

## **Cultural integration of external service provider employees into client workplaces**

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# **Cultural integration of external service provider employees into client workplaces**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The study explores the complexities of how external service provider employees culturally fit within client workplaces.

**Methodology:** It uses the facilities management (FM) industry to apply this research concept and was conducted using a qualitative multi-method design. A combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were the qualitative methods used to collect the data.

**Findings:** The major findings of this study are that organisational socialisation can be successful in socialising external service provider staff into the client workplace despite a current unawareness of its use. This study has developed a framework that can be used to achieve this integration if client organisations and service providers work together to socialise external service provider staff.

**Value:** The findings of this study will appeal to anyone working within the service industry that manages the interface between external service provider staff and the client workspace.

**Keywords:** Cultural Fit, Organisational Culture, Organisational Socialisation, Service Quality, Facilities Management.

## **Introduction**

A report released by The Business Services Association (BSA, 2014) states that the outsourced and business services sector have a current turnaround of £199 billion and employ 3.3 million people. Outsourcing was responsible for GBP79 billion of the UK's gross domestic product in 2007/2008 and an employer of over 1.2 million people (DeAnne, 2008). A look at those two facts will reveal that outsourcing has grown considerably in under a decade. Facilities Management (FM) workplaces across Great Britain nearly doubled between 1998 and 2008 (Asset skills, 2010). The FM/ Real Estate sectors are responsible for a Gross Value Added (GVA) figure of GBP303, 179 million and 149,325 sector establishments across the UK and a

workforce of approximately 978,000 with the vast majority of these involved in soft services (UKCES, 2012). The 2013 AMA research report on FM outsourcing also valued the corporate market for outsourced bundled services at approximately GBP9.5 billion with the possibility of increasing to GBP10 billion in 2014(FM World 2013). This report further discusses the establishment of FM outsourcing in the corporate sector showing the importance of minding today's FM.

This study provides a significant contribution to knowledge and to the service delivery sector of FM by applying a theoretical framework on organisational socialisation to external service provider employees in FM companies. It intends to explore the current organisational socialisation process practiced in FM service companies and client organisations.

The popular trend of outsourcing non-core aspects of a business has several advantages and disadvantages (Belcourt, 2006). It is quite obvious that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages but some of its disadvantages can cost businesses more than they have anticipated. It is normal that we expect staff in organisations to reflect the culture and brand that the business sells. Staff cover everyone who performs a function, either paid or unpaid, on behalf of the business. They are seen as the first point of contact for the business by customers and organisations often train them in the prevalent culture to ensure that they are well represented.

These employees more often than not help shape the impression customers have of the organisation by their delivery of service, also known as 'moment of truth'. Moment of truth is the point during an interaction with an organisation that enables the customer form or change their perception of service (Soderlund and Julander, 2009). This perception can either be negative or positive but it is difficult trying to change this perception once it has been formed.

In their research on customer satisfaction in FM, Tucker and Pitt (2009) discovered that there was a significant relationship between the customers' perception of people involvement/ cultural fit and service delivery. These two seemingly separate factors are assessed by the customer on the same level. This signifies that a team that presents a cohesive front to the customer they interact with and shows the necessary skills and abilities required to deliver the service needed will be seen as efficient by their clients. They must be polite, responsive, communicate well and know all that is necessary to delivering their job while at the same time advancing the

organisation. The use of 'cultural fit' aptly describes the proper cultural socialisation of employees where socialisation is "the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organisational role" (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979); and is a new term to FM. While these customers might not realise what this means, the service organisation is made aware that the employee's degree of involvement in the organisation directly affects customer perception of service received.

This shows how important the customers' perception of the organisation is. The modern organisation is aware of this and strives to ensure customers are satisfied and new customers feel welcome. They improve their chances by training their employees in the culture of the organisation, how they work and what is expected of every new employee. This process is also known as organisational socialisation. Review of literature does not show this process for external service provider staff as it does for in-house staff.

The socialisation process for external service provider staff is far more complex than that of in-house staff. There are always a minimum of two employers involved in an outsourcing contract: the service provider and the client organisation the external service provider staff is detailed to work with. In several instances, external service provider employees may work for more than one client organisation. Mullins (2010) work on the matrix structure is very useful in explaining the position of the external service provider staff in the service organisation and the client organisation. The question of whose responsibility it is one of the major deterrents to socialisation. Other barriers such as lack of time, financial constraints, staff reluctance to participate and difficulties overcoming language barriers can make socialising external service provider staff a minefield for the unprepared organisation (UKCES, 2012).

External service provider staff are not always seen as a part of the team and in some instances, they might have a contract of 6 months or less. This makes it difficult to invest in them as the benefits are usually spread out over time and the high rate of turnover makes organisations skittish. Things are different today. Service contracts now run for 2-5 years (Cotts, 2010) or even more in some cases making organisational socialisation necessary for every employee regardless of work status. Outsourcing today is no longer an isolated business; it is a partnership between two or more organisations all seeking to achieve their individual goals. This motivates all involved parties more as any clog in the wheel of the partnership is seen as a barrier to success.

The socialisation process which varies by organisation needs to be adapted to suit the peculiar situation of the external service provider employee. The knowledge of if and how FM companies and their clients successfully socialise an external service provider employee, which enables them perform at optimum demand and achieve their goals is the critical aim of this study.

## **Theoretical background**

### ***FM services***

The service sector in the UK is currently responsible for 77.7% of the national GDP which includes financial and health services, public, private and the 'third' sectors (CIA World fact book, 2012). With that overwhelming percentage and the need for efficient management of their physical premises, these organisations seek avenues to maximise output from their facilities while reducing running costs (Kurdi *et al.*, 2011). This explains the need for an efficient FM function.

