



# EFMC 2009: Will an FM Action Agenda Succeed?

By Wim Pullen

## Why an Action Agenda?

One of the aims of EFMC 2009 was to contribute to the development of a long term Action Agenda for FM. This is based on the belief that joint effort based on FM practice and research is required to improve a business; for the sake of the organization, the people and for society in general. That may be viewed as an ideology: pragmatic and focused.

There were three reasons for bringing that focus to EFMC 2009. First, the feedback from past conferences highlighted the need to join forces; the need to have common objectives to work on and knowledge sharing between practice and research represents progress in FM.

Secondly, Dutch Facility Managers are perceived - or even worse perceive themselves - as reactive, waiting to see what top management will ask of them and focused on internal policies rather than on improving outcomes (Heling 2008 ). So the big problems of society like energy demand and consumption, demographics at work, business paradigms (business ethics!) are not proactively addressed by FMs.

Thirdly, the world as an ecosystem has been given to us to take care of and look after. That gives us a responsibility to do what we can. The Action Agenda can work as a tool for the FM community to evaluate its activities and subsequently to take steps to lead us towards the future. In addition, EuroFM will be able to use the Action Agenda as a tool in political lobbying in Brussels, which is more than necessary to get political support and research funding for innovating business resources strategies (which should be seen as the focus of research in FM!).

## Content

One of the most striking questions used to sum up the EFMC 2009 conference was: "What are the costs of being cheap?" This question combines everything that matters. Firstly, there is the underlying, predominant paradigm of being cheap, of working with the lowest budget possible in order to achieve the highest profits. Cost is the key indicator. What about choosing 'continuity' as a business's main goal? Being cheap is no problem when sunk costs are omitted from the decision-making process. When it comes to sustainable decisions, we seem to argue that what we don't know about the past or the long term future doesn't matter.

## Key questions

Do we know? Does it matter?

If we apply these six, simple words to the other seven in the question "What are the costs of being cheap?", the most likely answers are "No" and "Yes", respectively. If it matters, we need to take action. Everyone is involved in his or her own domain. Researchers should unlock the best available knowledge. Consultants should sharpen their experience by asking themselves, "Is this the best available knowledge to share with my customer?" And end users should not be satisfied with a solution that just works; they should demand the best available solution!

## Action and coordinated action

The answers to the question in the Action Agenda will also affect The Center for People and Buildings. In our research work for 2010 and beyond, these issues will guide us in our activities. We will do our utmost to promote the Action Agenda in the

Netherlands.

The raison d'être of EuroFM is not merely to organize a yearly conference and have fun (which is a necessary ingredient of human well being!). It is "the advancement of FM knowledge and its application...." (EuroFM website). To report progress in the development and application of knowledge, coordinated action is required.

What action? First, there is the need to evaluate ongoing research in FM. Is it relevant, does it contribute to answering the questions raised by the Action Agenda? Secondly, how can this research be adopted and implemented? Thirdly, there needs to be more integration between research and practice, including joint presentations/papers based on practice and research. There must be plenty of empirical material available throughout

Europe which can be presented from both a business and a research perspective. Lastly, there is the institutional approach. Our Australian colleagues managed to get their Action Agenda adopted by government and put into practice, which boosted the development of FM. Accordingly, the EuroFM Board should build strong relations with the EC and the different bodies of the EU. The Action Agenda could act as a medium for communication.

Will the idea of the Action Agenda succeed? It's up to us!

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## FM ACTION AGENDA 2015: Do we know? Does it matter?

1. Sustainability, CO2 and energy demand
  - Does increased demand for energy matter to FM?
  - What is the contribution of FM to CO2 emissions?
  - What is the contribution of your company's facilities to CO2 emissions?
  - What can FM do about reducing CO2 emissions?
2. Credit crunch, dominant business paradigms
  - Do the facilities in your organization contribute to:
    - Productivity growth and shareholder value?
    - Productive vitality and business continuity?
    - What can FM contribute to changing the way people think?
3. Demographics
  - Delivery in education, health, services, production: who is there to care?
  - What can FM do to deliver smarter?
  - Develop scenarios to discern what is relevant.
4. Space use, space levels
  - What is the spatial footprint of organizations becoming combinations of networks?
  - What is the socio-economic impact of the use of different levels of space? Cost vs. emotion.
  - What can FM do to raise awareness?
5. Decision making
  - How much does it cost to be cheap?
  - What are the trade-offs in decision-making processes?
  - Social, spatial, environmental.....?



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