

IFMA Midwest “Rock the Foundation” Symposium

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Good morning, fellow IFMA members and colleagues. I’m honored to kick off the “Rock the Foundation” Midwest Symposium, and very pleased to be a part of this special gathering.

Some of you who haven’t checked the updated program yet may be scratching your heads. It’s true – I am not IFMA chair Tom Mitchell, who was originally on the bill to speak to you this morning. A family loss, followed by other responsibilities prevented him from being here today. He asked me to fill in, which I was more than happy to do. Tom sends his regrets and well wishes for a successful event. With the caliber of speakers on the agenda and such a cool venue, I expect to deliver a glowing report!

My thanks to Tom for choosing me as his “second,” and my thanks to the Chicago Chapter for their understanding and warm welcome. It’s great to be here, and I look forward to learning and sharing some interesting discussions with you. Whether we talk about FM or the latest American Idol winner, what’s important is that we’ve come together, as members of our professional community, to explore issues important to us. To keep the communication lines buzzing. And to continue broadening our knowledge, skills, and perspectives.

I won’t be speaking to you today about specific workplace trends you need to prepare for, or exciting new technologies you need to be aware of. Matt Dawson and Dr. Bacon will have those areas well covered. My focus is on how to prepare for what’s next as both an individual and an organization, and the importance of being aware of changes taking place in your profession and your association. The underlying theme I’d like for to you to keep at the top of your mind is “opportunity.”

Now, I know what you're thinking...“Oh, that tired, old word.” But believe me – opportunity in action is a wonderful thing!

Opportunity itself is merely the opening of a door. The action of walking through that door brings a world of possibility. Preparing for what's on the horizon takes action, individually and collectively.

2010 has already presented me with a number of exceptional and unexpected opportunities, such as being here with you today. In March, I was appointed Second Vice Chair of IFMA's Board of Directors, filling the seat vacated by former vice chair Bill Rodgers. Bill's increasing professional commitments made it difficult for him to meet the time and energy demands of a volunteer leader. Thankfully, Bill remains on the board. His leadership and experience are invaluable to IFMA's continued growth.

I welcomed the honor of serving IFMA in this position. I walked through that door with conviction; but I was also keenly aware of its life-changing potential.

Those of you who have served as chapter, council, or committee leaders understand the meaning of “commitment.” You work hard to provide your members with beneficial resources. You dedicate yourselves to advancing the profession and the association.

You wake up in the middle of the night with a great idea, but you can't remember if it's meant for your chapter or your place of work. Volunteer leaders put their lives into overdrive; but for most, the experience is highly rewarding. It definitely has been for me. Had I failed to grab exceptional and unexpected opportunities over the years, I doubt I would be as fully immersed in the changes happening in our profession, or the advancements taking place in our association, as I am today. That full-blown engagement has not only enriched my IFMA experience; but also enhanced my career.

You are making a commitment to yourself, your profession, and your association by attending this event. How? You're getting involved. You're taking advantage of the IFMA Opportunity. And for those of you who attended last year's World Workplace or have watched Tom Mitchell's video series of Chairman's Messages, you're actively responding to the IFMA Call to Arms.

Tom's message to members this past year has focused on getting out there, and getting active. Sharing ideas. Making a difference. Making your mark. Making the most of your membership experience. And making sure that IFMA stays strong and relevant for another 30 years.

There's no doubt in anyone's mind that the workplace is changing. And our role within the workplace is changing. The very definition of "facility management" is changing. The question is not whether change is coming. The question is, do you have a hand in controlling that change? In defining what it is you do? The answer is yes; but only if you're willing and able to grab the opportunity. To walk through the door.

Your association provides you with the support; but it takes your commitment, drive, and interest in your own future, to ensure that future is what you want. Together, we have the power to direct our influence on the future of the workplace. Collectively, we can identify issues and respond to them. We can discuss changing needs, then figure out how to adjust to redefined skills and services. We can prepare for new technologies, and ensure that we are neither surprised by, nor ill-equipped to handle them. Bottom line – we have to lead change; not be led by it.