FM is a profession that encompasses multiple disciplines to ensure functionality of the built environment by integrating people, place, process, and technology (IFMA, 2007). Pitt and Tucker (2008) have defined it as "the integration and alignment of the non-core services, including those relating to premises, required to operate and maintain a business to fully support the core objectives of the organisation". This definition shows that FM should be streamlined to provide facility and non-core services to an organisation. Situations such as reactive maintenance are not ideal when considering FM if it is to be effective. FM has evolved to become a component of the business value chain, providing most services which directly relate to business indicators e.g. customer satisfaction (Becker, 1990).

FM typically covers the non-core but crucial services of the organisation such as cleaning, maintenance, ICT, catering and security. To better monitor these services and reduce costs, these services get outsourced to the service provider with the most favourable contract (Kurdi *et al.*, 2011). Outsourcing purchases products or services from sources that are external to the organisation, and also transfers the responsibility of the physical business function and often the associated knowledge (tacit and codified) to the external organisation (McCarthy and Anagnostou, 2004). Staff involved in these non-core services have roles: clean office premises,

fully functional facilities and friendly staff which when successfully managed, often improve customer perception (Tucker and Pitt, 2009; Chiang, and Birtch, 2009).

### ***Influence of culture***

Culture is “a pattern of basic assumptions-invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration.” (Schein, 1985). It is what becomes accepted as the norm for everyone under its influence and provides the standard by which they relate to their environment. Culture is the underlying bedrock that defines a society and provides the moral, social, religious, economic and physical guidance for everyone connected to it. Culture affects how we work, what we think, our relationships and even our relaxation periods and methods to a great extent. It becomes embedded in our natures and often unnoticeable which is why anthropologists often spend several years with a people in an attempt to understand and document what drives them.

Culture is so ingrained in humans that what we see as our reasoning pattern, is really internalised culture (Hall, 1976). We are as unaware of it as the next person is unaware of theirs. It is bred into our bones unconsciously and forms a basis for how we operate and deal with others. Culture is such a powerful tool which when adapted and adopted with purpose, changes the way everyone under the influence of that culture think. Culture follows us wherever we find ourselves; school, social gatherings and work. Where work is concerned, culture is imbibed when a new employee joins an organisation as he/she absorbs the pre-existing culture. This is important as it enables the employees understand the goals of the organisation and key into the strategy of the leadership for success. This is perhaps routine for most staff that are fully employed in-house by an organisation but will be more challenging for the external service provider staff who will grapple with the cultures of both the service provider and the client organisation.

The current wave of interest in organisational culture dates back to the 1980's (Alvesson, 2002). The possibility that managerial issues could be easily resolved by successfully managing the people in that organisation was an exciting one which CEO's and managers pursued wholeheartedly. Organisational culture became a fad which gave birth to several theories and frameworks on organisational behaviour. This is further explained in chapter three.

Everyone taking up a new job comes with different expectations, goals, attitudes and ethics which are borne of the culture they have acquired from birth up till their last place of employment. (Buelens *et al*, 2006; Cox, 1994). They are also highly likely to meet an already established culture at their new place of employment except where that company is a new start. Thus, organisational culture is made up of more than one subculture as there are likely various sets of professionals with varied backgrounds working in any given organisation (Brooks, 2009). This leads every organisation to establish for itself whether consciously or otherwise a governing and overriding pattern of work that enables them work on similar wavelengths and deliver their set goals.

There is no agreed definition of organisational culture by the various researchers who have studied the subject. The business, anthropological and sociological perspectives adopt different approaches to culture and therefore organisational culture (Gustav, 2012). Brooks (2009) argues that strong cultures exist in organisations which exhibit a close relationship between themselves and their environment. The best societies therefore had the strongest cultures and routines which held them bound in the system passed down in time. This system would then form the basis from which business and financial decisions can be made. Schein (1985) also defines organisational culture as existing on different levels.

- The core at which lie people's assumptions and beliefs which influence our 'common sense' view of the organisational world.
- Cultural values which lie at the intermediate level; and,
- At the surface, culture manifests itself as behaviour.

For the purpose of this study, organisational culture will be defined as a dynamic and complex system of social patterns that govern the mechanism of core beliefs and assumptions, values and behavioural rituals by which an organisation relates with itself and external bodies. 'Dynamic and complex' because of the layers of culture that are blended together to become the 'mechanism of core beliefs' or an internalised code of conduct. 'Values and behavioural rituals' are the acceptable criteria which the organisation and its staff assess themselves and others. This cultural behaviour is not automatically imbibed and can only be learned. The degree to which an employee inculcates this culture is known as 'cultural fit' and will also be explained.

### ***Cultural socialisation and FM***

Socialisation provides new recruits with a set pattern of behaviour they can emulate to enable them to blend into the organisation (Buchanan, 2010) in essence; organisational socialisation is the key to ensuring a seamless entry of newly employed staff. (Ge *et al.*, 2010).

Newly employed staff are able to integrate into the organisation through training and managerial interventions (Brooks, 2009) and by watching more experienced employees. The greatest risk to company success both financially and socially is a dilution of its traditional method of getting results. Socialisation of new recruits is currently the best way to preserve these traditions.

Several theories currently exist on the best socialisation process for employees (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). Not all of these frameworks are applicable to the external service provider employee as they have been designed to suit various work scenarios. Several were produced during the industrial age when employees could start and retire from the same organisation. The current social age has employees moving on to the next challenge after a few years in a bid for professional advancement and growth. This makes the use of early socialisation models difficult except they are adapted to the unique circumstances of the external service provider staff.

