result? Not just better service—but cost savings, too. Investing in internal talent allowed Geyer's team to reduce their reliance on third-party vendors while improving store experience.

Andrea Garza, Director of Facilities & Maintenance at Valvoline, emphasized the value of systems that support scale—not just speed.

"We're building systems and processes to protect that seat as we grow," she said. "If someone wants to change a piece of equipment in one store, that might not be scalable across the fleet."

It's not just about solving problems today—it's about designing operations that can flex with the business.

Takeaways:

- Hire for long-term value, not just quick coverage: people who build relationships and reduce vendor overload
- When hiring, look for character under pressure, not just facilities experience
- Build internal capabilities that drive down cost and increase control
- Put scalable systems in place early: protect consistency as you grow, so your team can say yes and no with confidence

Your team can't scale if your systems can't keep up. Build the foundation now before the chaos hits.



How to Reduce Spend (Without Sacrificing Quality)

Cutting costs doesn't mean cutting corners.

The smartest facilities teams aren't just spending less — they're spending better. That means tightening vendor strategies, investing where it counts, and stopping waste before it starts.

"There's a misconception that going out to RFP always leads to savings," said Catherine Barnes, Senior Facilities Leader. "Often it's the opposite. You have to be strategic: bundle services, engage providers who can handle multiple trades, and look for partners who extend your team's capabilities."

More vendors ≠ more value. In fact, managing too many niche providers often creates more coordination issues, delays, and service gaps.

Andrea Garza of Valvoline reframed capital planning as a revenue strategy:

"If we invest in overhead doors proactively, then we're increasing our ability to serve. That's immediate revenue we're protecting and enabling."

And it's not just about vendor strategy. The panel agreed: small, operational blind spots—like poor work order inputs—are huge sources of waste.

Takeaways:

- Bundle trades under fewer, more capable vendors to reduce friction and improve accountability
- Use RFPs strategically, not reflexively: don't assume new bids = lower costs
- Train store teams on how to describe issues clearly—the wrong trade or vague request leads to wasted truck rolls
- Track repeat work orders and flag unnecessary callbacks using your CMMS
- Invest in infrastructure that impacts revenue and operations now, not just 3 years out

The most effective cost control isn't reactive—it's built into how you manage vendors, prioritize spend, and train the people at the front lines.



How to Make the Business Case to Your CFO

If it doesn't tie to revenue, risk, or brand—it won't fly.

Facilities leaders know why maintenance and HVAC/R investments matter. But if your CFO sees nothing but rising costs and no story behind them, the budget conversation is already in trouble.

"A lot of times, we're helping the VPs we work with have better conversations with their CFOs," said Grant Baecker, Co-founder & CEO of Authority HVAC. "Because, pardon my French, a lot of CFOs are kind of pissed. They see the HVAC expense line go up every year. Then they see HR issues, OSHA issues, store closures, and employees posting on TikTok that it's 95 degrees in the store."

In other words: operational issues don't stay operational—they become PR risks, legal risks, and revenue risks. Your capital plans need to sound like protection, not just upgrades.

Panelists agreed: your best leverage with the C-suite comes when you position facilities investments as a way to protect customer experience, store uptime, and daily revenue flow. Whether it's preventing service interruptions, compliance fines, or costly brand damage, it's not about what you're spending—it's what you're preventing.

Takeaways:

- Frame facilities work as risk avoidance—not just repairs
- Use real-life examples (like viral videos or failed equipment) to humanize the risk for execs
- Tie proactive spend to revenue impact: "This keeps customers in the store" lands harder than "We need a new RTU"
- Build the business case in their language: reduced downtime, audit readiness, labor impact, customer retention
- Document and track emergency spend, lost revenue, and service disruptions using your CMMS or refrigerant tool

The best argument for budget? Showing what happens when you *don't* get it.

Getting the Most Out of Your Vendors

If your vendors feel transactional, you're leaving value on the table.

