FMI

Speaking to stakeholders

A guide for facilities managers to take communications from obligation to opportunity

Contents

Over the past decade, facilities management has seen a shift from being trade-centric, to service-centric.

With this shift, how facilities managers communicate with their stakeholder groups has become more important than ever.

Effective communications ensure the right people have the right information, at the right time, and in the most useful format possible. Sometimes, this will be a conversation, sometimes an email, a meeting, a report or a dashboard.

In this eBook, we look at some of the communication challenges faced by facilities managers and provide information and tips to help you overcome these challenges.

Common communication challenges
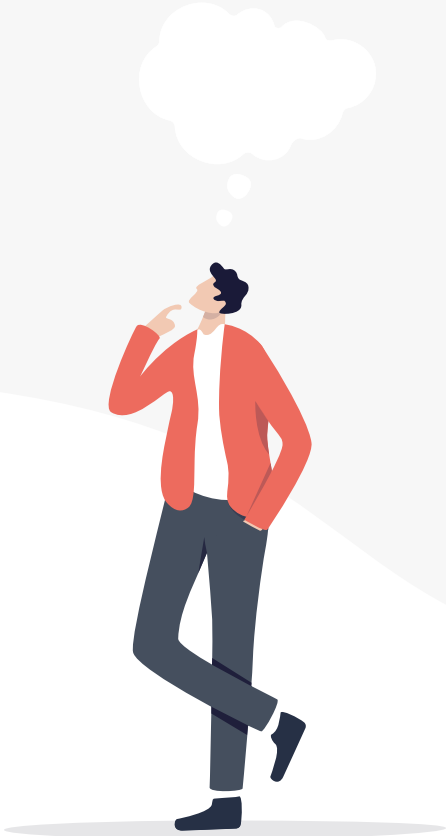
Across different industries and organisations, facilities teams face common challenges.

Communicating with various stakeholder groups, including facilities users, contractors or trades and management can pose a challenge for facilities teams. Regardless of the stakeholder or type of facility, these communication challenges usually stem from four foundational principles:

Information isn't accurate

Wrong level of information

Accessibility of information

Information isn't timely

Information isn't accurate

Your information can only be as good as the data you're working with. Accuracy of information relies on robust processes supporting information gathering and management.

If data isn't collected and updated regularly, it's hard to have confidence in the accuracy of that information.

> Being able to communicate confidently, knowing your information is accurate is not only empowering, but can have significant business impacts.

Accessibility of information

Accessibility of information refers to how well stakeholders can absorb and interpret the information in front of them.

Sometimes words are the best way to provide important information and context. At other times, visual aids, such as dashboards and charts are the most effective way to communicate complex information.

Wrong level of information

Delivering the right level of information is important to getting the intended message through. Too much information can overwhelm, while too little can result in avoidable back and forth; either can leave the recipient scratching their head.

The relevancy of information will depend on the stakeholder you need to communicate with; the information they need, and why that information is important for them.

Information isn't timely

Information holds much more value when it is received at the right time.

> A lack of visibility within the facilities team creates significant delays in attaining required information which then limit its usefulness.

Technology puts infinite information at our fingertips, which creates an expectation from stakeholders that information can be delivered quickly. If information updates are delayed or out of date, these expectations aren't met.

This can leave stakeholders frustrated, and it can have a significant, negative impact on the business if decisions are based on outdated information. Being able to pull up accurate information in a timely manner allows you to go into stakeholder conversations with confidence.

Communicating with contractors and trades

Almost all facilities teams will leverage contractors and tradespeople as a part of regular operations. Communications with this group of stakeholders are key to meeting compliance obligations and safety.

It can be frustrating for facilitates teams when inefficient contractor communications result in delayed or incomplete works. Similarly, it is frustrating for contractors when poor communications result in wasted time.

To meet compliance obligations, there must be a record of all relevant contractor accreditations, licences, insurances and permits before contractors set foot in the facility. In some cases, this will also extend to inductions and other safety certificates.

> **Contractors and trades require specific information about the job they are being brought in to complete. Failing to communicate the details of the work effectively can result in delays or mistakes, wasting time and money.**

Common challenges

Information accuracy and accessibility

Continual back and forth to get the required information when work is required is inefficient and frustrating for both parties.