Many FM organisations prefer to outsource these non-core services to professional service providers and concentrate on hiring employees who have a direct impact on their goals. This often results in external service provider employees from different providers who likely have no idea what the company's goals are and who might come into the company with pre-ingrained culture in them from their employers. Whilst Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) believe the employee's commitment to their contracting organisation might actually improve their commitment to the client organisation, there is still a need to socialise the newly external service provider employee. UKCES (2012) agrees by reporting that investment in staff through accredited training activities can make individuals feel like valued members of the company.



The discrepancy in the cultures of these two organisations may cause the external service provider employee to deliver below target and find it difficult to integrate with the client organisation while an in-house colleague blends in with relative ease. This difference in the degree of congruence between an outsourced FM employee and the client organisation will be termed ‘FM Cultural Fit’. A higher ‘fit’ level makes it difficult or even impossible for outsiders to distinguish between the in-house and the external service provider employee. ‘FM Cultural Fit’ will be used to determine if the discrepancy between both organisational cultures is been managed, how it is being managed and if the management is done by the FM organisation or the client organisation.

The current gap identified above in the field of FM shows the importance of employee management as a key to achieving KPI’s (Key Performance Index) and delivering quality service as agreed in a contract and as expected by the customer. An important theme that arose during the examination of these models is that the socialisation process takes place in three stages: Pre-socialisation, In-socialisation and Post-socialisation (table 1).

Table 1: Organisational socialisation models theories.

Organisational Socialisation Models		Degree of adaptability to study.	Action
<b>Buchanan’s Stage Model (1974).</b>	<b>Three Early Career (Buchanan 1974).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The basic features of this model have an In-socialisation stage but do not include what happens before the socialisation process.</li> <li>This model bases organisational socialisation on a 5-year plan which will not be practical in the ever changing field of FM.</li> <li>Employs formal, sequential and fixed tactics</li> </ul>	Use relevant features of model in a substantially reduced timeframe.
<b>Feldman’s Stage Model (Feldman 1976b)</b>	<b>Three Model 1976a,</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feldman’s model is one of the most applicable to the FM sector as its stages can be adjusted to fit the outsourced FM staff.</li> <li>The anticipatory socialisation stage or Pre-socialisation stage here is relevant to all new employees and should be utilised in training all new staff as it discusses what happens before the socialisation process begins</li> <li>The second stage is similar to Buchanan’s second stage and</li> </ul>	The anticipatory socialisation stage will be useful in the creation of a new model for external service provider employees as this will be useful in starting the socialisation

		<p>so can be merged. The expected outcomes should also be detailed to ensure that the desired output has been achieved or create room for change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employs formal and sequential tactics</li> </ul>	process.
<b>Pascale's Stage (Pascale 1984)</b>	<b>Seven Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pascale's model is not for the typical external service provider employee who is placed to do a specific duty in an organisation for the duration of a contract.</li> <li>• Employs sequential, serial and formal tactics of socialisation</li> <li>• Has a recruitment level that selects only employees who 'fit' the organisation.</li> <li>• It does not have a defined post-socialisation stage.</li> </ul>	The sixth step may be included in the new socialisation model as folklore is an excellent way to present organisational culture to employees and customers alike.
<b>Schein's Stage Model (Schein 1978).</b>	<b>Three Socialisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This model expects the laying of false expectations by both parties which does not always have to be especially where pertinent issues are discussed amongst all parties. In FM, the contract should be honoured by the FM Company, the client and the external service provider staff.</li> <li>• It has a Pre-socialisation stage but expects it to be disappointing to the employee after work commences. It also has an In-socialisation stage which is necessary for a well-adjusted socialisation process but skips the Post-socialisation stage.</li> <li>• Employs informal and sequential socialisation tactics</li> </ul>	The acceptable aspects will be incorporated into the new framework.
<b>Wanous' Integrative Approach to Stages of Socialisation (Wanous 1980)</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This model picked the best points from the other models and makes it stages succinct. It also has a well-defined In-socialisation stage but skips both the Pre and the Post-socialisation stages.</li> <li>• Employs the formal, individual and sequential tactics</li> </ul>	It will be useful as a basis for this research with the best pieces incorporated into the new framework.

The Pre-socialisation stage is what occurs before the employee begins work and comprises what they anticipate the organisation and their duties to be. Only two of the models (Feldman, Schein) have this stage. From their models, the reality is mostly different from the expectations.

The In-socialisation stage comprises what happens after socialisation has commenced up till the new employee has been integrated into the organisation. This is where the induction takes place and the organisation arranges a training schedule for the new employee/s. It ends when the

employee understands the culture of the organisation and has accepted their role in it. This stage was present in all the socialisation models and was the major focus as it is the most important aspect of the process. The Post-socialisation stage is what happens after the employee has been fully integrated into the organisation. It dwells on the ‘What happens next?’ question which these models have all failed to answer. It is important to the ‘cultural fit’ that a high integration level is maintained at all times especially where the employees are straddling more than one organisation at the same time.

## Methodology

This study desired to know *what* happens to the socialisation of external service provider staff and *how* to make it better. Essentially, it seeks to define the current socialisation processes undertaken by stakeholders in the FM delivery process through the identification of the variables that will emerge from data gathered. This will be best achieved by exploring the values these stakeholders classify as important and clarifying the place of the external service provider staff in these relationships.

A qualitative research method was selected for the collection of primary data in this study and it was determined that the aim of the research will be better met through a multi-method qualitative research rather than a mono-method qualitative, mono-method quantitative or mixed methods design. The qualitative approach enables rich material to emerge within parameters focused on the external service provider staff in client organisations. The data was gathered through face-to-face interviews (see the participant profile in table 2) to develop the first stage of the framework and then refined through focus groups and further interviews. The interviewees outlined below were selected using a purposeful sampling method.