In 2025, great vendor relationships don't just fulfill work orders—they act like extensions of your internal team. But that only works when expectations are clear, communication is consistent, and partnerships are built on mutual accountability. Jeff Yates explained how one client improved vendor performance:

"They specified that iVueit would be onsite at their facilities at least three to four times per year—with surprise visits," said Jeff Yates, Executive at iVueit. "That proactive visibility, combined with data, helped them narrow from eight vendor partners to four."

The result? Lower work order volume, better service, and stronger partnerships across the board.

Angela Tolmasoff of L'Oréal emphasized the importance of honesty from day one:

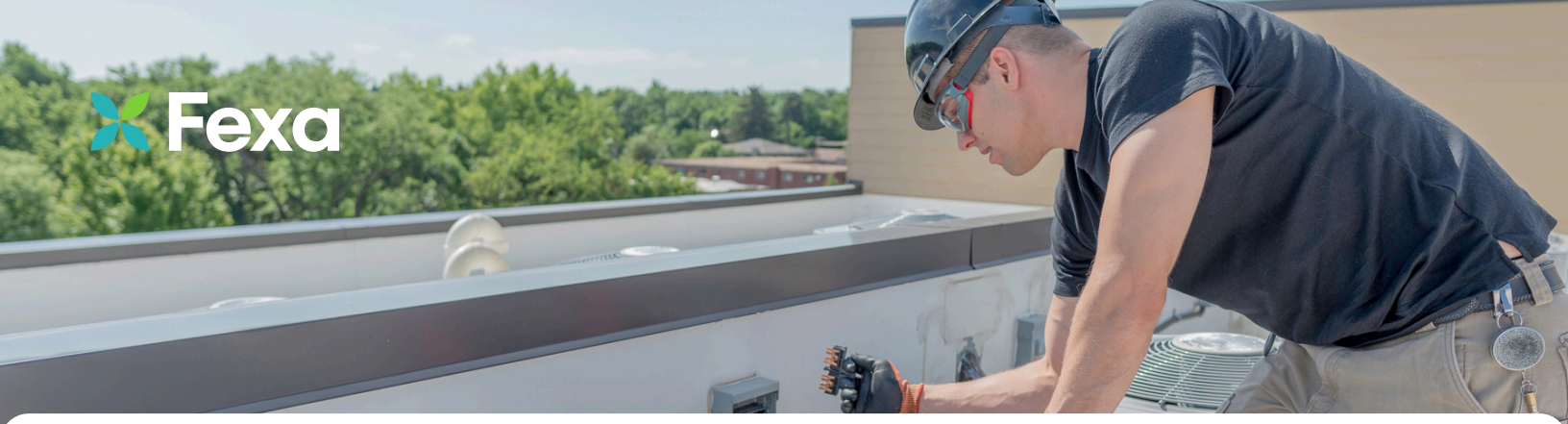
"Tell me what you're good at. No need to pretend you can do it all. Be honest from the start. That's how you build safe space."

When vendors overpromise, teams pay for it later. But when expectations are aligned upfront—and performance is tracked over time—vendors become trusted partners, not unknown variables.

Takeaways:

- Prioritize fewer, more capable vendors who can scale with your business and handle multiple trades
- Use scheduled and surprise audits to drive real accountability and performance
- Create regular feedback loops—15-minute monthly check-ins are more effective than annual QBRs
- Train vendors on your brand standards, store formats, and operational expectations
- Reward transparency: work with vendors who are upfront about their strengths (and limits)

Strong vendor partnerships don't start with price. They start with trust, alignment, and shared visibility.



How to Stay Ahead of HVAC/R Issues Before They Blow Up

If you're waiting for something to break, you're already behind.

HVAC/R issues aren't just inconvenient—they're expensive, brand-damaging, and increasingly regulated. The teams staying ahead in 2025 are the ones modernizing their systems, building flexibility into their operations, and using data to see problems before they spiral.

"If you stay close—using our tools, staying alert—we naturally grew into that adjacency," said Frank Sullivan, Chief Commercial Officer at Brainbox AI. "We leveraged our tech to expand into an area that became a major operational focus for them."

