



The Importance of Mobilisation in FM Contracting

When it comes to FM transitions, putting in the hard yards to build strong project management and trust early on is the key to success

Strategic Business Development
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For service delivery companies in any sector, signing a contract is only half the battle. In facilities management, when a project is commissioned, the battle has hardly started. The reality is that most facilities management projects, or transitions as they're often termed, are highly complex.

A common scenario at the start of a contract will be one of excitement from both client and vendor, but also one of friction and impatience. As the days mount up after project kick off, issues start to arise on both sides. The client will become concerned with a lack of progress and activity. But the vendor is getting anxious at the lack of access to key information owners or key assets on the client side. Inertia can quickly set in.

That's why strong project management and strong project leadership must be established from the start.

At EQUANS this is fundamental to our delivery approach. Generally, we will have a Transition Director in place even before a contract has been signed. That figure will assume the role of project leader and ensure all the required staff with the relevant skillsets are in place at project launch. That does primarily mean technicians, but it can also include IT professionals, project managers, Human Resources, and internal communications. All are crucial functions in large and complex facilities management projects. But our Transition Director will also be aiming to assemble a team on the client side to ensure that the EQUANS team can get the information and guidance they need to deliver the project. One of the major barriers to delivery on transitions is a simple lack of knowledge on who the gatekeepers are to a specific piece of key client information.

Building strong personal relations between vendor and client invariably solves this issue. Yet it is often ignored. This can have a serious follow up consequence. If personal relationships aren't built up between both parties, then a lack of trust and accountability can emerge. From the vendor side, accountability comes with a contract. But the client needs to be accountable too. If key information or access is not provided, then




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projects can stall. Therefore, expectations should always be set at the start of the contract. The onus should clearly be on the vendor for delivery. But to achieve the best results, the client should also be made aware of what is expected from them in order to deliver the project.

If these relationships between counterparties can be forged, they can then be underpinned by a regular and systematised project management framework. At EQUANS, depending on the size and complexity of a project, we will schedule regular client check-ins as often as each week or even each day if needed. For complex projects such as the delivery of maintenance contracts across critical infrastructure where you could be dealing with whole estates consisting of multiple buildings and implementing multiple service lines across mechanical, AV and electrical services, to lighting, there will be a vast range of work packages and budgets in play. It is critical that these are kept in check, and that the client shares in the process of project management. This way, the client can be taken on a journey through the project and be held to account constructively for any inputs or action they are responsible for. This approach doesn't need to be costly or time intensive, and can be underpinned by a project management tracker that both parties understand.

An example is the recent transition EQUANS have managed at a Melbourne municipality. Prior to deployment the EQUANS team met with the client-side stakeholders and mapped them through the transition timeline. This included the team organising security clearance and building access passes, and ensured all stakeholders knew the location of all relevant buildings and how to access them - in advance of go live. These small steps in preparation are a major contributor to completing project schedules on time and on budget.

Too often, people assume transitions will just look after themselves. But there are project teams which often number in the hundreds which need to be assigned, works to be calibrated and timed in line with multiple others. Across the board the FM industry needs to get better at project management. It's in vendors' and clients' best interests to do so. Accepting that a transition is more than a transaction, that it is a long-term collaboration between partners can be the difference between success and failure. Having this discussion with a client at the outset of a contract can be difficult. But in the long run it will build trust and ownership. And, ultimately, ensure that the client has confidence in taking over a building once transition is complete. Strong governance principles, and this includes mobilisation, are at the heart of the EQUANS management philosophy. Clear accountability, proactive mobilisation of the project team prior to project starts and the focus on contract follow up from Day 1 are built into many of our project rollouts.

So if you're looking to commission an FM project, a quick and easy option to kicking a project off can be appealing. But in the long run it will come back to bite you. If the right interpersonal relationships and project management building blocks can be put in place early, a project is far more likely to come in on time and on budget. 

If you would like more information or to chat to us about this article, you can contact us at info.anz@equans.com