Table 2: Profile for selected interview participants

Participant	Sector	Years of Experience	Current role	Stakeholder position
Participant 1	Health	10	EO	Client organisation
Participant 2	Construction	15	ORM	Client organisation

Participant 3	Consultancy	26	CT	Client organisation
Participant 4	Education	09	SFC	Client organisation
Participant 5	Entertainment/ Leisure	30	OD	Client organisation
Participant 6	Leisure	16.5	CM	Client organisation
Participant 7	Entertainment	26	HCS	Client organisation
Participant 8	Sports	17	FM	Client organisation
Participant 9	Health	06	MGR	Client organisation
Participant 10	Property	14	LCS	Client organisation
Participant 11	Facilities services	08	CSM	Service provider
Participant 12	Facilities services	17	MD	Service provider
Participant 13	Facilities services	31	FSL	Service provider
Participant 14	Facilities services	23	BDM	Service provider
Participant 15	Facilities services	25	SAM	Service provider
Participant 16	Facilities services	18	AD	Service provider

EO - Estate officer; ORM - Operational Relations Manager; CT – Consultant; SFC – senior facilities coordinator; od – operations director; cm – centre manager; hcs – head of corporate services; fm – facilities manager; MGR – Manager; LCS – lead cyclical surveyor; csm - Customer service manager; Md – managing director; FSL – field service leader; BDM – business development manager; sam - senior account manager; Ad – account director

There were 18 questions in total arranged to relax the participant first before asking the most important questions. To improve audio quality, two audio recorders were used for each interview to capture the session. The data was transcribed then subsequently analysed using NVivo software by coding the data into relevant key themes. The same principle was followed for the focus groups which were used to further refine the proposed framework and the profiles for the focus group participants can be seen in table 3. The same recording, transcription and analysis procedures used for the interviews were applied to the focus groups.

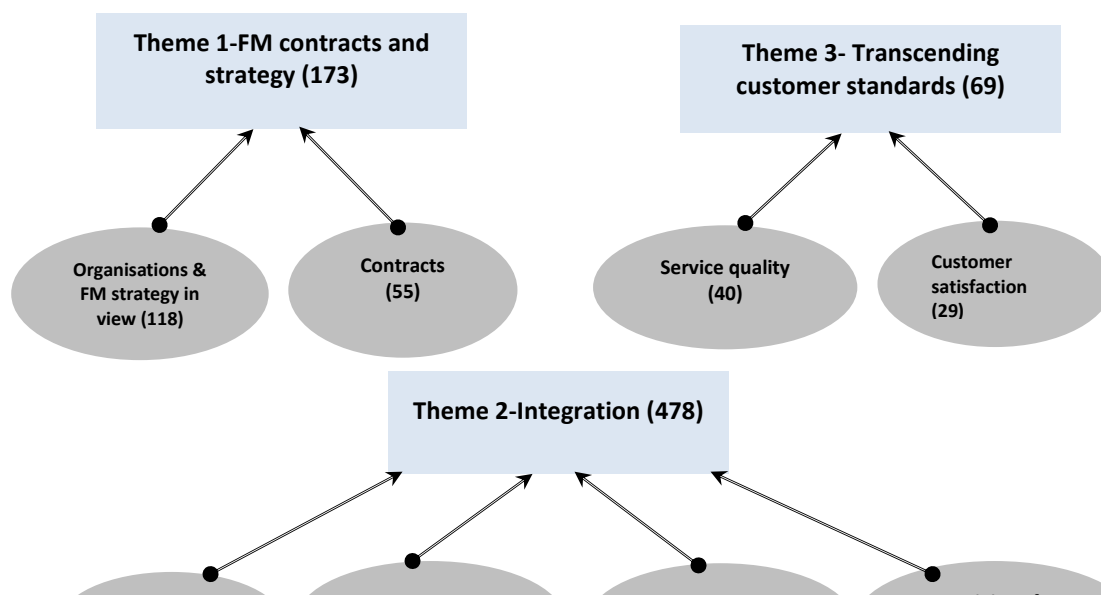
Table 3: Profile for selected focus group organisations and participants

Participant	Sector	Experience (yrs)	Current role	Stakeholder position
Participant 1	Legal	37	FM	Client organisation
Participant 2	Legal	28	BO	Service provider
Participant 3	Legal	08	BM	Client organisation

Participant 4	Legal	03	RMM	Service provider
Participant 5	Legal	02	OM	Service provider
Participant 6	Consultancy	15	HDM	Service provider
Participant 7	Consultancy	07	AFM	Client organisation
Participant 8	Consultancy	2.5	BS	Service provider
Participant 9	Education	24	MM	Client organisation
Participant 10	Education	17	MPS	Client organisation
Participant 11	Education	09+	HSM	Service provider
Participant 12	Housing	02	PS	Client organisation
Participant 13	Housing	03	DM	Client organisation
Participant 14	Housing	01	CC	Client organisation
Participant 15	Housing	14	LCS	Client organisation
Participant 16	Housing	10	BM	Service provider
RMM-Reactive Maintenance Manager; HDM-Helpdesk Manager; AFM-Assistant Facilities Manager; HSM-Health And Safety Manager; MPS-Maintenance Plan Supervisor;		MM-Maintenance Manager; MPS-Maintenance Plan Supervisor; PS-Property Services; DM-Direct Maintenance; CC-Compliance Coordinator;		LCS – Lead Cyclical Surveyor; BS-Building Surveyor; FM-Facilities Manager; BO-Business Owner; BM-Building Manager; OM-Operations Manager;

## Interview findings and discussion

The interview results revealed 3 major themes affecting the socialisation of external service provider employees where client organisation integration is concerned and a broad overview of the three themes and their components can be seen in figure 1.



