

The Flow-Compatible Workplace

A New Research Frontier for Facility Management

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Facility management has become increasingly sophisticated in measuring buildings. We can track asset condition, energy consumption, response times, occupancy, space utilization, service levels, compliance, and cost with growing precision. Yet the quality of a workplace cannot be understood from these measures alone. A workplace may be technically reliable and highly utilized while still making it difficult for people to concentrate, speak openly, recover from demanding work, or respond intelligently when conditions change.

This gap became clearer to me during the closing of IFMA World Workplace Asia-Pacific 2026 in Hong Kong. Much of the discussion showed a profession moving beyond its conventional boundaries. Buildings, assets, and operational efficiency remained important, but the deeper questions concerned human performance, adaptability, and long-term workplace value. One question continued to stay with me after the event: *what would change if facility management studied the workplace not only as a portfolio of assets and services, but as a system that shapes how people think and perform?*

Most workplace discussions still begin with efficiency and utilization. Both matter. Neither tells us whether employees can focus without unnecessary interruption, receive useful feedback, detect weak signals, learn from mistakes, or recover after periods of sustained demand. Utilization tells us whether a space is occupied. It does not tell us whether the conditions within that space support effective work.

This article proposes the **flow-compatible workplace** as a new research frontier for facility management. The argument is deliberately narrower than the claim that an organization can manufacture *psychological flow*. Flow is a subjective and variable state. It arises from an interaction among the person, the task and the surrounding conditions. Facility managers cannot guarantee that an individual will experience it. They can, however, influence many of its antecedents and many of the conditions that either sustain or repeatedly interrupt it.

A flow-compatible workplace is one in which physical, operational, digital, and relational systems are deliberately aligned to make sustained attention, effective feedback, capability development, psychological safety, and cognitive recovery more likely. Its success cannot be judged through

employee sentiment or productivity alone. It requires evidence that performance can be sustained without transferring hidden costs to health, safety, family life, or workforce stability.

The proposition extends research from my MSc dissertation, which examined integrated people practices in Indonesia's labor-intensive facility management sector. That research introduced two connected concepts: *flow by design* and *flow-compatible functioning*. The first concerns intentional system design. The second concerns observable patterns that are consistent with flow-enabling conditions when direct measurement of psychological flow is impractical or incomplete (Johary, 2026). The next step is to bring this argument more directly into workplace and FM research.

The Measures That Dominate Facility Management

Facility management developed around a practical mandate. Buildings must remain safe, assets must operate, services must be delivered, and risks must be controlled. This history explains why the profession is strong in measures that can be attached to an asset, transaction, or service-level agreement. Maintenance completion, energy intensity, cleaning quality, incident rates, temperature, help-desk closure, and cost per square meter all support legitimate decisions.

The problem begins when these measures become a complete theory of workplace performance. A response time may improve because employees are working at an unsustainable pace. A high occupancy rate may conceal a lack of quiet space. A digital workflow may create excellent traceability while requiring so many prompts and confirmations that it fragments attention. A standard operating procedure may reduce variation while making it harder for employees to exercise judgement when the situation falls outside the standard. None of these systems is necessarily wrong. Their value depends on how they affect the work as a whole.

Work-design research has long shown that job characteristics shape motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Hackman and Oldham (1976) identified skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback as central characteristics of motivating work. The Job Demands-Resources framework later explained how demanding work can produce either strain or engagement depending on the resources available to employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). These theories are well established in organizational psychology, but they are not yet fully integrated into the way FM defines and evaluates workplace performance.

This matters because the workplace does not merely contain work. It influences the sequence, visibility, pace, and social experience of work. Acoustic conditions affect concentration. Layout affects movement, contact, and privacy. Staffing affects workload and recovery. Digital systems affect

information, feedback, and discretion. Leadership routines influence whether an employee reports a near miss or remains silent. Learning systems determine whether increasing job demands are matched by increasing capability.

The result is a basic measurement problem. FM measures many inputs and outputs while giving less attention to the mechanisms between them. When service quality falls, for example, a dashboard may identify the site, time, and operational deviation. It may not show whether the underlying cause was fragmented attention, an unclear goal, insufficient capability, weak feedback, fatigue, or fear of speaking up. If these human mechanisms remain outside the model, the organization may respond by increasing control. Greater control can produce short-term compliance while further weakening the conditions required for judgement, learning, and adaptation.