Missing information is at best annoying, and at worse, can cause avoidable delays, or pose a threat to compliance and safety.

As part of their work, contractors and trades record important information that becomes part of the work record. Knowing what work was previously done on an asset, and making this information available to those doing the work, can save you valuable time and money.

Wrong level of information

Contractors need to know exactly what work is required and what the expectations are around that work. They need to know what exactly they're solving, where the job is, how to get there, and if there are any permits or inductions required.

With the vast amount of information required for contractors, it can be easy to under-deliver, or provide piecemeal information that becomes difficult to access.

Even something as simple as providing a site map can ensure contractors perform their work in a more timely manner. Pulling together this volume of information every time work is required makes it is easy for some information to be forgotten or missed.

Improving communications for contractors and trades

Information accuracy and accessibility

You need to be able to clearly communicate what information is required from tradespeople working at your facilities, whether they're part of your own facilities team or external contractors. Details about their licences, insurances and accreditations must be recorded, and both parties aware of expiry dates.

Saving these important details in a secure platform, against the relevant contractor can greatly improve the availability of the information. This is important to meeting compliance requirements around contractor safety, and for insurance purposes.

FMI Works allows contractors to upload required documentation to the platform. For contractors, this makes it clear what information is required from the outset. Each time work is assigned to that contractor, the system can check that the required documentation has been uploaded, so it isn't necessary to chase it up every time.

Level of information

Providing contractors and trades with information packages helps to ensure they have the details they need. When details can be stored and accessed from a dedicated FM platform, they can be linked to the work order alongside details such as work histories and any photos.

When contractors charge on a time basis, it is important they have all the information upfront to get to the job as efficiently as possible. Failing to provide this information can result in wasted budget, paying for contractors time spent finding their way around.

> In FMI Works, relevant informational packages can be attached to the work order, with key information about the facility. Ensuring information such as parking details, sitemaps, building access and important phone numbers are provided in an accessible manner. Having these information packages loaded into the platform means they don't need to be remembered and recreated every time.

This can also include information on potential hazards, such as buildings with asbestos. When information packages include location details, you can be confident that all contractors going to that location receive this important safety information.

Communicating with facility users
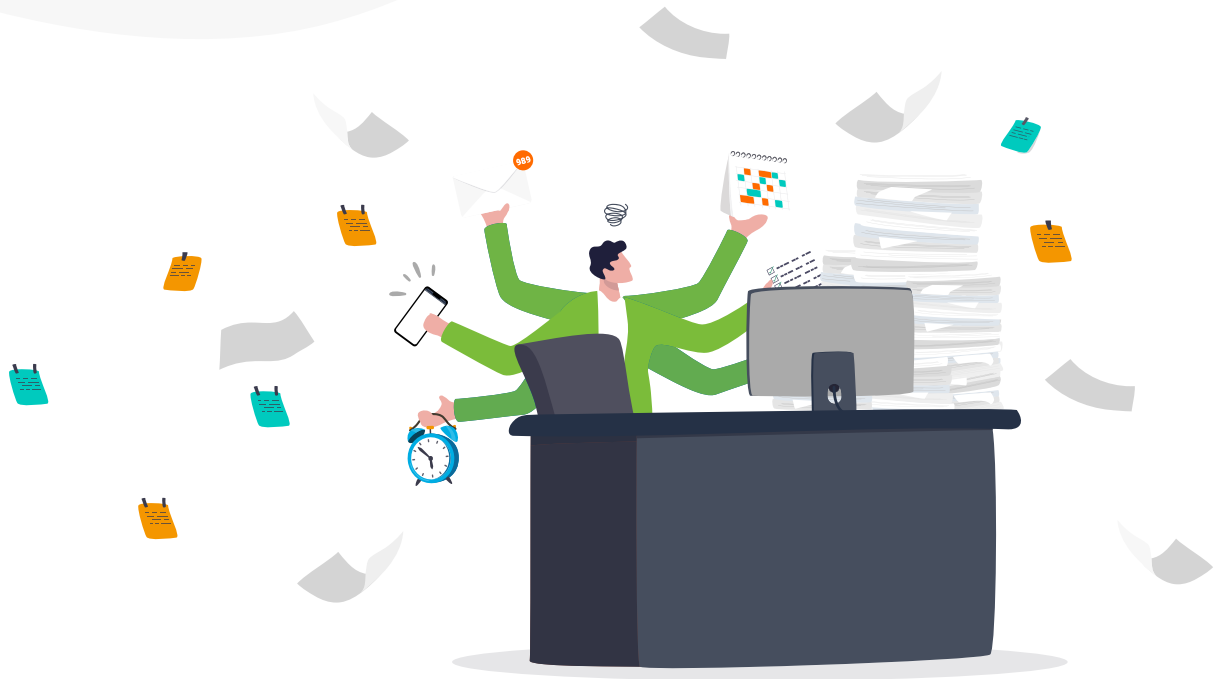
Facility users are the customers of the facilities management function, which has become increasingly service-centric. Effective communication is a key ingredient of great customer service, and the foundation of a constructive relationship with facility users.