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Figure 1: High and mid-level interview themes

***Theme 1-FM contracts and strategy***

Theme 1 with 173 passages of text comprises of all nodes that had information on FM, its role in the organisation, the strategy of the FM department, its staff, and FM contracts. Gaining understanding in this area shows how relevant FM is to today's organisation but even more importantly, we can see how the relationships between client organisations and service providers' work through the contracts they embark upon (table 4). Here, we also understand what organisations expect of their external service provider employees and information is provided by both the clients and the service providers. General characteristics give a universal feel for what is expected for example and show that most of these characteristics are not unachievable by the average employee. It is in fact what a standard organisation might expect of all employees whether internal or outsourced.

Table 4: Organisations and FM strategy in view

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Theme	Qualitative findings	Passages coded
Characteristics of interviewed organisations	It came across during the interviews that the FM scope is wide-ranging and that the participants all work in different organisational settings. The space used, the organisational structure, the contract types and lengths, the outsourced service needed, the organisational type and; what they demand for from service providers are examples of the differences amongst the organisations. This confirms initial suppositions that the framework needed for socialising external service provider staff must be flexible enough to fit the structure and culture of various organisational	21

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	types in order to be effective.	
Qualities organisations desire in external service provider staff	This refers to the qualities they want their staff to exhibit whether they are internal or outsourced. A key element was around trust, with one participant saying “we absolutely need to trust each other and we need them to be loyal to us. And we will in return be very loyal to them... And we need our contracted staff to be part of that team, to...be responsible to each other.”	33
Mutual understanding of vision and strategy	Embarking on a contract or partnership which will succeed requires both parties to understand what the other party is about and what they need from the association. The important basics of an organisation such as their vision and goals (both long and short term) need to be understood by the other organisation. This will prevent gross misunderstandings and help oil the relationship as there is a mutual awareness of essential requirements by all parties.	29
Recruitment process	The various ways the interviewed organisations recruit (“we try and get people young, so we can be looking for people from 17.” “as a contract manager we have the final say on who we outsource work to...” “in terms of for the recruitment process, we have an internal vacancies ... depending on the level really I suppose”) reinforce the need for a flexible framework that can be adapted to suit most organisations for a successful socialisation process.	19
Organisational structure and FM position	Organisations where FM are placed too low on the management chain or under another department will most likely suffer from budget and staff management issues which will directly affect external service provider staff under them.	3
Procurement is centrally done	This situation will be ideal where the FM unit has an input in the stating the skill set needed (for their department) and initial socialisation after hiring but this is not always the case.	2
Future direction for interviewees	This theme arose as a result of immediate future plans by interviewees to improve the blending in of the external service provider staff in their organisation and with advice on the best way to incorporate external service provider staff including how failure might be avoided.	6
On TUPE and terminated businesses	The challenges of TUPE was felt on 5 occasions, all by service provider’s interviewees.	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>118</b>

Several of the themes here are important issues that negotiating partners will need to agree upon

before the commencement or even the signing of a new contracts (table 5) as they will be instrumental in reducing conflicts that might arise after the partnership starts. This should be done by both parties or at the minimum; there should be an awareness of its need.

Table 5: Contracts

Theme	Qualitative findings	Passages coded
Contractual process, review and Implications of organisation size	The contractual process and review undertaken by organisations and the implications of organisation size on contracts can be a good way to determine that a socialisation framework is in place for external service provider employees. When client organisations review the policies of the other organisation, they can determine if a framework exists and decide to install one as a term of their contract before it is signed.	4
Length of contracts	The average length of contracts for FM average between 12 months- 5 years. "It can be anywhere between 12 months and 3 years. 3 years is a normal contract length" "we are allowed to keep a contract running for a maximum of three years" "we sign our contracts now, normally three to five years". Some other contracts go on for much longer e.g. 25-30 years whilst some really short ones may last just a couple of months	5
Number of contracts dealt with by individual and organisation	The participants showed a wide range of what they or their organisations manage and those with more responsibility might be more concerned about contract performance issues.	15
Types of services involved in organisation's contracts	The types of services involved in organisation's contracts (31 passages) was discussed by all the participants bar one, and the services rendered or received ran almost the whole gamut of the scope of FM as discussed.	31
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>

## ***Theme 2: Integration***

Theme 2 "integration" with 478 passages of text is the focal point of these interviews and in this context involves the cohesion of the various parts of a team to satisfy the needs of the customer and where possible, to exceed those needs. This high level theme has four minor themes, one of



which discusses the opinions of the interview participants on the creation of a socialisation framework. This theme, *opinion on socialisation frameworks*, shows the participants' view on the creation of a socialisation framework, its application and feasibility. The other three themes discuss socialisation in detail, based on the participants' views and introduce the concept of cultural fit to the discussion.

The *opinion on socialisation frameworks*, shows the participants' view on the creation of a socialisation framework, its application and feasibility. Essentially, it has several details on what is required in setting up the socialisation process (table 6).

Table 6: Opinion of socialisation frameworks

Theme	Qualitative findings	Passages coded
Applicability	This theme discussed who could use this framework and organisations that it would be suited for. Over half did believe it could be used by both client organisations and service providers. Some picked one or the other as they felt the responsibility should rest with one party solely.	27
Components	This theme sought the opinions of the participants on what components they thought might be necessary or useful to include in the framework. There was a general consensus that an initial period be set aside when the new staff resume to explain the goals and visions of the organisation and to lay out the work-related attributes expected of them. Other components need to include customer expectations, the work process and a role-specific induction, equality and diversity, health and safety, better co-operation, the same work wear where applicable, staff attitude should reflect the environment, code of conduct, creating buddy systems, weekly workshops and most interestingly; an induction before recruitment.	45
Feasibility	All participants believed that a socialisation framework would welcomed by their organisation.	26
Time frame	The time frame for a socialisation framework helps to establish a guideline for organisations to know when their internal or external service provider staff 'should be' integrated. Based on these varied answers, the timeframe for socialisation will decided by the client organisation in view.	31

<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>
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Socialisation (247 passages) is extensively discussed in the literature review from what it means to different frameworks that have been used to apply it to an organisation. It considers in detail what should happen during the socialisation of new staff in an organisation and their cultural fit in the organisation (table 7 and 8) and the interviewees were able to provide important information of the process in their organisations.

