



How to Lead and Upskill Your Facilities Team

A Guide for FM Leaders



Table of Contents

Introduction	02
What challenges are FM leaders facing in 2025?	03
How can facilities leaders build team resilience during times of change?	06
What does upskilling look like in a modern facilities management team?	09
Why is cross-functional communication a hidden leadership skill?	12
How can leaders prepare now for the future of FM?	13
Take action on building relationships now	15
Make sure your facilities management software supports your leadership goals	16



Introduction

Leaders in the [facilities management](#) world are always navigating uncharted territory. At [Fexa Flex 2025](#), we sat down with industry leaders who are constantly figuring out how to address supply chain disruptions, workforce shortages, and that never-ending pressure to “do more with less.”

Facilities management teams may deal with a lot of [uncertainty in 2025](#), but great leaders find ways to thrive by building [stronger relationships](#) and more resilient teams. The challenges facing facilities managers have never been more complex than they are today!

Attendees at Fexa Flex heard from Donnie Geyer, Steve Vollrath, Jeff Yates, and Catherine Barnes in a panel, where these experts shared the ways they’re moving beyond traditional management tactics to build genuine resilience and adaptability in their teams.

With that panel discussion as a foundation, this guide examines real-world leadership strategies from facilities professionals who have successfully navigated major organizational changes, economic pressures, and operational challenges in recent years. Think of their insights as a roadmap for any FM leader who wants to strengthen their team’s capabilities — and [prepare for an unpredictable future](#).

A photograph showing the silhouettes of two people standing in a modern office or lounge area, looking out a large window at a vast ocean under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The interior is dimly lit, with a modern chandelier visible in the upper right.

What challenges are FM leaders facing in 2025?

The facilities management landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. For many, what once felt like manageable operational challenges has evolved into a complex web of interconnected pressures.

Economic uncertainty sits at the center of many FM challenges. Despite retail GDP growing 3.6% in 2024—outpacing forecasts of 2.5% to 3.5%—the industry mood remains cautious. Essentially, there is a big disconnect between actual performance and perceived stability. Leaders are left trying to figure out how to answer this challenge: How do you maintain an atmosphere of confidence when there is so much uncertainty in the air?

Dealing with the pressure to optimize with fewer resources

“Cost containment” has been a buzzword on and off since the 1970s. However, if you’re in the facilities world, then you’re definitely feeling this in 2025!

Facilities teams are constantly tasked with managing their assets, vendors, and overhead with a budget that doesn’t seem to keep up. A larger portfolio of assets with a smaller budget is hard to manage, especially if the facilities manager is also taking on additional responsibilities beyond traditional maintenance and repairs.

In the Fexa Flex 2025 panel, Steve Vollrath from Addilan Group captured this reality perfectly: “Facilities teams are being asked to do more than ever. It’s not just plumbing or maintenance anymore. It’s projects, capital initiatives—whatever the organization throws their way.” This expansion of responsibilities requires leaders to help teams develop new skills while maintaining excellence in core competencies.

Vollrath also shared how his team navigates the challenges of supply chain disruptions: "When supply chain issues were peaking, we were transparent. 'Hey, there's a long lead time. Do we want to wait? Are there alternatives?' Those conversations matter." This level of transparent communication helps teams understand constraints while collaborating on solutions.

The complexity of vendor relationships in 2025

Another big change in the industry is the [vendor-client relationship dynamic](#). Anyone in facilities management can tell you that it's getting more complex all the time. This is especially true for organizations with dozens or hundreds of sites; the sheer number of vendors and service providers in your network is hard to imagine!

In addition to the significant workload that comes with handling so many contracts, vendor management also includes:

- Elements of strategic planning
- Cost optimization
- Risk mitigation
- Contract management
- Analyzing vendor performance
- Strategic partnership development

Jeff Yates from iVueit described one strategy for vendor work, which is to outsource the vendor management part of the facilities management. Specifically, iVueit is a tool that neutralizes the screening, selection, and performance evaluation of vendors. Yates explains, "It's not just about having visibility—it's about having unbiased visibility. Someone who doesn't have skin in the game can offer insights that neither internal teams nor service providers might catch."

Technology adoption pressures

Digital transformation has reached facilities management, bringing both opportunities and challenges. Teams must adapt to new platforms, data analytics tools, and [automated workflows](#) while maintaining operational effectiveness. This is especially true as AI becomes commonplace in both the facilities side of things and all other parts of the business.