Communications between facilities teams and facility users usually centre around the work request process, as this is the primary point of interaction. If communications are ineffective, they can be a point of frustration for both parties.

Ineffective communications can result in additional administration work for the facilities team, due to follow up and duplicate requests.

By rethinking these communications you can transform the work request process into a positive experience for both parties.

Common challenges

Information accuracy and accessibility

Work requests need to contain specific information so the work can be actioned by the facilities team. However, if facility users don't know what to include in a request, it's likely that essential information will be missing, necessitating follow up questions by the facilities team.

If work request processes are unclear or cumbersome, there's a chance that facility users will fail to log requests at all. This can mean the facilities team may not be aware of these issues for a significant time, during which the issue will be left unresolved.

These problems are common when email is the primary channel for raising work requests. When submitting a work request, the facility user is faced with a blank email, and it is up to them to pre-empt what information the facilities team needs.

> **As a channel for submitting requests, email cannot offer any meaningful information to the requester about the details required by the facilities team.**

Additionally, if emailed requests are sent to individual inboxes, they may not be accessible by the whole facilities team. The flip side of this is if requests are sent to multiple inboxes, and facilities team members are unsure about who is picking up the job.

Information timeliness

Facilities users expect to have their request acknowledged, and to get status updates on submitted requests quickly and easily. When requests are siloed in email inboxes, visibility over these works is limited, affecting how quickly this information can be provided.

Users also need to be proactively informed when work is going to interrupt their use of the facility, and need to know if there are hazards present in the facility. For example, if a lift is non-operational due to scheduled servicing, or if there is a water leak creating a slip hazard.

> **Proactive communication with facility users via broadcast messages empowers users to allow for any interruptions and reduces the likelihood of unnecessary queries.**

Improving communications with facility users

Information accuracy and accessibility

Creating templates for work requests is an easy way to support facility users to include all relevant information for the facilities team. When work requests are managed through a system like FMI Works, the user fills out a form based on a predefined template when raising a request.

> **These templates take the guesswork out of the equation for facility users and ensure the facilities team has the information needed to action the request.**

Providing visibility about work in progress through a self-service portal directly to requesters can further help to improve visibility. This increased visibility can then lead to fewer follow up requests or requests for updates, reducing the communication burden for the facilities team.

Providing self-service information on open jobs is especially important in facilities with shift workers. Being able to source information themselves is helpful for facility users whose schedule doesn't align with that of the facilities team.

Information timeliness

When requests are handled through a single channel, visibility of work is increased, and real-time updates are available to facilities users.

Request acknowledgements are an easy communication to automate through FMI Works.