The case for a flow-compatible workplace is not a request to replace operational measures with psychological ones. It is a request to connect them. The research question is whether the design of workplace conditions helps explain why similar assets, technologies, and service models produce different human and operational outcomes.

Flow as a Design Question

Flow is commonly associated with complete absorption in an activity. In the original theory, it occurs when the challenge of a task is matched by the person's capability, goals are clear, and feedback is sufficiently immediate for action to adjust (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The experience may include concentrated attention, a sense of control, reduced self-consciousness, and an altered perception of time. At work, Bakker's (2008) Work-Related Flow Inventory describes absorption, work enjoyment, and intrinsic work motivation as related dimensions.

Popular management writing often reduces flow to uninterrupted concentration. That is incomplete. A quiet room may reduce interruption, but it cannot correct an ambiguous objective, an impossible workload, or a mismatch between skill and task. Equally, a person may become deeply absorbed in work that is poorly designed, socially damaging, or difficult to sustain. Flow must be separated from the wider conditions and consequences around it.

Recent research supports this more careful interpretation. Bartholomeyczik et al. (2023) distinguish the antecedents of flow from the experience itself and from its consequences. Their framework also shows that interventions may aim to help people enter, deepen, or maintain flow and may target the individual, group, or context. The authors identify a striking limitation: *empirical intervention research*

on flow at work remains sparse. This gap is important for FM because the profession is responsible for many contextual interventions but rarely evaluates them through flow-related mechanisms.

The limited intervention evidence nevertheless shows that flow-related conditions can be influenced. A short goal-setting intervention increased reported flow, work engagement, and performance while reducing stress (Weintraub et al., 2021). A workplace humor intervention also examined changes in stress, flow, work enjoyment, and meaningfulness, illustrating that flow research can extend beyond conventional office-productivity interventions (Bartzik et al., 2021). Experience-sampling research has further linked the use of personal strengths with work-related flow and attentional behavior (Liu et al., 2022). These studies do not establish a universal formula, but they support a shift from describing flow to testing the conditions that make it more or less likely.

The phrase *flow by design* does not mean designing a universal environment in which everyone remains in flow. Individual differences, job demands, and task types make that impossible. Nielsen and Cleal (2010) found that particular activities and job characteristics predict flow states, while Hohnemann et al. (2022) showed that the effect of feedback on flow can vary with locus of control and conscientiousness. The same intervention will not affect every role or employee in the same way.

Flow by design instead describes a disciplined effort to shape conditions that increase the probability of effective engagement. Clear goals can be supported by work planning and briefings. Feedback can be improved through technology and supervisory routines. Challenge-skill balance can be strengthened through task allocation, learning, and progressive responsibility. Attention can be protected through acoustic design, notification rules, and workflow sequencing. Psychological safety can make it possible to ask for help when challenge exceeds skill. Recovery can prevent demanding engagement from becoming cumulative exhaustion.

This leads to the more cautious construct of *flow-compatible functioning*. My dissertation used this term because its secondary administrative data could not establish whether individual employees experienced flow. It examined whether longitudinal patterns in quality, safety, attendance, retention, learning, and other outcomes were consistent with conditions that flow theory, Self-Determination Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, and the Job Demands-Resources framework would predict (Johary, 2026). This was an inference about organizational functioning, not a psychological diagnosis.

The distinction matters for future FM research. A building sensor cannot measure flow. Neither can an attendance record or a service audit. Even a self-report scale provides one form of evidence at one point in time. Stronger research would combine validated psychological measures with operational, environmental, and behavioral data. The aim would be to test whether designed conditions produce a

coherent pattern: employees report clearer goals, appropriate challenge, useful feedback, and psychological safety, while operational data show stable quality, learning, safety, and workforce outcomes.