It's not uncommon to face two different kinds of pressure:

- The top-down pressure from company executives to adopt new technologies, fast
- The pressure to make a strong case for new technologies that the C-suite doesn't realize are important

That's why this is about a lot more than learning a new system. Technology adoption pressures include:

- Training and onboarding all stakeholders on new technologies
- Helping team members view technology advancements as enhancing their work, rather than replacing their expertise
- Building a business justification for new platforms, systems, and APIs
- Addressing adoption hesitation



How can facilities leaders build team resilience during times of change?

In the movies, an inspirational speech or a bonding experience is often all it takes to bring everyone together to accomplish a shared goal. The real world isn't so simple. Building resilient teams requires more than motivational speeches or team-building exercises. It demands a systematic approach to leadership, and it involves creative leadership strategies, a humble attitude, and a clear vision of the future.

Some of the best strategies that today's industry leaders embrace are "filtering the noise," setting clear expectations, and maintaining steady leadership—even when everything else feels uncertain.

Filter the noise and focus on controllables

The idea of "filtering the noise" is all about protecting your team from unnecessary chatter, questions, and worries. It's definitely not about keeping anyone in the dark! But it is about making sure that your facilities team can focus on actionable priorities instead of external pressures and distractions.

Donnie Geyer from Bath & Body Works has perfected this approach. He says, "I try to shield them from some of the internal buzz around cost increases. I tell them, 'Let me worry about that. Let me work with the CFO and finance.' I want them to stay focused on what they're great at."

In other words, Geyer's strategy centers on what his team can control. "They can't control if a vendor needs to increase costs because of tariffs," he says. "But they can control how quickly we respond to a broken HVAC unit or a plumbing issue."

At Fexa, we love this approach because it requires leaders to:

- Take responsibility for strategic and financial pressures
- Translate organizational challenges into clear team priorities
- Maintain regular communication without overwhelming team members with every concern
- Help team members understand what they can directly influence versus what they cannot

This strategy enables team members to focus their energy on activities that drive results, rather than worrying about factors outside their control.

Establish transparent communication rhythms

Predictable communication patterns go a long way in building trust. A resilient team is one that can trust its leaders to communicate clearly, consistently, and effectively, without placing additional administrative burdens on people who are already working hard.

Steve Vollrath emphasizes the critical nature of communication. When you consider your “team” to include everyone you work with, including your internal staff, third-party vendors, and key clients, you quickly realize just how much communication is required. It would be easy to let the responsibility of clear communication fall to the wayside, but that would be a mistake.

Vollrath explains, “Communication is the reason things succeed—or fail. And we've realized 90% of that communication falls on us. With all our key clients, we hold monthly 15- to 20-minute calls—just to touch base.”

Regular check-ins serve multiple purposes:

- Relationship building
- Opportunities to address concerns before they escalate
- Ensuring alignment on priorities
- Demonstration of your investment in your partners and team members

Invest in team capability, especially during challenging times

It may seem counterintuitive, but some of the most successful facilities leaders choose to make strategic investments in their teams when resources are constrained. These investments often deliver both immediate operational improvements and long-term cost savings.

Donnie Geyer described this exact scenario at Bath & Body Works. Geyer says, "In the last nine months—while many companies have been scaling back—we've been able to grow. We brought on three new people to elevate our service levels." The investment delivered measurable results: "We were able to develop a solid business case. We had been leaning heavily on external resources to support the stores, and it reached a point where it was actually more cost-effective to bring that support in-house. At the end of the day, we saw about a 15% cost savings by transitioning those roles internally."

What does upskilling look like in a modern facilities management team?

Today's upskilling goes beyond traditional training approaches, such as classroom sessions, certification programs, and technical workshops. These methods are still important, but they often prove to be insufficient on their own.

Effective upskilling now requires a broader, more holistic approach that develops both technical competencies and adaptive capabilities.

Let's take a look at several ways to train, develop, and upskill your current team. These same strategies will also help you quickly onboard new team members when you experience turnover or growth.

Develop cross-functional fluency

Modern facilities professionals need to communicate effectively across multiple organizational functions. This includes communication tasks like translating technical issues into business impact, collaborating with finance teams on budget optimization, and partnering with operations teams on service delivery tasks.