Information is key. Knowledge gives you the power to become a leader, not merely a follower, of change. Advanced technologies, alternative officing, globalization, and sustainable products and programs are redefining the role of the workplace professional. Facilities are becoming smarter! In the meantime... are we?

Today's workplace is significantly different than it was 20 years ago; and tomorrow's workplace could suddenly become an environment we don't even recognize. We could wake up to find materials we can't identify, tools we don't know how to use. How do we maintain our authority to direct workplace programs, if we don't understand our workplace?

I predict that the future of the built environment promises even greater opportunities for facility professionals to advance. The scope of our responsibilities will not only broaden; but also, become more specialized. Performance expectations will increase. And as our responsibilities multiply, professional development will be a priority.

Keep in mind that change is constant. Trends come and go. What was “hot” last month is now just lukewarm. Through IFMA, you have access to current information, continuing education, and our community’s ever-expanding body of knowledge. IFMA’s best long-term plan for itself and its members to direct the future of facility management is a three-prong approach... build professional partnerships; invest in training and certification; and take the lead in sustainability.

Let’s look at each step in detail, and see where and how they fit into what’s coming for FM.

Build professional partnerships.

Knowledge may be power; but knowledge sharing is smart. Facility managers, H.R., the tech team, installers, designers, engineers – all of us have a hand in running the machine called the “workplace.” The engine of our ingenuity runs on the principal of cooperation. All of us are smarter and more productive than any one of us. And the cooperative input of many keeps the machine operating at top form.

Currently, where we, as an association, see our greatest influence is in education and certification. Where we see our greatest opportunity is in the global market, positioning ourselves to better service and support international FMs. Where we see our greatest strength is in our partnerships – collaborating with other organizations on the challenges and needs of all workplace professionals.

IFMA has reached across oceans and industries to build its network of partners, firm in its belief that collaboration fuels growth. Very few of us are experts in all areas of expertise; but that’s the benefit of knowledge sharing. That’s the benefit of being part of a professional community that shares information and insights. That’s the benefit of reaching out to workplace partners to talk about what’s happening in other industries.

And as experts in specific areas, we ourselves become valuable resources to others, sharing specialized knowledge with our fellow practitioners.

Corporate partners are invaluable to your network. Innovations in sustainable materials are progressing at break-neck speed. As a result, the speed by which we must adapt to these

innovations has intensified. If we don't keep up, we fall behind; then we lose that all-important authority to lead change.

John F. Kennedy once said, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." Leaders, by definition, show the way. In order to lead, you must be one step ahead of the rest.

Equip yourselves with information about weird and wonderful products. Reach out to other trained and certified craftsmen. Make sure the materials and processes you're using are the best. Show the way. Lead your organizations, your teams, and your workplace partners in making good decisions about the facilities and people you support. Remember – facilities are becoming smarter. In a battle of the brains, we sure don't want to be outwitted by a building!

State-of-the-art solutions require state-of-the-art training, which is the second part of the three-prong plan. Invest in training and certification. Our employers expect us to deliver. How we make that happen is up to us. We must have the foresight to look beyond the scope of our current duties, and visualize the impact of these advancements on our skills and know-how.

Keep challenging yourselves through training. Solidify your influence as a competent professional. Certification verifies your professionalism. It fortifies your position. More importantly, it activates empowerment. It gives you the authority to lead change.

IFMA provides the support. IFMA identifies our competencies and performance areas. It creates awareness of the profession's importance, guides its growth, and meets its needs. Without IFMA, the facility management profession would not have the recognition or the level of professionalism it has today.

A facility manager once was the guy or gal who changed the light bulbs, fixed the elevator, or turned the thermostat up or down. Essentially a "jack of all trades," the FM was expected to take care of a building's operations and maintenance; but was not perceived as a partner in the design or functionality of a building. There was a huge gap between the boiler-room in the basement and the executive suites on the top floor.

