



# What Administrative Assistants Really Want to Know About Facility Management

When administrative and facilities teams work together, everyone is better prepared.

by ARC Facilities

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Ask an administrative assistant what they know about facility management and you might get a polite smile. Ask what they need from facility management, and the answer could be very different. Administrative and executive assistants are often the people coordinating schedules, communicating with leadership, contacting vendors and keeping everyone informed when something goes wrong. They may not maintain the building, but they can become deeply involved when the building stops cooperating. So what do they really want to know about facility management?

We asked people who work close to the issue. Three themes came through clearly: emergency preparedness, building information and business continuity.

## 1. “Are we ready when something goes wrong?”

A facility emergency rarely stays in the facilities department. A water leak can affect employees. A power outage can disrupt meetings. An equipment failure can force people to relocate. Suddenly, administrative staff are fielding questions from the media, executives, employees, vendors, and visitors.

Jared Spangler, Facilities Operations Superintendent, City of Peoria, pointed to emergency preparedness as one of the most important areas where facilities and administrative teams need to connect.

Administrative assistants need to know who to call, what information is reliable and what role they should play when something happens. That sounds basic. It isn't always.

Noel Medina, owner of NCEM Partners, said emergency procedures should be specific to the facility—not generic documents that sit in a binder until somebody needs them. He pointed to site-specific SOPs, LOTO procedures, chemical spill plans and clearly identified shutoffs for gas, water, and hazardous materials. “Most places rely on useless, generic templates that nobody knows how to use,” he said.

That’s an important distinction. A procedure isn’t useful because it exists. It’s useful because people can actually follow it.



## 2. “Why can’t we find information about our own building?”

Here’s another mystery between facilities and administration:

Someone asks for a drawing, equipment record, vendor contact or maintenance document.

**The response?**

**“Let me see if I can find that.”**

Jared identified the time and money lost searching for building information as another major concern for administrative teams. They’re not necessarily looking for technical

information themselves. But they often need to find the person, document or detail that can answer a question.

And that search can take far longer than it should. Noel sees the same problem from the facilities side.

**“Companies burn through thousands of dollars and waste countless hours just looking for basic prints and building info,” he said.**

The issue isn't simply having more documents. It's knowing which information is current, where it belongs and how the right person can find it. That matters to facilities technicians. It matters to administrative assistants. And it matters to executives who need answers without waiting for someone to dig through an old network folder.

### **3. “Can the organization keep operating if the building can't?”**

Buildings don't get to call in sick. If a pipe breaks, the power goes out or a major system fails, the organization still must function. Administrative teams often become part of that response. They may help communicate changes, coordinate people, reschedule meetings, work with vendors, or help leadership understand what is happening.

That's why business continuity shouldn't be viewed as a facilities-only responsibility. It is a team sport. The stronger the connection between administrative staff and facilities, the easier it is to coordinate a response. And that starts with knowing who owns what information and having reliable building information available before something goes wrong.

### **Cleaning up the mystery**

There is sometimes an invisible wall between the people who run the business and the people who run the building. It doesn't need to be there. Administrative assistants don't need to become facility managers. Facilities teams don't need to become administrative assistants.

But both groups benefit from knowing how the other operates and from having the information necessary to do their jobs.

Jared's perspective reinforces the need for better communication and preparedness. Noel's experience adds a practical facilities perspective: competent leadership, a strong team, organized building information and site-specific emergency procedures all matter.

Put those pieces together and something interesting happens. Facilities becomes less of a mystery to everyone else in the organization. And when the next building problem arrives, the first question doesn't have to be, “Who knows what to do?”

When asked what are the three things that can be done between facility managers and administrators to streamline communications, enable quicker responses to emergencies, and keep the buildings running without interruption, IFMA Fellow Thomas L. Mitchell, Jr., said:

**“Establish one operational communications system, pre-authorize emergency decisions, and build redundancy into critical building systems. Together, they reduce information delays, shorten response time, and prevent a single failure from becoming an operational outage.”**

**ARC Facilities** helps administrative assistants and facilities teams work from the same reliable building information, so everyone knows where to find answers and who to call. Facilities teams can give administrative staff a clearer picture of building conditions, emergency procedures, equipment and critical contacts without turning them into facility experts. And administrative assistants can help keep communication moving, coordinate responses and support the organization with greater confidence when building issues arise.