This requires developing what might be called "business translator" skills—the ability to frame facilities challenges in terms that resonate with different stakeholders.

What does this look like in training? It may mean offering soft skills training, as opposed to limiting your training efforts to competency-building, such as:

- Communication
- Active listening
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking

It also means training people across multiple organizational functions. Don't silo your team members into narrowly defined groups that never interact or understand what others in the company do. When it comes to cross-functional fluency, collaboration is key!

Build vendor partnership capabilities

The shift from vendor management to vendor partnership almost always requires new skills. Team members need to understand contract negotiation, performance metrics analysis, and strategic relationship development.

A vendor partnership, as opposed to a simple contract, is about collaborating on success. It's also about building strong, long-lasting relationships. Vendors and facilities managers share many of the same goals and success metrics, even though the work itself may look different. The best vendor relationships go beyond being transactional. Instead, they are strategic.

Steve Vollrath articulated this well in the Fexa Flex 2025 panel discussion: "I don't want to be a 'vendor.' I want to be a partner. And that means delivering even the tough news—sharing the information the client might not want to hear, because that transparency is what builds trust."

Strengthen problem-solving and diagnostic capabilities

Immediate technical issues make up only a portion of the work that facilities teams do daily. Everyone loves those easy fixes, like replacing easy-to-reach light bulbs or a minor plumbing repair. But everyone also knows that much of the work of facilities management requires root cause analysis, complicated preventive maintenance, and comparing lots of potential solutions to find the right one.

Modern facilities teams need to understand the broader operational context of the assets they manage, and they need to develop solutions that address underlying causes, rather than simply treating the symptoms.

Catherine Barnes shared a straightforward but powerful example of this diagnostic approach when addressing a floor care challenge: "I asked the regionals, 'When you go into a store, check the mop bucket. If it's dusty, they're not using it.' You can say you're doing the daily cleaning, but that tells a different story." In other words, FM leaders need to go beyond simple problem reporting.

For Barnes, this diagnostic thinking helped identify that the real issue wasn't vendor performance but operational execution, leading to a solution that saved \$7 million!

Develop change management skills

Change management experts will tell you in a heartbeat that their work is a challenge. Any shift in an organization, whether it's a leadership change or a new technology integration, creates uncertainty. Uncertainty, in turn, breeds hesitation.

If you want a resilient, upskilled team, then you'll want to practice change management principles to manage resistance and truly engage your stakeholders in the process.

Change management may include:

- Outsourcing training to a change management vendor
- Sequencing changes in ways that encourage maximum adoption levels
- Communicating the benefits of the change in terms that are relevant to affected stakeholders
- Identifying and addressing sources of resistance before they become barriers

Enhance data analysis and reporting capabilities

Modern facilities management generates enormous amounts of data. (Just ask your IT department how much data they're responsible for supporting!)

Facilities team members need to understand how to extract meaningful insights from this data and communicate findings in actionable formats. Otherwise, you're just storing numbers, not actually using them.



Why is cross-functional communication a hidden leadership skill?

Let's go into more detail about cross-functional communication, because this hidden leadership skill can make or break your FM experience. Leaders who recognize and develop this capability create significant competitive advantages for their organizations, as well as growth opportunities for their team members.

Effective cross-functional communication enables facilities leaders to:

- Translate technical issues into business impact, especially related to operational efficiency, financial performance, and reputation management
- Build credibility across organizational functions
- Create collaborative problem-solving opportunities for multiple departments
- Influence resource allocation decisions by communicating value propositions for strategic improvements
- Establish clear accountability frameworks
- Navigate organizational politics effectively
- Facilitate change management across departments
- Develop strategic partnerships with internal customers
- Create feedback loops that improve service delivery, thanks to ongoing insights into operational needs and performance gaps
- Build organizational understanding of their facilities' value

Cross-functional communication is like having a single key that opens many doors. The most successful facilities managers are those who excel at fostering understanding and collaboration.

How can leaders prepare now for the future of FM?

Preparing for the future requires balancing immediate operational needs with strategic capability development. The most effective leaders use current challenges as opportunities to build foundations for future success.

The first step in preparing for the future is to embrace a mindset of continuous learning.

The pace of change in facilities management shows no signs of slowing. That's why leaders who thrive will be those who model and encourage continuous learning throughout their organizations.