In the early 1980s, IFMA made a move to improve the image of the facility management professional. In order to wipe out the "guy down in the basement" icon, they had to raise the

stakes. Certification was the magic word. Being certified – meeting a strict, measurable standard – meant an instant credibility boost. It worked; but not in an instant. Anything worth doing takes time; and IFMA has spent the last two decades building awareness of FM certification.

Today, the Certified Facility Manager and Facility Management Professional credentials are valued world- and industry-wide as confirmation of excellence and professionalism in our field. Public and private sector employers seek out CFMs and FMPs. Many employers contact IFMA for a list of local CFMs when they have high-level job openings.

When you consider whether training and certification are worth the time and effort, look at it from the customer's or employer's point of view. In both our personal and professional lives, we seek out qualified practitioners. How many of us have sat in a new doctor's office and studied the diplomas and certificates on the wall? If Doctor Smith has nothing to show but a mail-order degree, we're going to make a run for it.

It's not that we demand competence in our professionals... we expect it. We trust that the word "professional" signifies professionalism. We want the experts we turn to for answers to know things, especially if we're seeking answers about something meaningful to us. Whether it's about our business, our family, or in Doctor Smith's case, our health, we want that level of confidence that keeps us seated on the examination table, not sprinting toward the door.

For an employer, both the CFM and FMP represent third-party validation that they have a skilled and knowledgeable professional on staff. For an employee, these credentials elevate your credibility in your own organization, or give you the marketability to move on to another, perhaps greater opportunity.

Remember that your needs are IFMA's focus. The programs and resources that IFMA provides or develops are based solely on what you need in order to perform at your best.

Even in an economic downturn, IFMA must continue providing a valuable service to our industry. Working in our favor is the difference between serving a profession, rather than a consumer. Our market isn't scaling down from gourmet dining to fast-food. Our market

understands the importance of continued improvement and maintaining their competitive edge, even, and perhaps especially, in hard times.

What you learn through IFMA, combined with your own experience and talent, gives you the ability to advise your employer and colleagues on important issues affecting the workplace. It also empowers you to direct programs and initiatives that support heightened productivity, sharper performance, and the increased longevity and profitability of your buildings.

A recent step toward directing our own future was IFMA's global job task analysis, conducted to identify the growing needs of facility professionals worldwide and ensure that the CFM measures all candidates against a single standard. The survey received close to one-thousand responses, with the highest participation from FMs in Canada, Australia, Asia, Africa and the United States.

The results not only validated the relevance of IFMA's existing core competencies, but also identified two new areas. Soon we will add Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability, and Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity to the list of FM core competencies.

The CFM program will change to include these areas, ensuring that Certified Facility Managers are better prepared to address, direct, and implement sustainability and preparedness programs. It is another crucial step in solidifying our authority to recommend and oversee these programs.

Results from the global job task analysis also sparked discussion among IFMA staff and board members about introducing a new sustainability credential. This project has quickly moved to the top of IFMA's immediate priority list, because we know that our members are more powerful when they can contribute to business decisions.

Corporate sustainability initiatives have moved beyond initial feel-good "recycle-and-carpool" programs. We're now involved in massive reconstruction projects that incorporate the latest planet-friendly materials and systems. We have to understand how these new products and technologies work. We have to grab the opportunity and show the way.

Which leads us to the third step in directing the future of FM – taking the lead in sustainability.

This is no longer a hot topic – it’s now the way the world does business. Your knowledge of sustainable products and practices will help you create better places for work and play. Your expertise on compliance and eco-efficiencies will increase your value to your employers and communities. It will be IFMA’s responsibility to not only provide you with the highest level of sustainability education and resources; but to also lead by example.

IFMA was one of the first industry leaders to see the significance of sustainability on the built environment, and to begin addressing how it would affect facility managers. During her term as IFMA chair, Sheila Sheridan was a strong proponent of green initiatives, and has continued to support IFMA’s ever-increasing focus on and response to environmental responsibility. Today you have the privilege of hearing Sheila speak about her vision of how sustainability can be integrated into the FM core competencies.