Table 7: Socialisation

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Qualitative findings</b>	<b>Passages coded</b>
Benefits and importance of socialisation	Socialisation has a major benefit: it brings cohesion to an organisation that might otherwise appear disjointed and unable to satisfy its customers' needs to the best of their ability.	22
Socialisation process	The socialisation process is the way and manner by which the external service provider staff are incorporated into the organisation. This information will reveal how, if at all the organisations socialise external service provider staff. It will also reveal if this socialisation method, where available is a standardised process or not. All the participants responded to this and had differing views on whether their organisation had a process or not.	51
Content of socialisation process	One obvious bit in this theme is the myriad ways organisations achieve socialisation. The organisations in this study work at different levels with some muddling along while others have a strict programme they follow. Most of the participants who responded to this theme did use the process to integrate external service provider staff. As a participant said: "the content is understanding our customer requirements".	24
Length of socialisation process	What should the length of a socialisation process be? What will be ideal for organisations to successfully integrate any staff into their workplace? According to the participants of this study, it takes their organisations one day, six months or is a constant ongoing process.	20
Is the socialisation of outsourced a positive and	Organisations and service providers are interested in a framework that socialises external service provider staff into the client organisation. This theme acted as a check to either confirm or discard this assumption. 15	19

plausible move	participants gave feedback on this and it was all positive.	
Responsibility for socialising external service provider staff	It was noted that it will be difficult to ascribe this responsibility to either client or service provider as organisations are different and what works for them will most likely be different as well but an awareness of what the other organisation has done is necessary.	23
Differences in service attitudes after socialisation	This theme exists to confirm if these changes occurred after the socialisation process for organisations that currently have one in place. The vast majority of participants believed there were positive differences after socialisation.	35
Barriers to socialising external service provider staff	Finances, human factors and TUPE are just some of the barriers the participants believed made socialisation of external service provider staff difficult.	33
Negative effects of socialising external service provider staff	According to the participants, in some cases the socialisation goes a little too well which leads to a total transfer of cultural identity. The external service provider staff begins to identify more with the client organisation and no longer see themselves as a staff of the service provider.	7
Similarities in both organisations socialisation processes	Where organisations have similar processes in socialising external service provider staff, there is likely to be less conflict and a higher degree of understanding.	5
Service providers	Service providers expressed that they are often willing to follow the lead of their client. This is only to be expected as their service is based on delivering what the client wants.	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>247</b>

Table 8: Cultural fit

Theme	Qualitative findings	Passages coded
Importance of cultural fit	For all of the participants, cultural fit appeared to be an elemental aspect. In reference to its importance, a participant stated “it’s absolutely fundamental, if you don’t integrate outsourced services you don’t get the best out of the partnership.”	48

Controlling external cultures	This theme looks at the ways organisations control external influences on their culture. The majority of the participant's believed that quick action was necessary to prevent culture dilution.	36
Partners who miss the cultural fit	Some participants noted the repercussions of not aligning the cultural fit between parties, which result in great financial impacts and possibly contract termination.	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>87</b>

Finally, interviewees favoured outsourcing and felt there were key advantages to it, although this was primarily a client organisation viewpoint (table 9).

Table 9: Outsourcing

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Qualitative findings</b>	<b>Passages coded</b>
Advantages of outsourcing	Excerpts from the interviews explain why outsourcing is beneficial to some organisations. "...staff shortages and limitations, by outsourcing you actually can still manage them." "One of the downsides of being in-house is the flexibility of your staff ...because we work with a head number." "A lot of the risk we can transfer from certain projects onto the contractor and otherwise it's on you if anything goes wrong."	9
Barriers to outsourcing	Organisations that do not have direct access to service providers due to location, miscommunication issues, trust or lack thereof and other reasons that might make them wary of outsourcing may develop a negative view of it.	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

### ***Theme 3: Transcending customer standards***

Awareness of what a customer desires and striving to surpass those needs and desires is a major part of the services organisations delivery today. This final theme with 69 passages of text is divided into two mid-level themes which look at what customers expect and meeting those standards. Service quality (table 10) shows that client organisations feel that they set and meet

service quality standards, whilst they also appreciated the importance of ensuring that customers are fully satisfied through their service delivery (table 11).

Table 10: Service quality

Theme	Qualitative findings	Passages coded
Setting and meeting service quality standards	Setting the standards in the terms of the contract was a reoccurring point on how the organisations put down service quality standards and communicated them to partner organisations. SLA's, benchmarking and KPI's for meeting the standards were the most popular answers provided.	30
Measuring and improving service delivery	The respondents to this theme had surveys and meetings as the methods for measuring.	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>

Table 11: Customer satisfaction

Theme	Qualitative findings	Passages coded
Importance of customer satisfaction	Excerpts show how important it is to the organisations interviewed: "Customer Satisfaction is paramount." "it's really highly important to us and it's one of our key drivers." "it's the key driver; if our customer's happy then obviously the contract tends to work very well and more importantly what happens as a consequence is we make money, which you know we have to do."	24
Responsibility for setting or managing standards	Respondents believed the onus rests with the client organisation perhaps because they are in possession of the standards that need to be met. However, one of the client organisations didn't agree and thought the service provider should be responsible for management of the standards without elaborating on the reason.	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>29</b>

## Focus group findings and discussion

The information from these interviews were used to develop the initial framework but it needed further refinement and this was done via the focus group sessions. The themes shown in this section are the result of the thematic analysis done after the focus group sessions had been transcribed. The focus group discussions were conducted based on the proposed framework that was developed from the interview results. This means the focus group discussion were focused on the suitability of each added component, the suitability of the proposed framework and the overall design.