Flow-compatible functioning also provides a necessary bridge to frontline work. Much of the imagery surrounding flow features writers, programmers, designers or athletes performing intrinsically interesting activities. Facility management depends heavily on cleaners, technicians, security officers, catering employees, help-desk personnel, and supervisors. Their work may be routine, tightly scheduled, or constrained by compliance. The relevant question is not whether every task can become intrinsically fascinating. It is whether routine and controlled work can still provide clarity, mastery, feedback, dignity, appropriate discretion, and visible contribution.

Research suggests that it can. Flow is associated with job characteristics and can occur when task demands and skills are aligned (Bakker, 2008; Nielsen & Cleal, 2010). In operational environments, the design challenge may be less about unlimited autonomy and more about meaningful participation within necessary boundaries. A cleaner may not choose whether infection-control standards apply, but may have discretion over sequencing, access to timely quality feedback, and a credible route to report a condition that prevents the standard from being met. A technician may follow a permit-to-work system while still being invited to challenge an unsafe assumption. These are practical forms of autonomy and voice.

The Workplace as an Operating System

The conventional image of the workplace is *physical*: rooms, desks, equipment, circulation, light, air, and temperature. These conditions remain central. Yet a person experiences the workplace through a larger system that also includes workload, information, technology, authority, relationships, and time. Calling the workplace an operating system is useful because it directs attention to the way these elements interact.

A spatial intervention, for example, may fail if operating rules do not support it. A quiet room offers little value when employees are expected to remain constantly available through multiple digital channels. A collaboration area may remain unused when team leaders do not create time for shared problem-solving. A wellbeing room cannot compensate for staffing levels that make breaks impractical. Conversely, effective operational routines may be weakened by an environment that produces excessive noise, heat, or crowding.

The *flow-compatible workplace* can be analyzed through six connected layers.

Spatial conditions

Spatial conditions include acoustics, lighting, air quality, temperature, privacy, movement, proximity, and choice. Their effect depends on the task. Work requiring sustained concentration may benefit from acoustic separation and control over interruption. Work requiring rapid coordination may depend on visibility and access to colleagues. Restorative settings may support recovery after cognitively or emotionally demanding work.

The central research issue is fit rather than a single ideal design. A workplace can offer many settings and still perform poorly if employees cannot access the setting that fits the task. Future studies should examine task-space fit, not merely the availability of space types. They should also include frontline environments such as plant rooms, service corridors, control rooms, loading areas, and staff welfare facilities, which receive less attention than corporate offices.

Operational conditions

Operational conditions include staffing, work allocation, sequencing, shift patterns, workload, handovers, and interruption. They determine whether clear goals and manageable challenge survive contact with daily operations. A well-designed physical environment cannot support flow when priorities change repeatedly or when employees must switch between tasks without a workable handover.

Knight and Parker's (2021) systematic review of 55 work-redesign interventions found broadly positive performance evidence, with 39 studies reporting positive effects and others producing mixed or negative results. Their analysis is especially relevant because it identifies implementation, context, and alignment with wider systems as boundary conditions. Work redesign is not a discrete event. Its effect depends on whether related processes reinforce or contradict it.

Digital conditions

Digital systems can make goals and work status visible, provide rapid feedback, reduce administrative friction, and direct attention to emerging risk. They can also intensify monitoring, fragment attention, and narrow discretion. Parker and Grote (2022) argue that automation and algorithms increase the importance of work design because technology allocates tasks, distributes information, and changes human control over work.

This tension is highly relevant to FM. CAFM platforms, mobile applications, sensors, and AI-supported systems can help a technician identify priority work, access equipment history, and record

completion. The same technology can become a source of continuous alerts, duplicated data entry, or unrealistic time control. The research question should not be whether a workplace is digital. It should be whether the technology improves clarity and capability while preserving appropriate human judgement.

Relational conditions

Workplace performance depends on whether people can ask, challenge, admit, and report. Edmondson (1999) defined psychological safety as a shared belief that interpersonal risk-taking is safe within a team. Later research has connected it to learning, voice, and performance across individual, team, and organizational levels (Newman et al., 2017).

Psychological safety is operationally important in FM because frontline employees often detect weak signals before formal systems do. A change in equipment sound, an unusual odor, a recurring near miss, or a customer behavior may be visible first to the person closest to the work. A workplace that discourages voice loses information. *Flow-compatible functioning* requires enough safety for people to seek clarification, request assistance, and interrupt work when conditions have changed.