Whether new construction or retrofitted existing buildings, the greening of the workplace is not only a reality – it’s a necessity. A way of life. Sustainable technologies, programs, products, and behaviors are becoming second-nature in our homes and businesses. If you’re still waiting for the cycle of this trend to run its course, it’s time to remove the “training wheels” and get in the race.

The “Clean Tech Revolution” is steadily moving into mainstream business. Billions of dollars are being invested in solar and wind power, biofuels, and water filtration. Serious Materials, a company based in California, has raised one-hundred and twenty million dollars in venture funding to develop low-energy, low-carbon glass, windows, and drywall. More significantly, the workplace has the attention of federal government. Greater emphasis on environmental stewardship has resulted in legislation such as Executive Order 13514. This order requires federal agencies to measure, manage, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions toward agency-defined targets. It also requires agencies to meet a number of energy, water, and waste reduction targets.

Historically, facility managers have been asked how to cut costs, not boost revenue. However, sustainability has the potential to improve efficiencies and decrease spending, giving FMs the power to directly impact the bottom line.

Sustainability is our profession's steep slope right now. Navigating nimbly through the avalanche of information and advice will help us reach the top.

Through networking, through IFMA, and through educational events such as this week's symposium, you stay up-to-date on advancements in your industry. You're savvy to state-of-the-art products. You become more aware of issues and legislation that impact your work. You're better prepared to plot your course.

Consider this... the workplace was once just a place to work. The office of my parent's generation has transformed to a vibrant working environment that promotes productivity and collaboration. The start-up companies of the 90s replaced their conference tables with ping-pong tables. Floor plans opened up. Bosses now had "open-door" policies, because their doors were no longer there.

Telecommuters introduced a whole new workplace wrinkle. Going to the office meant hopping from the bedroom to the computer room in your bunny slippers. Once considered an employee privilege, telecommuting is now an essential way to keep business and government working in the event of an attack, a natural disaster, or pandemic.

We've faced many changes and challenges over the years; and we've met them head-on, because we've been informed... we've been prepared. IFMA has connected the dots for us. IFMA doesn't wait for its members to tell us what they need. IFMA keeps a keen eye on trends impacting facilities and facility managers. Often before we even realize something's coming, IFMA has already started working on how to get us ready for it. Celebrating 30 years as an association, it's important to reflect on our history; and use our strength today as a springboard for what we do tomorrow.

In 1983, IFMA had a staff of three, and one-thousand members. Just ten years later, staff increased to thirty-two, and membership reached twelve-thousand. Today, there are fifty-two employees working for us at IFMA headquarters, and membership is just over nineteen-thousand worldwide.

This evolution didn't happen overnight, and it certainly couldn't have happened with only three staff members. The association has relied upon the commitment and drive of the IFMA community to spread the word, make personal connections; to become the face and voice of IFMA. Our members get out there and recruit new members, mentor students and young professionals, elevate awareness of facility management in their own organizations, and bring FM issues to the forefront among elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

As we've done over the past thirty years, IFMA will continue to reach out to you, asking for your input and insights on the top issues facing our profession. My best advice is to embrace these opportunities; don't shy away from them. You have the ability to drive the future of your profession and your association.

Remain committed to growth, not only for yourself; but for your profession. Stay active in your chapters, councils, and communities of practice. These dynamic branches of the IFMA tree are the association's primary source of strength, fresh ideas, and new members. Reach out to the next generation FMs. Get them involved and motivated now, so they may carry on the good work we've begun.

Put opportunity into action. The trick isn't knowing what the future holds; it's adapting to the future armed with knowledge, skills, and a community of colleagues you can call on for strategies and guidance.

Build your network; keep learning and striving for excellence; and share sustainable ideas and solutions to improve industry- and world-wide practices. Together, we can lead change and ensure that our future is what we want.

I'm ready, and I hope you are too! Enjoy today's symposium and thank you for your time.