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Facilities Change Management

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Edited by

Edward Finch
Professor in Facilities Management
The University of Salford

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Editorial offices:
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK
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Preface

FACILITIES CHANGE MANAGEMENT

It would appear that we no longer need many buildings — or so some would have us believe. In their view, offices, hospitals, prisons and education buildings, among others, are becoming a relic of the past. That is the argument put forward by the advocates of virtualisation, sometimes on the grounds of carbon reduction, convenience or cost savings. Technology, it is suggested, is brushing aside the need for such costly physical assets. Home working, community based health, electronic tagging and online learning are presented as inevitable alternatives that make the need for such building types redundant.

The evidence however suggests otherwise. The demands for such buildings are just as great as ever, despite the apparent option of remote working, remote telemetry and remote learning. How can this be explained? People are sentient beings, who seek the stimulation that the built environment presents. They embrace the opportunity to be part of a vibrant physical congregation, an organisation, housed in a facility with a definable purpose. What is evident is that the future demand for such buildings is assured, in meeting the needs and motivations of individuals. However, just what form they take is much less certain. Businesses, public authorities and local communities have to rethink exactly what is required by the familiar concepts of school, police station, hospital or workplace. In short, they require reinvention. The design of such buildings is no longer tethered by constraints of the past. New technology satisfies the need to access resources that previously could only be met by a journey to this building or that one. Now that such a need can be met in other ways, we are forced to question the very rationale for their existence.

This book in facilities change management is designed for those entrusted with this challenge — the challenge of making the physical environments we inhabit fit for a future that will be significantly different. Such professionals include facilities managers, property managers, architects, building users and those responsible for investing in our future environments.

Looking specifically at the role of the facilities manager, which previously had been described as a 'Cinderella' profession in the construction industry, it is now being challenged with deep, searching questions about how to meet the demands of future building users. This professional stance is unfamiliar to many facilities managers, whose track record has traditionally been proven in terms of 'delivery' — can you deliver on time and to budget with the least amount of aggravation to building inhabitants? In short, can you deliver what the client thinks he needs?

This unquestioning mental position, inevitably leads to a process of self talk of the form 'we can achieve anything' and 'nothing can stop us'. This attempt to banish doubts is seen to be part of the recipe of the facilities manager's success. However, it may indeed be their undoing. Enabling a degree of doubt to enter into the equation might be what is required.

A recent study by three US social scientists (Ibrahim Senay and Dolores Albarracin of the University of Illinois, along with Kenji Noguchi of the University of Southern Mississippi) explored the difference between what is called 'declarative' self talk ('We will get it done') to 'interrogative' self-talk ('Can we get this right?'). A simple experiment involving the resolution of some anagrams was conducted. But prior to this, participants were split into two groups: one half took a minute to consider whether the task could be completed; the other half took the time to tell themselves that they could complete the task. The result? The group of self-questioners was able to resolve significantly more anagrams than the self-affirming group. So what is going on here? One of the researchers, Albarracin, explains in a UK national newspaper (cited by Pink, 2011) that the process of '... setting goals and striving to achieve them assumes, by definition, that there is a discrepancy between where you are and want to be. When you doubt, you probably achieve the right mindset'.

The authors in this book raise just such seeds of doubt in relation to the management of change in the built environment. They make no apologies for doing this and common to each of the chapters is a searching and questioning predisposition. Leading authors from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Netherlands, Turkey, China and the UK, among others, each present part of a holistic framework for raising such questions and developing the evidence base to resolve them. It is hoped that this book will be instrumental in supporting a new generation of facilities professionals that are able to ask the right questions.

Pink, D.H. (2011). 'Can we fix it' is the right question to ask. *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 May.

Edward Finch, Editor

Contributors

Cláudia Miranda de Andrade
Andrade Azevedo Arquitetura Corporativa
São Paulo, Brazil

Simon Austin
Department of Civil & Building Engineering
Loughborough University
Loughborough
UK

Iris de Been
Center for People and Buildings
Delft
The Netherlands

Melanie Bull
Sheffield Business School
Sheffield Hallam University
Sheffield, UK

Tim Brown
Sheffield Business School
Sheffield Hallam University
Sheffield, UK

Paul Dettwiler
Institute of Facility Management
Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Zurich, Switzerland

Edward Finch
School of the Built Environment
University of Salford, UK

Alistair Gibb
Department of Civil & Building Engineering
Loughborough University
Loughborough, UK

John Hudson
School of the Built Environment
University of Salford
Salford, UK

Goksenin Inalhan
Faculty of Architecture
Istanbul Technical University
Istanbul,Turkey

Peter Love
School of Built Environment
Curtin University
Western Australia, Australia