Psychological safety does not mean an absence of standards or accountability. It makes disciplined performance more reliable by allowing errors, uncertainty, and risk to be surfaced early. The practical FM mechanisms include accessible supervisors, respectful response to bad news, consistent incident review, and feedback that helps the employee improve rather than simply records a failure.

Capability conditions

Challenge-skill balance is central to flow. As technology, regulation, and customer expectations change, the balance cannot be maintained through recruitment alone. It requires continuous learning, structured practice, coaching, and recognition of increasing competence.

Capability development is often managed outside FM, but its design affects service delivery directly. Training that is separated from the actual workflow may produce completion records without changing practice. Learning embedded in daily work can connect new knowledge to a real task and provide immediate feedback. The research opportunity is to examine when workplace learning changes both perceived capability and operational outcomes.

Recognition also belongs within this layer. It signals which forms of judgement and contribution the organization values. Recognition tied only to speed may unintentionally weaken safety or

collaboration. Recognition of learning, reporting and problem-solving may reinforce behaviors that sustain the wider system.

Recovery conditions

Recovery is the layer most likely to be omitted from discussions of high performance. Flow can be energizing, but sustained effort still consumes resources. Demerouti et al. (2012) showed that daily recovery is relevant to the relationship between work-related flow and energy at work and at home. A systematic review by Aust et al. (2022) found that flow was predominantly associated with lower burnout symptoms, but the evidence was heterogeneous and included findings in the opposite direction. Occupational and cultural context may affect the relationship.

Recovery must be designed and measured. It includes workable breaks, transitions between demanding tasks, staffing resilience, predictable workload cycles, and freedom from unnecessary connectivity outside working time. In physical terms, it may also include access to welfare and restorative spaces. Recovery is not a concession made after performance has been achieved. It is one of the conditions that determine whether performance can continue.

Why Facility Management Can Lead This Research

The *flow-compatible workplace* crosses professional boundaries. Organizational psychologists study *motivation and behavior*. Human resources functions *design people practices*. Architects and designers shape *physical settings*. Technology teams introduce *digital systems*. Occupational health professionals address *safety and wellbeing*. Business leaders determine *operating priorities*. **Facility management interacts with all of them.**

That position gives FM an unusual integrative capacity. The profession observes the workplace at the point where strategy becomes lived experience. It sees whether a design can be maintained, whether a process works across shifts, whether technology produces usable information, and whether a standard remains credible under pressure. FM also holds operational data that are rarely combined with psychological research: work orders, environmental conditions, incidents, audits, complaints, attendance, staffing, and asset events.

FM should not claim ownership of human performance. Such a claim would exceed its expertise and weaken collaboration. Its more valuable role is to integrate the conditions on which performance depends. This requires a change in the questions asked during design, mobilization, and operation.

Instead of asking only whether a space meets its capacity requirement, FM can ask which tasks it must support and how employees will move between concentration, coordination, and recovery. Instead of asking only whether an application records completion, it can ask whether the application improves feedback and decision quality. Instead of treating employee voice as a culture issue owned elsewhere, it can study whether operational routines encourage or suppress the reporting of risk.

This shift also changes post-occupancy evaluation. Satisfaction remains useful but is too general on its own. An employee may like a workplace while struggling to perform a particular task. Another may dislike a policy while the system still improves safety. Future evaluation should connect experience with task, behavior, and outcome. It should examine when, where and for whom the workplace supports attention, learning, voice and recovery.

The same reasoning applies beyond offices. Hospitals, factories, data centers, logistics sites, retail environments, and education facilities combine different forms of concentration, physical effort, customer contact, and risk. *Flow-compatible design* will not produce one workplace model. It will produce a more precise method for examining the fit between work and conditions.

The Risk of Turning Flow Into Pressure

Any proposal that connects flow with performance needs an ethical boundary. An organization could use the language of flow to make a system problem appear to be an individual responsibility. Employees might be encouraged to manage their attention while workload, noise, conflicting priorities and poor technology remain unchanged. A programme could teach concentration techniques without removing the interruptions the organization itself creates.

