

*"It is the facility managers or the world who will successfully implement environmental policies—or not."*

*~ Shelia Sheridan*



*The Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort*

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**E**arlier this year, a new Caribbean regional award for Green Globe-certified properties was unveiled. It would be based on the benchmarking data submitted by a facility for the past two years to Green Globe ([www.greenglobe.org](http://www.greenglobe.org)) and reviewed by EarthCheck ([www.earthcheck.org](http://www.earthcheck.org)). Subsequently, the "Best Overall Performer Award" was granted to Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort in Aruba, a property that achieved best practice status in all indicators and performed significantly above the best practice level. The Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa, also in Aruba, earned the "Most Improved Performer" for demonstrating the largest improvement in achieving the Green Globe benchmarks over two years.

The announcement of this new sustainable management award for the Caribbean region is a recent example of the hospitality industry's increasing focus on the worldwide management of safe, healthy, productive and environmentally sensitive facilities.

## Global Facilities Management

While serving as chair of IFMA from 2002-2004, Sheila Sheridan recognized there was little synergy at the international level for members to learn sustainable facility management best practices from each other. She and her international colleagues observed there were many large facilities managers around the world intent on implementing green building management practices, but they often lacked the right tools to succeed. In response, IFMA, along with the British and Australian national facility management associations, established a global association in 2006 called Global FM ([www.globalfm.org](http://www.globalfm.org)). The goal would be to help worldwide national facility management associations grow and become self-sufficient within their own countries.

## About Global FM

Global FM is a worldwide alliance of member-centered facility management organizations providing leadership in the advancement of the facilities management profession. Its purpose is to develop and promote knowledge, standards and education in the facilities management profession and, using one voice, collaborate on the development and means to share the progress of facilities management, knowledge and standards. The organization promotes broad collaboration between national facility management associations and supports the formation of national groups where none exist.

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Other key objectives of Global FM include utilizing the diverse cultures and strengths of each organization to enhance the skills of members and supporting countries that wish to form facilities management-related organizations where none are yet established. Its emergence onto the world forum in 2006 will bridge the gap that exists in the development and influence of quality facilities management at the international level. This in turn will support the agendas of national facility management associations and further the value of collaboration and communication among their respective members.

## Top Global Challenges: Compliance Complexity

According to Sheridan, when Global FM looked at the top issue challenging facility managers around the world today, they discovered it was "compliance complexity" which, when examined in detail, entails meeting the challenges of sustainability and climate change.

A parallel concern alongside compliance complexity is a company's ability to maintain a consistent quality of management across a variety of facilities operated in numerous countries. Thus, meeting the key challenges of sustainability and climate change have created a new urgency for establishing better global standards of facilities management.

"Right now, for example, when a U.S. firm goes out and purchases and maintains a building in another country, they face the challenge of dealing with facility management standards that vary widely," Sheridan said. "Increasing the quality of facility management standards in all countries benefits everyone."

## United States Impact

The globalization of facilities management, along with the primary challenges of compliance complexity (including sustainability and climate change), significantly impacts the providers of green building products and services in the U.S.

For example, Sheridan notes that green facilities management is making gains at the company level in the U.S. In most other countries, however, national governments lead the way in establishing energy efficiency policies. The result is that comparatively, a U.S. green building is typically lower in sustainable practices than a green building within the European Union (EU). Therefore, the emergence of global facilities management can help American property managers learn some good lessons about

sustainability from their European counterparts.

Another example of the impact of global facilities management on U.S. green products and service providers relates to mitigating the environmental threats posed by climate change.

"The facilities management professional is the person ultimately responsible for implementing company actions to address climate change," Sheridan said. "There is corporate responsibility at the executive level, of course, but that is really just words. The actions have to be taken by facility managers. They have to change processes and set benchmarks that help protect the environment. They are the ones on the frontlines implementing the policies and improving them."

Sheridan's observations mirror my own. In my role as president of The Ashkin Group, providing expertise on

Green Cleaning Programs around the world, it is my experience that the vast majority of facilities managers in any country want to do what is right. To succeed, they need support from the top and, ultimately, from their clients and building occupants. Also key is establishing a means to communicate to facility managers that there is value to what they do and to compliment them on making a difference.

When you think about it, Sheila Sheridan is right. It really is the facility managers of the world along with the providers of green products and services such as Green Cleaning—who have a significant responsibility for the successful implementation of policies that will help protect environment.

The Ashkin Group is one of the nation's leading consulting firms working to green the cleaning industry. A 25+ year veteran of the cleaning industry, Steve Ashkin is the author of *Green Cleaning for Dummies* and a tireless advocate for environmentally preferable cleaning products. Often referred to as the "father of green cleaning," Ashkin has played a pivotal role in setting industry standards, promoting environmentally preferable products, and advocating for socially responsible practices. For more information or to subscribe to his e-newsletter, DestinationGreen, visit [www.ashkingroup.com](http://www.ashkingroup.com).