> **A simple notification email, sent shortly after a request lands, helps to instil confidence, and set the engagement off on the right foot.**

Simple automations, such as automated emails when a job moves to a new status, can help to reduce follow up requests. By proactively notifying requesters of updates to their job, and offering self-service updates, the need for follow up requests can largely be eliminated.
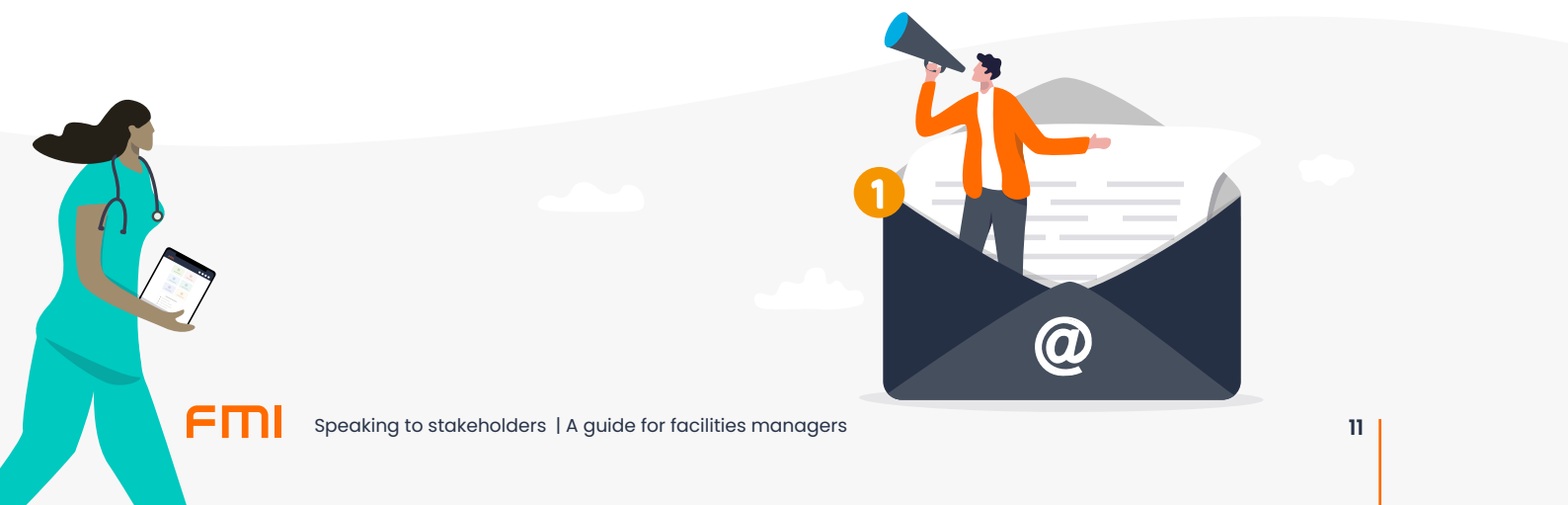
Communicating with management

A key part of a facilities manager's job is communicating important information to upper levels of management. These communications provide an opportunity to demonstrate the connection between the work of the facilities team and the strategic goals of the organisation.

Facilities management is imperative to the success of organisations. Strategic goals may vary between organisations, but all organisations require safe, functional spaces in which to operate.

Business continuity, and the achievement of those strategic goals is often dependent on the facilities team identifying and managing risks within the business.

> Facilities managers need to be able to communicate effectively with decision makers about identified risks, and make the case for the resources required to manage these risks.

Common challenges

Wrong level of information

Facilities managers excel at day-to-day problem solving and have a detailed understanding of the operations of the facilities under their care. This equips facilities managers with a lot of context around trends and abnormalities in facilities data.

When communicating with management, facilities managers can sometimes tend to providing an overwhelming amount of detail, which impairs the effectiveness of the communication.

> **Ineffective communications to management can result in resource requests being denied, or in some cases, problems being neglected due to a lack of understanding.**

If this continues for over time, it can leave the facilities team feeling frustrated and unappreciated, and the organisation exposed to excessive risk.

Information accuracy and accessibility

When communicating upwards, it is important to consider that these stakeholders likely receive a multitude of communications from various parts of the business. To get the attention you need, ensure you connect the information to the strategic goals of the organisation.

> **Stakeholders in managerial positions are often looking for a big picture, rather than detailed information. Attaining this kind of information relies upon information being available to the facilities team in a format that can be analysed effectively.**

For example, your stakeholders might not necessarily need a breakdown of cost for every job a trade has done. They would likely be more interested in the total cost of outsourced trade jobs, vs the cost of hiring that trade in-house.