This would contradict *flow by design*. The purpose is to redesign conditions, not to demand a psychological state. The distinction also protects against the assumption that more flow is always better. Deep absorption may lead employees to delay breaks or remain engaged beyond healthy boundaries. Feng et al. (2024) found that flow can contribute to work-family conflict under certain conditions. Flow may feel positive at work while creating costs elsewhere.

The *flow-compatible workplace* must be evaluated through paired outcomes. Performance measures should be considered with safety and recovery. Engagement should be considered with exhaustion. Digital responsiveness should be considered with cognitive load and off-hours intrusion. Utilization should be considered with task fit and employee control.

Data ethics require similar care. The proposed research agenda depends on combining psychological, behavioral, operational, and environmental evidence. Such integration can reveal relationships that

separate datasets cannot. It can also produce intrusive forms of monitoring. Employee consent, purpose limitation, aggregation, access control, and transparency are not administrative details. They determine whether the research itself damages psychological safety.

The unit of analysis matters. Research should avoid using individual-level sensor or productivity data when team- or site-level evidence can answer the question. It should distinguish data intended for learning from data used for disciplinary action. If employees believe that participation will expose them to individual scrutiny, both the research quality and the workplace climate will suffer.

There is also a risk of designing for a narrow image of the ideal worker. Some employees concentrate through silence; others work better with social contact. Neurodivergent employees may experience noise, light, movement, and interruption differently. Frontline workers may have little freedom to choose their setting. A *flow-compatible workplace* must offer reasonable variation and examine unequal access to supportive conditions.

Finally, flow cannot become a reason to remove beneficial interruption. Hospitals, security operations, and engineering environments depend on escalation and rapid response. The aim is not uninterrupted work at any cost. It is the *intelligent management of interruption*: distinguishing signals that require attention from noise created by poor process or technology.

A Research Agenda for Future Facility Management

The value of the flow-compatible workplace will depend on whether it can be tested. The concept should develop through a programme of research rather than become another workplace label. Eight research streams deserve priority.

Cognitive enablement beyond utilization

FM needs stronger evidence about the relationship between workplace conditions and cognitive performance. Research should examine how acoustics, temperature, lighting, air quality, privacy, movement, and spatial choice interact with task type. The outcome should not be reduced to self-reported productivity. Studies can include concentration errors, decision time, rework, task completion, fatigue, and recovery.

The practical question is whether a workplace provides the condition needed at the time the task is performed. Occupancy sensors may show that a quiet room exists, but not whether the employee who needs it can access it. Future research should connect environmental and utilization data with task-level experience.

Integrated interventions

Many workplace studies isolate one intervention. Real workplaces change through bundles: new space, new technology, revised leadership routines, training, and altered policies may arrive together. My dissertation found that coherent bundles of people practices were associated with more favorable and sustained operational patterns than isolated initiatives (Johary, 2026). Future research should test this proposition directly within workplace interventions.

The design challenge is to identify sequence and threshold. Does psychological safety need to improve before a monitoring technology is introduced? Must learning reach a minimum level before greater autonomy becomes effective? Does spatial choice matter only when managers allow employees to use it? Longitudinal designs are required because these relationships develop over time.

Frontline and labor-intensive work

Flow research needs to move beyond its concentration in Western and knowledge-work settings. FM provides access to diverse roles performed under real constraints. Comparative studies can examine cleaners, technicians, security officers, and customer-facing employees across sectors and countries.

This stream should test how autonomy operates in structured work. In collectivist and hierarchical contexts, autonomy may be experienced through participation, relational trust, and respectful inclusion rather than independent discretion. Psychological safety may depend heavily on leader accessibility and consistent treatment. Generating theory from these settings would strengthen organizational psychology as well as FM.

Digital enablement and digital control

Digitalization creates a natural experimental field. Studies can compare sites or teams before and after the introduction of mobile workflows, algorithmic scheduling, AI support, or sensor-driven maintenance. The outcomes should include perceived autonomy, information clarity, interruption, workload, and trust alongside operational measures.

