

# ASK RUSS

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What are the top challenges that public assembly facility operations and engineering managers face?

I do not really look to the public assembly facility industry for innovation. We have great talent in our industry but, in my opinion, the nature of our business and its available training and resources, leads me to look at other industries for information and innovation.

One of our top challenges is how our industry provides information to our professionals and where else can they get it?

That's what inspired me to pursue the development of the Venue Operations Summit. I cannot wait for the next one because I feel that we are making great progress towards meeting our goal of delivering information that our attendees can use as soon as they return to their facilities.

But the Venue Operations Summit is not enough, which is why I recommend that operations and engineering professionals look to organizations that have significant complimentary professional development resources, including the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) and the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA).

I also look at hospitals and airports as complicated facility types with complex operating conditions and systems for information on operations, methods and materials.

In a recent article in Facilities and Security News dated July 29, they suggest that the following were the top 8 challenges that facility managers face today. Here is their list with my comments relating to our industry.

- Wearing a Jugglers Hat: Unlike commercial real estate, we also have to contend with production and show managers, event planners, teams and a wide and diverse group of clients while the type and nature of events changes for us on a daily basis.
- Cutting down costs: This is where process and procedures are our best friends. In the great race where everyone has an emergency, processes and procedures are our best friends and give us a fighting chance to succeed.

- Aging Inventory Systems: I would expand this to include deferred maintenance. It is the nature of our business to defer maintenance despite the very real and well-known facts that relate to the costs of preventative maintenance vs. the cost of repair and replacement.
- Changing regulatory and compliance standards: I see in a great many facilities that the budget allocations look the same in year 15 or 20 as they did in the start up of the facility. This regurgitation does not take into account the changing nature of the facilities' needs and is the main ingredient in the recipe that creates non-compliance.
- Meeting Eco-friendly policies: I believe that a green strategy that accommodates sensible operating procedures and capitalizes on adding to the systems and equipment when resources come available is the right way to go. Look at what you are doing, ask yourself if you can you do it better and if there are community resources that can assist you, and go from there.
- Security Management: If you work in a facility with a major professional sports team, you likely have a full security department with corresponding resources. If you do not, then security is normally left in the hands of operations. The budget response to this is usually incident driven, meaning when the next bad thing happens, you can expect a knock on your door followed by the question, "what are you going to do about this?"
- Pressure to perform with reduced resources: I think we have said enough about this already, it is the standard that you face in every operating area, every day.
- Time Management: Time is the one resource that is in the shortest supply. The key to time management, in my opinion, goes back to process and procedures. In our business there is simply no time to waste.

## Bottom Line

The challenges the commercial real estate facility managers face are not dissimilar to the public assembly facility industry as it relates to the physical facilities. When you add in the pressures and consequences of meetings, games and events, then we are in a whole different league.

*Russ Simons is...*

*managing partner, Venue Solutions Group, and has been in this industry for more than three decades, working in arenas, stadiums, design, construction, safety and security. Send questions about any aspect of venue operation to [askruss@venuestoday.com](mailto:askruss@venuestoday.com) or mail questions to Venues Today, P.O. Box 2540, Huntington Beach, CA 92647.*

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