Maartje Maarleveld
Center for People and Buildings
Delft, The Netherlands

Sheila Walbe Ornstein
Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism
University of São Paulo
São Paulo, Brazil

James Pinder
Department of Civil & Building Engineering
Loughborough University
Loughborough, UK

Ana Pereira Roders
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning
Eindhoven University of Technology
Eindhoven, The Netherlands

Rob Schmidt, III
Department of Civil & Building Engineering
Loughborough University
Loughborough, UK

Jim Smith
Institute of Sustainable Development & Architecture
Bond University
Queensland, Australia

Danny Shiem Shin Then
Hong Kong Polytechnic University
China

Jacqueline C. Vischer
School of Industrial Design
University of Montreal
Canada

Theo J.M. van der Voordt
Department of Real Estate & Housing
Faculty of Architecture
Delft University of Technology
Delft, The Netherlands

1 Facilities Change Management in Context

Edward Finch

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The number of books, training seminars and missives on the subject of change management continues to grow unabated. Yet few of these consider the importance of the *physical* change which inevitably accompanies the change of 'minds'. It is the physical change in the form of workplace redesigns, procurement of new buildings or perhaps the reengineering of a facilities service, which present the tangible evidence of change. People often discard the wise words which appear in the mission statement or the new process hardwired into the corporate intranet. If change is going to succeed, evidence suggests that a transformation in what we see, touch and experience is the only kind of change that people within an organisation are likely to understand and internalise.

How does the facilities manager achieve such transformations? A starting point in this journey is the process of 'sense making' or understanding the nature of change. This chapter describes the changing landscape in which facilities management teams operate. In so doing, it seeks to contextualise facilities management. This chapter explains how each of the elements of the change management process is addressed in each of the book's chapters. This is achieved by (1) an analysis of current thinking on change management; (2) an exposition of how facilities management needs to be redefined to accommodate contemporary approaches and (3) an explanation of a framework (described as the REACTT model) which identifies the key stages of facilities change management which in turn correspond with each of the chapters of this book.

Keywords: Change context; REACT model; Facilities management definition; Punctuated change; Transformation.

1.1 FORCES OF CHANGE AFFECTING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

A change can be described as any 'alteration in the state or quality of anything' (Shorter English Dictionary). Changes can involve people, technology, services or buildings. Indeed, most changes of any significance impact on a number of these facets. Thus, the facilities

Facilities Change Management. Edited by Edward Finch.

manager is never entirely concerned with buildings in isolation. One of the most popular quotes in the field of architecture is that of Winston Churchill:

> We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us. (Winston Churchill, 1874—1965)

This prophetic observation is indispensable to our understanding of facilities in the context of organisations. It makes clear that the buildings which we find ourselves in are at the outset an expression of all the elements that go to make up an organisation. They represent an expression of its people, what they stand for, their mode of operation, as well as their actual and espoused values. The quote highlights that from the day a facility is occupied such buildings themselves become the agents of change (or inertia). A modern day counterpart to this quote given by Denison and Mishra (1995) contends that:

> Structures are both the medium and the outcome of interaction. They are the medium because structures provide the rules and resources individuals must draw upon to interact meaningfully. They are its outcome, because rules exist only through being applied and acknowledged in interaction — they have no reality independent of the social practices they constitute. (Denison and Mishra (1995), p. 206)

Ironically, the quote conceives of structures as organisational structures. However, it is most apt in describing the importance of 'physical structures' (buildings, floor layouts and supporting services) which provide the 'hardwired' rules that dictate organisational interaction and social practices.

1.2 INERTIA AND CHANGE

Early thinkers on the nature of change construed change as an incremental process. This view of the world is described as the 'gradualist' paradigm. Continuous improvement (*Kaizen*; Japanese for 'change for the better') was proposed as the key method for managing change in an environment which was perceived as largely predictable. Based on this concept, changes to individual subsystems such as people, missions or facilities provide the necessary intervention to allow small but continuous change that allows adaptation to the internal and external environment. In such a model it is possible to tinker with one part of the system without affecting the whole (Choi, 1995).

However, in parallel with modern day reinterpretations of biological evolution, it has been argued by Gersick (1991) that change in most organisations is not continuous, but is characterised by events involving rapid change. In just the same way as evolution in the natural world undergoes major transformative events, so it can be seen that organisations are also subject to such rapid and often unexpected change. Gersick (1991) studied change in individuals, groups and in organisations as well as the history of science. She found in all of these change categories a recurring pattern of relatively long periods of stability or equilibrium 'punctuated' by short bursts of metamorphosis. The paradigm known as 'punctuated equilibrium' was used to describe this pattern.