Wang et al. (2021) showed that autonomy, monitoring, workload, and social support were associated with remote-work challenges, which in turn were related to performance and wellbeing. The broader lesson applies to FM technology: the same system can function as a resource or a demand depending on its design and use. Research should identify the conditions under which visibility helps employees act and the point at which it becomes surveillance.

Psychological safety as operational infrastructure

Psychological safety should be studied as a mechanism linking workplace design with learning and reliability. Researchers can examine whether leader response, incident-review practices, and feedback routines affect reporting, near-miss detection and service recovery.

This stream should distinguish voice from volume. More reports may initially indicate a safer reporting climate rather than deteriorating operations. A mature evaluation would examine report quality, response time, corrective learning, and recurrence. It would also test whether employees who speak up receive visible feedback about what happened next.

Recovery and long-term performance

Short observation windows can mistake intensified effort for improved design. Future research should follow employees and sites across peak demand, contract mobilization, restructuring, and technology implementation. It should test whether improvements in quality or speed are accompanied by fatigue, absence, turnover, or work-family conflict.

Recovery indicators may include break opportunity, sleep and recovery experience, post-peak absence, fatigue-related incidents, and off-hours digital activity. The purpose is not to medicalize FM. It is to determine whether operational performance is being financed through an accumulating human cost.

Measurement and triangulation

No single measure can establish a flow-compatible workplace. Validated instruments such as the Work-Related Flow Inventory can assess subjective experience (Bakker, 2008). Experience sampling and diary studies can capture variation across tasks and days. Interviews can explain how employees interpret autonomy, feedback, and safety. Operational data can test whether experience corresponds with behavior and outcomes.

A strong research design might combine employee-reported goal clarity, challenge-skill balance, absorption, autonomy, psychological safety and recovery with environmental data, workflow information, learning participation, quality, safety, attendance, and retention. The analysis should preserve the distinction between antecedent, experience, and consequence. Otherwise, good performance may be used incorrectly as proof that flow occurred.

Quasi-experimental methods can strengthen inference where randomization is impractical. Staggered implementation across sites, matched comparisons, and interrupted time-series analysis can examine change before and after an intervention. Qualitative work remains essential because it can identify why the same intervention is interpreted differently across teams.

Governance and professional capability

The final research stream concerns FM itself. What knowledge and authority do facility managers need to lead human-centered workplace research responsibly? The profession will require greater fluency in work design, behavioral research, ethics, and data governance. It will also require collaborative models with organizational psychologists, occupational-health specialists, designers, technologists, and human resources leaders.

Research should examine whether FM governance structures support this role. If workplace decisions remain fragmented across property, technology, HR, and operations, no function may be accountable for the complete employee experience. The answer is not necessarily to centralize everything within FM. It is to create decision processes that make interactions and trade-offs visible.

What Facility Managers Can Do Now

The evidence base is not yet mature enough to justify a universal *flow-compatible workplace* standard. Facility managers do not need to wait for a standard before improving the questions they ask.

The first step is to *identify friction in the work system*. Where do employees face avoidable interruption? Where are goals clear at management level but ambiguous at the point of delivery? Which forms of feedback help employees adjust, and which merely document non-compliance? Where does technology improve judgement, and where does it narrow control without improving capability?

The second step is to *map conditions across the six layers*. A performance problem should be examined spatially, operationally, digitally, relationally, developmentally, and through recovery. This prevents the organization from prescribing a spatial solution to an operational problem or a training solution to a poor workflow.

The third step is to *involve the people who perform the work*. Their participation is necessary for diagnosis, but it also changes the design process. Employees can explain where interruptions originate, which signals matter and when a procedure conflicts with reality. Participation should include frontline and outsourced workers whose experience is often missing from workplace studies.

The fourth step is to *test changes at a scale that permits learning*. A pilot should identify its proposed mechanism before implementation. If a quiet zone is expected to improve concentration, the study should measure access, interruption and task performance, not only satisfaction. If a new mobile system is expected to improve feedback, the study should measure information timeliness, decision quality, autonomy, and workload.

The fifth step is to *pair every performance indicator with a sustainability indicator*. Faster completion can be considered with errors and fatigue. Higher utilization can be considered with task fit and control. Increased reporting can be considered with psychological safety and corrective action. This paired approach discourages local optimization that weakens the wider system.