For Sullivan, that meant helping a client roll out refrigeration compliance across 7,000 locations—by leaning on predictive insights and flexible tech.

Grant Baecker, CEO of Authority HVAC, underscored the need for modernization:

"We just invested in our own new work order system that will integrate with CMMS platforms, energy systems, even AI tools our clients are using."

That's the future: tools that talk to each other, tech that sees issues before your store team does, and a proactive strategy that blends refrigerant compliance with uptime and visibility.

Takeaways:

- Invest in tools that support integrations across CMMS, refrigerant tracking, and energy systems
- Don't wait for emergencies—use AI and automation to flag early warning signs
- Treat HVAC and refrigeration as strategic infrastructure, not just repair tickets
- Tie system downtime to real outcomes: revenue loss, customer experience, brand risk
- Use refrigerant data to stay ahead of AIM Act compliance before audits show up

Proactive HVAC/R management isn't a luxury—it's your frontline defense against cost, risk, and non-compliance.



How to Train Store Teams to Avoid Expensive Mistakes

Your store teams can either protect your budget—or quietly drain it.

Store employees are often the first to notice an issue—but if they don't know how to report it, who to call, or how urgent it really is, things go sideways fast.

“We see a ton of waste when a dispatch-based work order system routes jobs to vendors without the right trade selected or the right description in place,” said Catherine Barnes, Senior Facilities Leader. “Trucks roll out only to say, ‘We don’t handle that.’ That’s wasted time and money.”

From unnecessary truck rolls to repeat visits for the same unresolved problem, the cost of poor inputs adds up—fast. And it's not always about tech. Sometimes, it's about checking the basics.

“When you go into a store, check the mop bucket,” Barnes said. “If it’s dusty, they’re not using it.”

That small, symbolic detail? It shows how store-level behavior can either reinforce your ops strategy, or quietly undermine it.

Takeaways:

- Teach store teams how to identify business-critical vs. cosmetic issues
- Train on trade selection and issue descriptions so vendors don't show up unprepared
- Set clear expectations for daily maintenance routines—then verify them
- Use simple accountability checks during site visits (“the mop bucket test” lives rent-free now)
- Integrate how-to guidance into your CMMS workflows so support is just a click away

Your tech is only as good as the data store teams feed into it. Make accuracy part of the culture.

How to Turn Maintenance into a Brand Advantage

Your customers may never meet your facilities team, but they'll notice their work.

From floor shine to working HVAC to updated signage, maintenance plays a massive role in how your brand is perceived. It's not just about uptime. It's about experience, consistency, and trust.

"We partnered with the signage team to make sure brand updates are incorporated into our fiscal planning," said Andrea Garza, Director of Facilities & Maintenance at Valvoline.

"We want the interior work to match the external brand expression."

When facilities and marketing align, customers experience seamless store visits—whether they're in your newest location or your 15-year-old flagship. That cohesion builds brand trust and makes facilities a revenue enabler, not just a cost line.

Well-maintained stores don't just prevent complaints: they drive confidence, return visits, and customer loyalty. As Garza noted, tying facilities work to brand standards also protects long-term investments and reduces reactive spend down the road.

Takeaways:

- Coordinate with marketing and signage teams during remodels and upgrades
- Bake brand updates into fiscal planning and don't treat them as afterthoughts
- Use facilities as a brand consistency tool across aging and new store formats
- Focus on how your spaces feel and function, not just whether something's "broken"

Every clean floor, working door, and well-lit sign is part of your brand. Make it count.

What's the advantage of integrating your CMMS with a refrigerant compliance tool like Fexa Trakref?

By integrating your [CMMS](#) with a refrigerant compliance tool like Fexa Trakref, you gain seamless HVAC/R tracking, automatic compliance, audit readiness, and proactive maintenance—all in one system. Together, Fexa + Trakref help facilities teams control costs, manage refrigerants, and future-proof operations.

[Request a demo today.](#)