How can we explain this process of punctuated equilibrium and more importantly what are the ramifications for facilities management? The model is explained in terms of in-built organisational inertia which arises from persistent *deep structures* which allow only small incremental changes. It is these embedded structures which resist change and pull an organisation back to a condition of equilibrium. Such deep structures are highly stable. This stability arises from the establishment of a number of key choices in the organisation's

history that exclude many options which might be deemed inconsistent. These mutually interdependent choices reinforce and strengthen one another over time. Gersick (1991) suggests that three sources of inertia are at play in organisations.

- Sense making: the organisation's way of seeing things (cognitive framework). Organisations evolve shared mental models in the way that they interpret reality and learn. In reaction to change, the natural response is to look at ways of 'doing things better'. Notice that this contrasts with a more open approach which considers all options and also considers doing 'better things'. The focus is thus on efficiency and alignment rather than the exploration of new opportunities.
- Motivation: change brings with it a fear of loss as well as a realisation that such change may bring about a 'sunk cost'. For example, the change in choice of air-conditioning manufacturer may render the expertise of a plant engineer redundant, having gained years of experience in the maintenance and regulation of an existing system.
- Obligation: with any change comes disruption and the severing of interdependencies. Relationships with particular service providers may have to be terminated: short-term disruptions to customer services may ensue. In the short term, the attraction of change may be lacking and the turmoil and loss of goodwill may be the dominant concern.

At some point in time, the forces of inertia, despite their attractive forces (e.g. efficiencies achieved through interdependency) become overwhelmed by external changes. The ensuing change is inevitably shattering to the status quo, resulting in 'punctuation in time'.

The punctuated equilibrium paradigm explains much about why facilities management change initiatives are so often challenging and problematic. Initiatives such as hot-desking or energy-awareness are often only able to impact on the outer superficial structures without penetrating more resilient deeper structures (culture and behaviour). This explains the legacy of failed attempts to introduce 'new ways of working' that directly challenge the deep structures of an organisation. Much of the literature on change in facilities is founded on the 'gradualist' paradigm of change, whereby, through a process of continuous adjustment, it is possible to respond to the changing environment.

As well as explaining why facilities managers encounter resistance when implementing change, the punctuated equilibrium model also highlights the significance of major facilities initiatives. The decision to relocate from a central business district to a suburban location may coincide with a change in business model, for example, a change from face-to-face to online customer service support. The relocation is thus a 'punctuation' or radical departure from the past way of doing things: the facilities change is simply a physical manifestation of a deep structural change. As such, every opportunity is taken in such a move to realign and transform systems: not as separate systems but as part of a holistic entity. The opportunity for transformative change which arises from a relocation or change in service provider is clear. However, it is incumbent on the facilities manager to realise this opportunity. As such, it involves working in concert with other systems within an organisation to overcome deep structural inertia.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING THE S-CURVE

Facilities management is driven by space forecasts and space budgets. Often such forecasts of change are based on simple extrapolations of what has gone before. A pattern of 5% growth in personnel over the last ten years is assumed to be repeated for the next five years.

However, such a forecasting approach is fraught with dangers based on business as usual. One of the most widely recognised predictor of change, the sigmoidal curve or S-curve, has consistently proven to be a reliable tool. Early work by Tushman and Romanellli (1985) showed how the S-curve (so described because of its characteristic S-shape) accurately describes the growth pattern of innovations and organisations. The curve illustrates the slow growth rate associated with start-up organisations whose initial growth is tempered by resource constraints and market acceptance. This is then succeeded by a period of rapid (exponential) growth during which time the organisation undergoes successive periods of growth. Finally, as the service or product offering is exhausted, the growth rate reaches maturity, with a tapering of growth.

The S-curve equally describes the characteristic growth patterns of individuals and indeed their lifestyles. This was illustrated in the seminal work of Becker (1990) in *The Total Workplace*. This describes how life changes impact on our choice of residential property. This begins with modest requirements to support a singles lifestyle, succeeded by shared living and the arrival of a family. Finally, in the maturing stage, married couples become 'empty nesters' and begin to downsize. At each stage there is punctuation in their existence associated with a change of accommodation. Houses and apartments are bought and sold to realign with their changing needs.