Finally, leaders should *resist launching a branded flow programme*. The work should begin with redesign, evidence, and learning. Flow is useful because it directs attention to clear goals, feedback, capability, and concentration. It loses value when it becomes a motivational slogan or an additional demand placed on employees.

A Broader Mandate for Facility Management

The next stage of facility management will not abandon buildings, assets or operational discipline. It will extend the profession's understanding of what those systems are for. A reliable asset matters because it supports safe and effective activity. A well-managed space matters because it enables people to perform work under conditions suited to the task. Technology matters when it improves information, capability and judgement.

The *flow-compatible workplace* provides a way to organize this wider inquiry. It shifts the unit of attention from isolated amenities to interacting conditions. It connects physical space with work design, digital systems, leadership, learning, and recovery. It also imposes an important discipline: *performance improvement is incomplete when it depends on hidden fatigue, silence, or loss of autonomy*.

The contribution of FM is not to promise that people will remain in flow. It is to reduce the avoidable conditions that obstruct effective engagement and to strengthen the conditions that support it. That work requires collaboration and better evidence. It also requires the profession to treat employees as participants in workplace systems rather than occupants of managed space.

At World Workplace Asia-Pacific 2026, I saw a profession increasingly ready for this conversation. The quality of the discussion reflected a field becoming more interdisciplinary and research-informed. The next step is to turn that intellectual openness into a sustained programme of workplace research.

The future relevance of FM will still be judged through reliable services, compliant assets, and responsible use of resources. It will also be judged by whether workplaces help people think clearly, report risk, learn continuously, recover adequately, and adapt when conditions change. Utilization alone cannot answer those questions. *Flow-compatible research* can help the profession begin to do so.

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Yohanes Jeffry Johary leads OCS Indonesia, over 11,770 employees across 771 work locations, within a global organization shaped by more than 126 years of heritage. His work focuses on delivering performance while continuously redesigning how organizations remain relevant in complex and evolving environments.

Over the past 19+ years, Jeffry has built his career around a central question: how to translate strategy into consistent execution. His approach has evolved into designing integrated systems by aligning customer experience, digitalization, and ESG into operating models that sustain long-term value.

He holds a Master of Science (MSc) in Business Psychology from the University of East London, graduating with distinction. His dissertation, “*Designing Flow-Driven Workplaces Through Integrated People Practices: A Strategic Research to Sustain Optimal Productivity in Facility Management*,” introduced the concepts of “*flow-by-design*” and “*flow-compatible functioning*,” reframing performance as a function of organizational design rather than individual capability.

He is also a graduate of the Alchemist 4.0 Program from the Graduate School of Business - University of Cape Town and Graduate Certificate on Organization Resilience, Risk, and High Reliability programme from the Institute of Presilience® (Australia). Jeffry concluded the Social Enterprise program at Harvard Business School Executive Education in collaboration with the Hauser Institute for Civil Society at Harvard Kennedy School.

His leadership combines analytical clarity with systems thinking, enabling him to navigate complexity while maintaining execution discipline. He views intelligence not as an individual trait, but as an organizational outcome shaped by how decisions, information, and trust flow across the system.

This philosophy is most visible in how OCS Indonesia operates. While commercially disciplined in its business model, the organization is built with the mindset of a social enterprise by embedding workforce development, social mobility, & responsible employment practices into its core operations.

Beyond his corporate role, Jeffry contributes through British Chamber of Commerce (BritCham Indonesia) and American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham Indonesia) Indonesia to advancing governance and sustainability. He is the President of the Indonesia Chapter of IFMA and ASEAN President of The Institute of Strategic Risk Management (ISRM).

His work is guided by a simple principle: organizations do not underperform because people lack capability, but because systems are misaligned. Leadership, therefore, is about designing environments where the right behaviours can emerge consistently at scale.

Word Count

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The Flow-Compatible Workplace
A New Research Frontier for
Facility Management

Yohanes Jeffry Johary

Facility management has become increasingly
sophisticated in measuring buildings. We can
track asset

condition, energy consumption, response times