This is a challenge for teams relying on spreadsheets to store and access data. Identifying trends over time for example, would require sourcing information from multiple spreadsheets and collating them, and translating to a graphical format.

Improving communication with management

Level of information

To improve the level of information included in communications up the chain, consider the strategic impacts of the information you're sharing.

The work facilities teams do every day helps to manage risk, and keeps the organisation open for business. These factors mean that there is almost always a connection to be found between that work, and the strategic goals of the organisation.

Sometimes it is easier to start by thinking about the potential impacts of inaction when looking for these connections. Without accessible proof that critical systems compliance requirements have been met, the likelihood of a failed audit, and subsequent shutdown, is increased. In some industries, an inability to produce this proof could result in a loss of funding from governing bodies.

Information accuracy and accessibility

Improving the accuracy and accessibility of the information you are communicating to management starts with good data practices. Think about how easy it is to collate and analyse data to identify trends.

When presenting the information to stakeholders, consider the context those stakeholders are likely to have. While you might be dealing directly with day-to-day operations, they're less likely to be "in the weeds".

These communications should allow stakeholders to quickly understand key concepts.

By using visual aids such as graphs, you can provide information in context. Leveraging this format makes it easy for stakeholders to understand the information without being involved in the day-to-day.

Building a strong foundation for communications
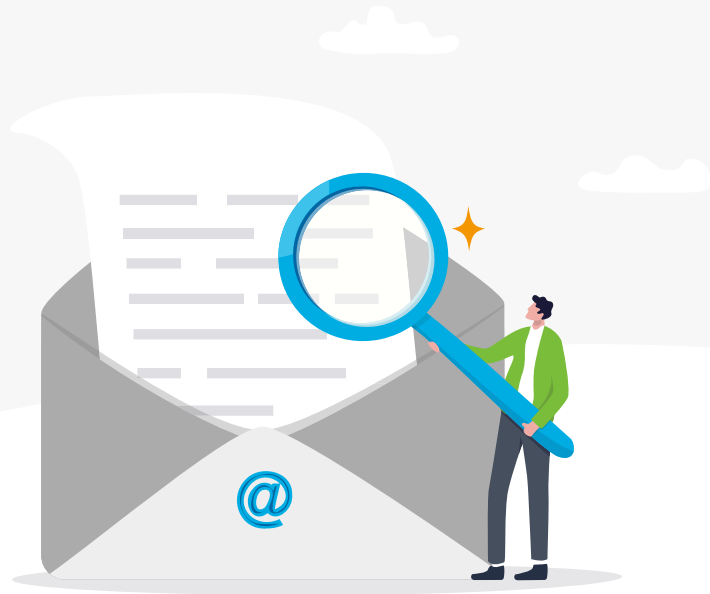
Effective communication is only possible when those communications are based on accurate information that you and your team can access in a timely manner.

Improving communications with stakeholder groups has to start with improving communications within the facilities team.

> **A lack of accessible, accurate information within the facilities team can lead to problems such as double-handling work, missed jobs and damaged stakeholder relationships.**

The accuracy and timeliness of information relies upon having robust processes in place to support information gathering and management.

Team members need to know what work is in progress, what is scheduled, and which jobs are assigned to them. This can be a challenge when there is a lack of visibility over work, or when work orders are being sent to individual inboxes.

Whenever work is completed, details of that work need to be recorded and securely stored. These records are necessary not only for compliance, but to support effective communications.

> **For many facilities teams, issues with information accessibility and accuracy stem from poor data management.**

Without clear processes for information collection and information storage, it's nearly impossible to improve your information, and thus communications.

Start with a single source of truth

Information needs to be stored in "a single source of truth", to avoid losing hours searching for information that may or may not exist. When information is always updated in a single place, the accuracy of that information is improved because it is the only place where updated information will go.

> **Many high-performing facilities management teams leverage FMI Works as their single source of truth.**

Through the ease of processing work requests, and managing planned maintenance in the platform, data collection can be engrained organically into everyday processes.