Figure 1.1 illustrates organisational growth in the form of an S-curve and the way this impacts on facilities and relocation decisions. During the early stages of growth, organisations typically occupy 'incubator' facilities, providing the flexibility for experimentation unencumbered by constraints and standards. The organisation at this stage is involved in inventing its 'deep structure'. As the organisation becomes too large for its original facility, the pressures for a transformative change overwhelm the forces of inertia. Thus a 'punctuation' in an organisation's timeline occurs. The organisation has established its deep structures, including its characteristic way of doing things, its mission and underlying

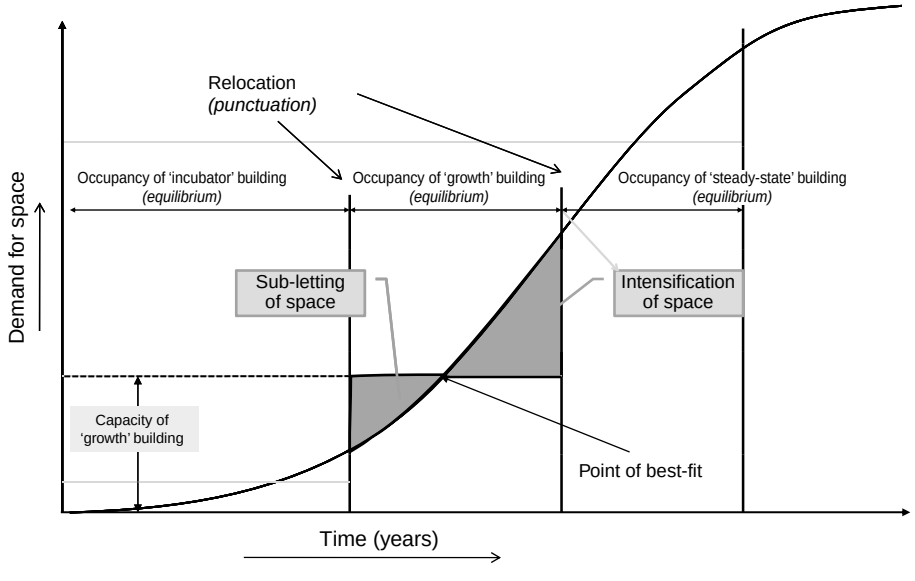

Figure 1.1 S-curve patterns of growth and space demand within an organisation. Reproduced by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

culture. The new building (unlike the incubator building) attempts to formalise and express this emergent view of itself. At the same time, the organisation seeks out standards and efficiency measures. This is what is described by Becker (1990) as the transition from the 'loose fit' to the 'tight fit' organisation. This in turn is reflected in the facilities management operation, with the emergence of formal policies and standards (such as space standards) which attempt to rationalise the service provision. Becker also refers to the concept of 'elastic fit' as the form of building solution (and facilities management solution) which succeeds the 'tight fit' approach. The constraints imposed by operating standards, whilst allowing efficiencies, prevent the organisation from growing. Only by engineering a degree of flexibility can an organisation extend its life on the S-curve: it needs to reinvent itself. The 'elastic' model relinquishes formal 'standards' in favour of 'frameworks' and 'templates' tuned to the individual needs of each part of the organisation. During the growth and downsizing stages, further moves and relocations inevitably occur, ranging from the relocation of individuals or departments to whole organisations. Moves inevitably are associated with 'punctuation' — an opportunity for transformation. They present a chance to realign the space and service offering; an opportunity to bridge the emerging gap between what is required and what is available. Treating the relocation as simply a resizing operation is fundamentally flawed. Such a 'punctuation' needs to embrace all of the levels of change in an organisation; in other words, to enable a 'punctuation' which addresses some or all of the forces of inertia.

Figure 1.1 also illustrates the constant state of inexact fit which arises between the space demands of the organisation (the demand side) and the capacity of the building (the supply side). At almost no point is entire equilibrium between these two forces met. The shaded zones identify areas where the facilities manager is constantly having to compensate for the deficiencies in this mismatch. During the early period of occupancy (or during periods of downsizing) there may be a surfeit of space. Facilities managers, however, are rarely presented with this problem as departments undertake unsanctioned 'creep' into unoccupied areas. The problem then becomes one of preventing encroachment and of using excess space. Sub-letting is one such approach, as is the homogenising of capacity between more than one building. However, having too much space can be as challenging as having too little space. Beyond a specific 'tipping point' in the organisation's growth cycle, the challenge becomes one of limited space. Measures to intensify the use of space (in tandem with innovations such as hot-desking or desk-sharing) can significantly extend the capacity of the building. Indeed, more and more buildings are built on this premise from the outset. Even for large multinational organisations, this problem of fit in relation to a single building or campus remains. The option of distributing staff between geographical locations may not be an option where co-location or adjacency to market is an imperative. The S-curve becomes an essential weapon in the facilities manager's armoury in forestalling simplistic projections.

1.4 THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE

Most theory relating to change management lacks context. Many address only an isolated aspect of change (e.g. culture, workplace design, process design); whilst others put forward a single approach to change (e.g. 'organisation development', 'systems thinking' or 'strategic planning'). No wonder the facilities management profession is reluctant to spend time making sense of such a convoluted collection of 'recipes'. However, as we have seen in the