Steve Vollrath emphasized this point: "If you stay stuck in your old ways, you're going to stay stuck, period. You've got to keep an open mind. I mean, five years ago, if you'd said 'AI,' I would've said 'Allen Iverson'—because I'm from Philly. But now? There's not a day—or even an hour—that goes by where I'm not thinking about how AI might help us do our work better."

Continuous learning involves:

- Staying current with industry trends and emerging technologies
- Seeking out diverse perspectives through professional networks and industry events
- Experimenting with new approaches and tools
- Learning from both successes and failures

Making your facilities team future-ready also requires you to build adaptable team structures.

Teams that are positioned for growth can adapt to changing requirements without complete restructuring. This involves developing flexible skill sets, cross-training capabilities, and resilient communication systems.

Jeff Yates highlighted the importance of adaptability, explaining, "For us, customer feedback is everything. As the climate changes, so do customer needs. So we listen closely to what they're asking for. If we hear the same thing from multiple clients, I go straight to our dev team and say, 'Hey, this is what they need—let's figure it out.'"

Additional strategies for preparing for the future

Here are 4 more strategies that will keep you on track for a growth-ready future:



1) Invest in technology integration capabilities.

Tech will continue to transform FM, and you'll have to go beyond adopting a new tool for every new challenge. Rather, you will need to find tools that integrate seamlessly with one another. To do this, learn to assess technology vendors and manage implementation. Don't hesitate to measure the ROI of each of your current technology solutions compared to new ones. Data-driven decision making is always going to be stronger than depending only on your gut instincts.



2) Strengthen your vendor relationships

We've talked a lot about vendor relationships in this guide, because these partnerships have a massive impact on your day-to-day experiences in facilities management. Leaders should invest now in building partnerships that can adapt to changing requirements. Donnie Geyer emphasized this, saying, "Honestly, it's all about relationships. We stay in close contact with our vendor partners—biweekly touchpoints... Events like this—where we can talk to our peers—are so helpful. Just hearing how others are managing through the same challenges is invaluable."



3) Develop scenario planning capabilities

Unfortunately, uncertainty seems to be a permanent feature in FM. Leaders in the facilities space can cope with uncertainty by helping their teams to prepare for multiple potential future scenarios.



4) Focus on authentic leadership development

Teams that trust their leaders are more likely to adapt successfully to any changes that come your way. They also maintain high performance through challenging periods. As you oversee your sites, build trust and engagement by being authentic, honest, and humble. Your team will pick up on these positive attributes and reflect them back to you.

Authentic leadership involves:

- Being honest about challenges while maintaining confidence in team capabilities
- Protecting team members from unnecessary stress while keeping them informed about relevant changes
- Recognizing and celebrating team contributions regularly
- Investing in team member professional development even during challenging times



Take action on building relationships now

For every lesson learned that our Fexa Flex guests shared in their panel discussion, there is a long history of decisions, trial-and-error, mistakes, and success recognition. We believe there is a lot to learn from industry leaders who continue to build their success by understanding the value of their stakeholders.

The most successful facilities leaders recognize that relationships—both internal and external—are foundational to long-term success. They invest consistently in building and maintaining these relationships, understanding that they provide both current operational benefits and future opportunities.

This relationship focus extends to:

- Regular engagement with vendor partners beyond transactional interactions
- Active participation in industry networks and professional associations
- Building internal relationships across organizational functions
- Mentoring and developing successor capabilities within teams

The facilities management profession continues to evolve rapidly, demanding leaders who can navigate uncertainty while building stronger, more capable teams. Success requires moving beyond traditional management approaches to embrace strategies that develop resilience, adaptability, and cross-functional effectiveness.

Make sure your facilities management software supports your leadership goals

Thriving facilities management leaders recognize that their primary role isn't just managing facilities—it's developing people who can succeed in an increasingly complex environment. They understand that investing in team capabilities, building strong relationships, and maintaining authentic leadership creates the foundation for sustained success regardless of external challenges.

The time to begin implementing these strategies is now. One of the best ways to make it happen is by using the best possible facilities management software, like Fexa's CMMS, which is completely flexible. When your software adapts to your goals, organizational values, and data requirements, you can improve the life cycle of your assets, automate workloads, and start seeing FM savings.

Ready to build stronger, more resilient facilities teams?

Fexa's comprehensive facilities management platform provides the tools and insights you need to support your team's success. [Request a demo](#) to see how technology can enhance your leadership capabilities and team effectiveness.