Our team are experienced with assisting facilities teams to communicate effectively with their stakeholder groups. From improving processes, to setting up automated communications, our team can support you every step of the way.
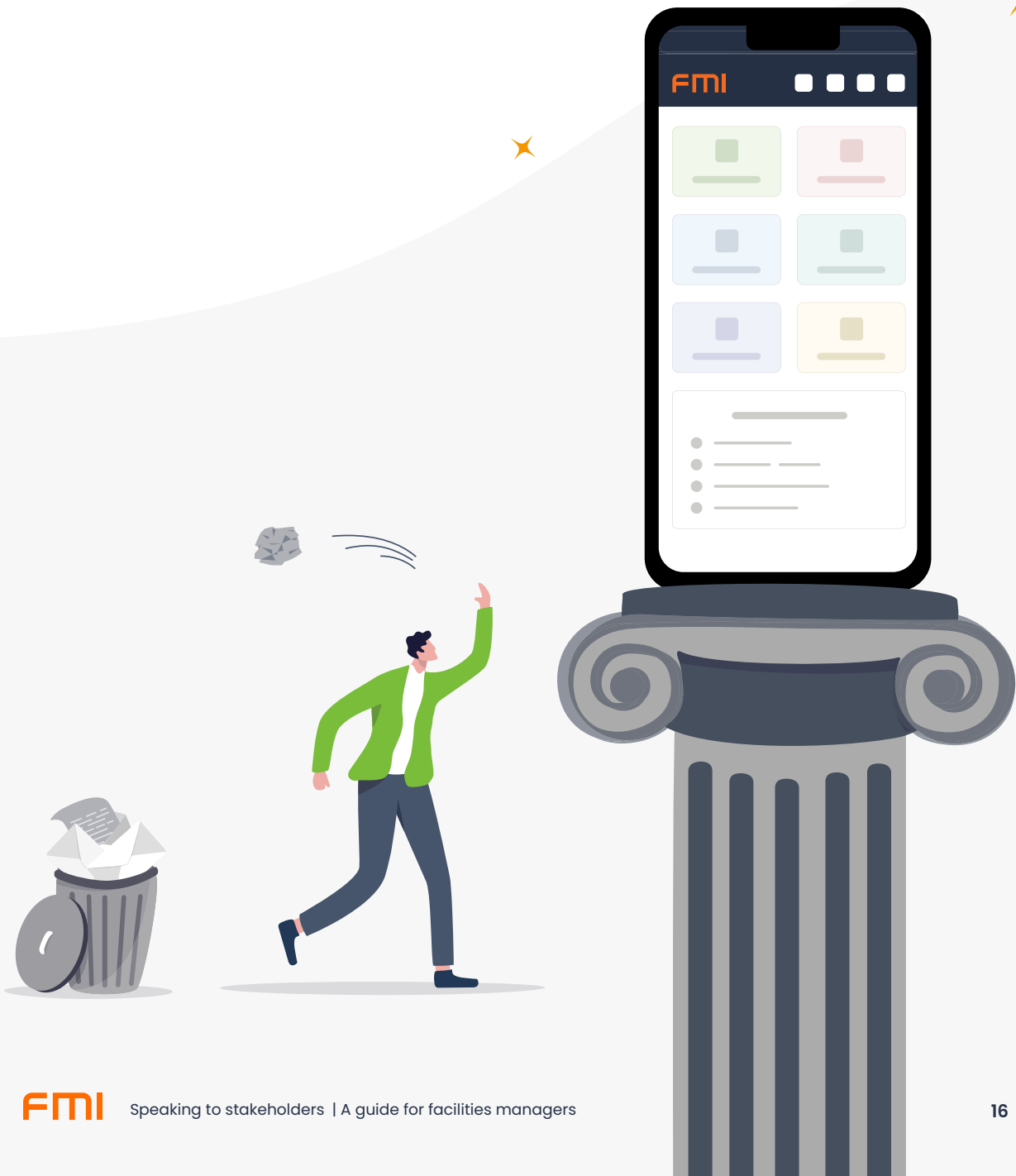
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Need to improve your facilities communications?

At FMI, we've worked with facilities managers for decades, and have seen a growing trend where communication has become an increasingly valued part of a facilities manager's role.

To learn more about FMI Works, and how it can help lessen the burden of communications, visit our website today.

fmiworks.com