

Soft Landings

FAST FACTS FOR FACILITIES MANAGERS

Introduction

This fact sheet is for anyone with little or no knowledge of 'soft landings' and how it applies to the discipline of facilities management. It outlines the benefits of adopting a soft landings approach to construction projects as well as offering basic guidance to Facilities Managers (FMs) as to what to consider when embracing this new way of working.

What is Soft Landings?

Soft landings is a process that provides building occupiers and managers with the opportunity to become involved with the design and construction process – thus ensuring improved operational performance and better working environments. Specifically soft landings recognises that the on-going business benefits, maintenance and operational cost of a building during its lifecycle far outweigh the original capital cost of construction. Therefore, the short-term cost savings in construction can have a significant and long-term adverse effect on business performance both financially and through organisational productivity.

Benefits of a Soft Landings approach

The key benefits of a soft landings approach can be identified as:

- > involvement at an early stage of building managers and end users allowing for early challenges of the practical implications of design concepts in terms of how they may impact upon on-going maintenance and operational costs
- > ensuring that full training, commissioning and handover is provided at an early stage, which reduces the cost of a protracted handover and means the building will reach optimal performance sooner
- > allowing for post occupancy evaluation, which monitors the project outcomes for three years post completion against performance and cost criteria, and ensures lessons are learned for future projects

How does soft landings link with BIM

Building Information modeling (BIM) is the overarching term given to a variety of technologies that capture data to help users compile digital models of buildings. From a construction perspective, these building information models allow for a reduction in design defects and construction costs, greater collaboration across the life-cycle of an asset, and increased support for the FM role. While BIM is the technology, soft landings is the process which sits behind this and enables BIM to be implemented more effectively.

What is the role of FM in soft landings?

All soft landings projects must be designed to consider the needs of the client and their occupiers post completion.

The key role of a facilities manager operating in a soft landings team is therefore to ensure

that briefing and design take account of the business and end user requirements that the asset will be operationally efficient and effective.

Given this, the specific role of the facilities manager within the project team is likely to encompass:

- > ensuring that the strategy and design brief identifies the functionality and effectiveness outcomes required. Also that the brief considers the intended environmental, energy and financial outcomes
- > ascertaining that the project meets client and occupier needs, is cost effective and can be maintained
- > ensuring that the voice of end users and the FM building operations team is heard
- > determining that assets are built or refurbished to optimize operation, maintenance and cost
- > developing operational strategies that ensure the operational budget is set early in the design process and that changes to design are reviewed for their impact on operational running costs
- > where appropriate ensuring BIM data transfers into CAFM systems so that there is a fully populated asset register
- > maintaining continuity of involvement with the project from strategy through to operation
- > supporting commissioning, testing, handover and aftercare, and ensuring that Post Occupancy Evaluation is embedded into the project to compare actual performance against planned performance and allow lessons to be learned for future projects

In the majority of cases, the skills required should already exist within the client side Estates/FM/Asset Management team. However, early engagement of the role in the construction process may mean that there is an additional cost, as typically the FM would not have been involved until practical completion. That said any such additional cost will be recouped many times over during the life-time of the building.

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