Discussion of the focus group findings were done in tabular form for ease of reference. The table will have the selected theme and a summary of the main points on the left and the implication of the summary on the right. The implication for the framework is split into three sections:

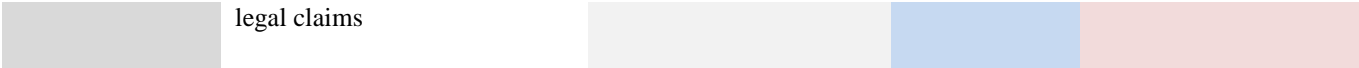
- **Acceptance/acceptance with updates:** this column will be used to show where a component has been clearly accepted as it is or with some modifications to the terminology or guide
- **Additions/removals:** this column is used to note where participants have suggested additions to the framework or the removal of a component
- **Benefits/limitations:** this column has been included for components or themes that have explicitly noted a benefit of the framework or a limitation it is likely to have in practice.

These tables make the points explained in the previous section easier to appreciate and creates a key that will be used to refine the framework and guide. The in-depth nature of the focus group discussions and analysis means each component of the framework was discussed and examined for relevance. An example of the implications of the focus group discussions can be seen in table 12.

Table 12: Extract from Theme 1: Socialisation process (In socialisation)

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Theme Socialisation process  (In socialisation)	1: Summary	Implication for framework and guide		
		Acceptance/Acceptance with updates	Additions/Re movals	Benefits/ Limitations
<b>Setting up</b>	It was suggested that the ‘probation’ period should also be a period to set the strategy for the socialisation period as the probation time set will depend on the strategy.	Include the strategy for the socialisation period in the guide		
	Arranging a ‘flexible training schedule’ was accepted as the uniqueness of the FM industry means staff will work at different times of the day	Keep in framework		
<b>Induction process</b>	‘Conducting a general induction’ was accepted as important to the outsourced process to initiate the fresh employees	Keep in framework		
	Clear indicators of rewarded and punished behaviours was controversial because of the word ‘punishment’ though it was accepted that the component was needed to maintain service quality	The title should be change and the guide updated		
<b>On boarding</b>	‘Buddy systems’ is seen as a positive step as it can be a path to a smooth transition for external service provider staff and helps in integration	Keep in framework		
	‘Encouragement of fit between the employee’s job and life’ was blacklisted because		Remove from framework	
	1.Organisations did not want responsibility for mishaps			
	2.Employees did not want to socialise with colleagues			
	3.Employers cannot promise fixed hours to employees			
	‘Setting up channels for resolution of workplace conflicts’ was accepted by the participants as it minimises	Keep in framework		

