



Interview with: Stan Mitchell

*Chairman of ISO TC 267 Facility Management
and the CEO at Key Facilities Management International*



Today we interview Stan Mitchell. Stan is the Chairman of ISO TC 267 Facility Management and the CEO at Key Facilities Management International, which is the longest established Facilities Management business in the UK. He will be leading the 'Standards in FM' workshop at CIFMers Latam in Buenos Aires.

What are the latest news in Facility Management regulations?

The latest news is that TC 267 Facility Management has now published two standards and one technical report. ISO 41011 is the standard that established the vocabulary for all subsequent standards that may be produced. This is more important than perhaps many would think in that it is the language and terminology that we will use in all future standards and will represent how our profession will be presented, communicated and understood in a consistent manner.

ISO 41012 is the standard that is focussed upon strategic sourcing and facilities management agreements. This is a stand-alone standard and an extremely useful one. It will give the reader guidance in how to establish business relationships and partnerships between the demand organisation and service providers. It is aimed at ensuring all the important aspects of establishing long term and sustainable working relationships are robust and fully considered at the outset. When such dialog takes place at the beginning of the relationship it helps in avoiding issues that may emerge later in the life of the agreement. It is also there as a guide to ensure that all the important aspects of a successful relationship are fully considered, transparent and understood.

ISO TR 41013 is the technical report which serves to provide the reader with an introduction and awareness of some of the many benefits and influences that a facilities management approach will bring any organisation. At the same time, it provides an insight for those individuals who may be considering a career in Facilities Management.

The main focus of the committee, at the time of this interview, is the ISO 41001 Management System Standard. As a Management System Standard it differs from technical standards in that its focus encompasses the management of the activities and how they should be structured and enabled to achieve optimum efficiency, effectiveness and value to the parties involved. As a management discipline this is fundamental to our role and this standard is seen as the platform upon which facilities management can gain recognition and display the benefits that it brings to all organisations that enable it. It follows the plan-do-check-act philosophy in how it is structured and will benefit those who use it as a benchmark in establishing a methodology and approach to be adopted, whether that be within an in-house team or an outsourced provider.

ISO 41001 will be an accreditable standard in a similar manner as ISO 9001 for Quality Management, which is the most popular Management System Standard worldwide and the one that most people are familiar with. Therefore, ISO 41001 for Facility Management will be able to be accredited and will demonstrate an organisation or in-house team's structure and focus is consistent with a true FM approach.

2. Why is it important that Latin countries are involved in the international regulations and how could they influence them?

It is vitally important that any ISO standard has as broad an input from the international community as possible. An ISO standard will always be only as good as the input that is received from those involved in its construction and critique.

The methodology utilised in creating such standards is an extremely robust one and currently, within ISO TC 267, is represented by over 42 countries. Each country participating has an equal say in its construction and eventual critique, that in part is what brings the value to any standard.

Within the ISO development process the TC (Technical Committee) delegates a number of its member country experts to establish a Working Group and it is via these Working Groups that the development work is carried out.

Following a series of reviews of the work carried out within the Work Group, the Technical Committee has the opportunity to critique and comment and thereafter the document will go for public comment. Only following this final stage of the review process will the Working Group respond to all comments received and the Technical Committee will publish the standard.

Although a lengthy process, it is one that ensures what is eventually published has had a thorough review. The result is almost always a standard that has real value to those that want to reference it or utilise its guidance.

3. You work world-wide, what differences do you find between the application of regulations in Europe and Latam?

I find that there is a misperception in various parts of the world that Europe, and I would include the USA, has a developed knowledge that everyone else should follow. I think that what Europe and the USA has is a self-confidence and robust structure to what they do and as a result, communications can create that misperception.

I have worked, and continue to work; internationally including Latin America and my experience is that the knowledge truly exists worldwide. What is often lacking is a confidence to promote and communicate that knowledge when working within wide ranging international groups.

In terms of the applicability of ISO standards in the various countries and communities that exist worldwide, it is considerably influenced by the input received at the outset of the process, as mentioned earlier. A good example in terms of the development of ISO 41011 was when we were developing the vocabulary our Asian delegates were able to highlight some of the terminology that was in common use in Europe was not understood and did not translate within the Asia. That enabled us to develop an alternative approach and a terminology that was acceptable and able to satisfy all delegates.

It can therefore be seen that if such terminology had not been challenged and ultimately changed the standard would have had little value in those markets that did not understand it. In the case of ISO 41011, that would then have diluted the potential effectiveness and usefulness of all other facilities management standards created under ISO TC 267, as they will all reference the vocabulary within ISO 41011!

4. You will participate in the next CIFMers Latam in Buenos Aires delivering a workshop together with IRAM (Argentinian Normalization Institute), what do you expect of the event?

First of all, I am very grateful to have been invited to attend and engage with as many Latin American colleagues as is possible during my time in Buenos Aires.

My aim within the workshop is to communicate, listen and encourage engagement.

As commented above my experience in my work life, as well as in my standards work, is that there is almost always as much to take as there is to give where there is real open two-way communication within the facilities management sector. The benefit of a workshop environment is that by its nature there is two-way communication.

The timing of the event is opportune in that we will be on the final stage of the process to publish ISO 41001 Management System Standard but at the beginning of the development of a roadmap of standards to be developed over the coming years within the ISO TC 267 Facility Management Committee. It will therefore be an excellent opportunity to both communicate what we have done and how it can be used within, the Latin American markets as well as consider what standards the market considers as being appropriate for the committee to develop going forward.

It is also hopefully an opportunity for individuals to better understand how they can contribute to the ongoing work of the committee and ensure that there is a strong Latin American influence in all that we do going forward.

5. You have participated in other events organized by CIFMERS GLOBAL, why should Facility Managers attend CIFMers Latam?

CIFMers in my experience is a fairly unique event in how it is structured and communicated to as wide an audience as possible. Every one that I have attended has been rich in content and beneficial in terms of peer to peer engagement.

For those facilities managers working, often in isolation within their organisations that they serve, there is nothing more enlightening and uplifting than when you get the opportunity to network and interact with your peer group who understand and share the challenges and opportunities that exist within the organisations that we serve. What is not often appreciated is that many of your peers have experienced the same challenges and opportunities and therefore the sharing of those ideas and solutions can be extremely beneficial.

However, I would suggest that an even greater reason for attending, beyond some of the knowledge and awareness that might be gained from the speakers and workshops attended, is the development of personal networks. Every conference that I have ever attended has always delivered another new network contact which, over the 30+ years that I have been involved in facilities management, has stood me in good stead when I want to reach out for support and knowledge.

It is an investment that will reap benefits for many years to come.

I look forward to attending and extending my network through meeting with many new colleagues across Latin America.