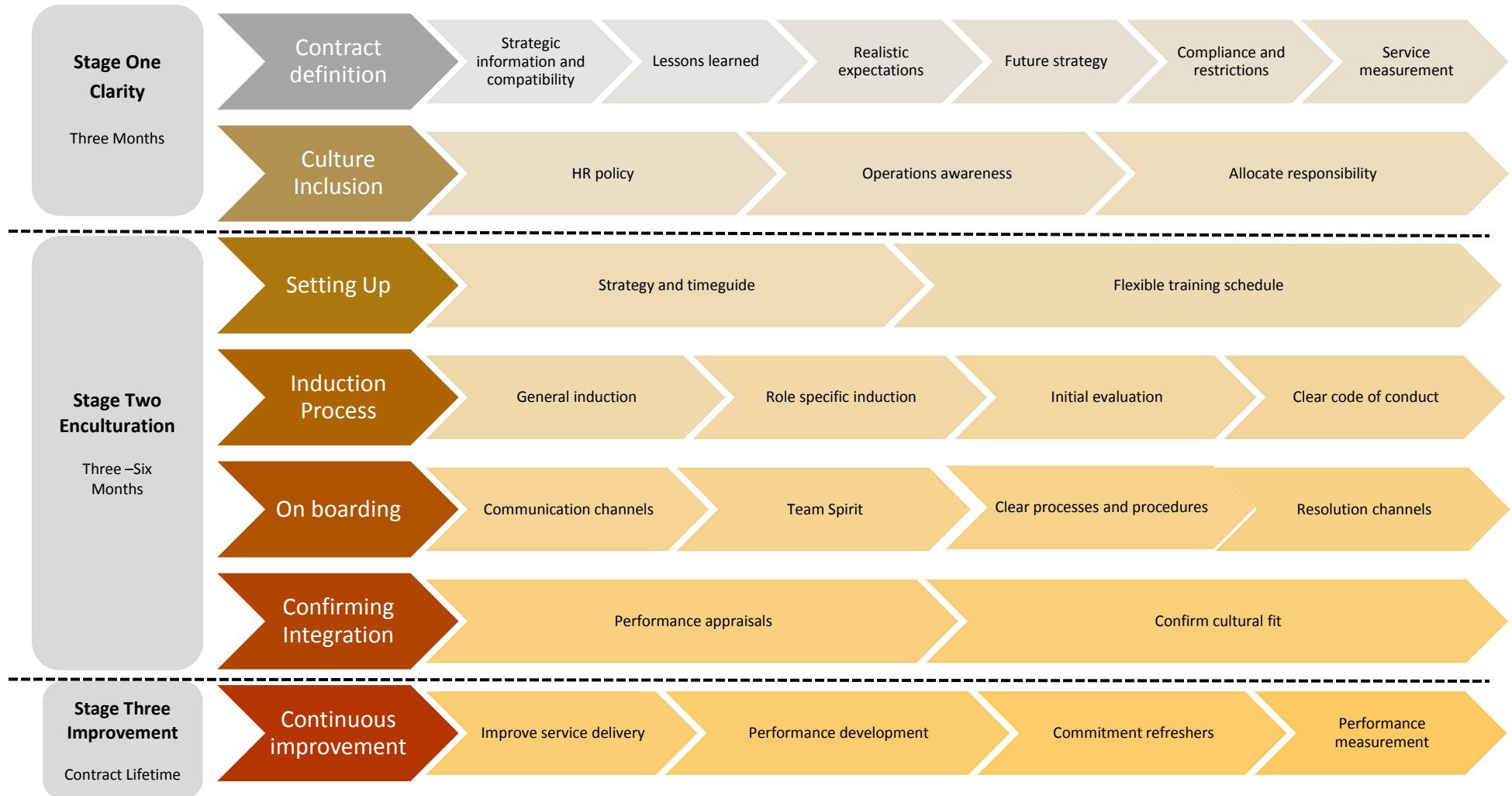


**Accepted framework and guide**

The detailed discussion of the data collected from the focus groups and the implications the data has on the current framework allowed the framework to be updated to incorporate the suggestions made. An obvious distinction that should be made in the explanation for this framework and guide is that it is meant for the use of the client organisation but can be introduced by the service provider or a consultant. The actions that are detailed in the framework can only work where the client organisation is interested and they will ‘lead’ with the use of this framework or it would be difficult to implement. The service provider would be able to use the information provided to increase the quality of their service but it is a framework that clients apply to their organisation. The final validated framework overview can be seen in figure 3.



Figure 3: Developed Cultural Fit Framework



The focus group analysis was very clear in ensuring that the framework was supported with an appropriate self-assessment guide that defined each of the stages in figure 12, and provided examples of best practice. Table 13 identifies the self-assessment guide that was produced. Each stage in the framework overview (figure 3) included the framework guide key, in which figure 4 provides an example from one of the components in the framework.

Table 13: Key to the ‘Cultural Fit’ Framework and guide




Key	Meaning
Action	Action refers to a step that should be carried out in the execution of the framework
Explanation	Explanation expands the action to be implemented and clarifies its meaning to avoid confusion
Examples	Examples are the ways in which an organisation might implement the action but they are not exhaustive or necessary as organisations might have different methods by which they execute the action
Self - Assessment	Organisations are able to assess how much of the framework they have achieved and where they need improvement. This will be shown via a traffic light system
	Fully implemented (FI) 
	Partially implemented (PI) 
	Not implemented (NI) 

Figure 4: Example of framework guide for individual component

CLARITY					
CULTURE INCLUSION					
This is simply an establishment of identity. It enables an organisation to clearly state its position and what it finds acceptable to its mission. It also works for the other party as it reduces confusion and liabilities after the contract commences.					
Action	Explanation	Examples	Self-Assessment		
			FI	PI	NI
HR policy	A human resource management policy included as part of the contract documents makes the other party aware of the standards required by your organisation and also acts as a service measurement method.	Qualification level and experience required			
	Where the outsourced staff are working in sensitive departments, there could be a clausal inclusion to vet the outsourced staff before they join the client organisation.	IT, procurement etc. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.			
Operations awareness	Where the contract is open and there is no need for secrecy in operations, the service provider and the client organisation might both benefit from understanding how the other party works as this should improve understanding.	Accounting, HR, management, supervision, etc.			
Allocate responsibility	Overlapped and abandoned duties can be reduced when obligations are clear without being tedious with the details.	Delineate and maintain reporting order			

## **Conclusions and contributions**

This study has identified that external service provider employees are not truly prepared for the set-down cultures in the client workplace they are contracted to work in. Furthermore, their employers (service providers) and the organisations they work at (client organisation) can do more to prepare them for these cultures or integrate them into it. However, the framework and guide developed in this body of work will start external service provider employees on that path and perhaps even help them achieve total integration in the client workplace.

Asides the contributions this study makes toward theory, it also contributes to practice. There was a general consensus by the stakeholders who participated in the primary data collection that this framework can be used to successfully socialise external service provider staff in the work place. The study contributes to practice in the following ways:

- The development of a framework that can socialise external service provider staff into the client workplace. This will encourage the proper integration of such staff into the client's workplace and enable them deliver the agreed contracted services without several hitches that might occur otherwise.
- The development of a framework that will foster better relationships between client organisations and service providers. Where the service provider and the client understand what the other party wants and how they would like it done, misunderstandings are fewer and the relationships can become true partnerships in practice.
- The development of a framework that can reduce absenteeism, high staff turnover and increase staff motivation and morale. Staff that understand an organisation and are happy to work in that environment are less likely to call in sick to escape work and will be happier about their jobs as they understand that they contribute to the success of the organisations vision no matter how small their part is. It foster the 'working together as a team' spirit.
- The development of a framework that has its roots in strategic FM and touches upon several aspects of daily FM practice since processes and procedures need people. This means this framework might produce positive results in other aspects of the organisation that even the FM might be unaware of.

- The drive for FM to be more strategic and forward-thinking is a major viewpoint of this study and it is hoped that organisations will consider the present and future impact of their workplace processes in the bid to make them more effective and efficient.

These contributions should improve the relationships between client organisations, service providers and external service provider staff in the FM industry.

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