**BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES FOR ASSET MANAGER’S ROLES ON FEDERAL FACILITIES ASSET MANAGEMENT IN MALAYSIA**

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# Abstract

# The asset management in Malaysia is rapidly developing as it has shown to positively impact the industry. This development has emphasised the importance of an asset manager’s duties and responsibilities in order to achieve a productive and competent asset manager, specifically within the government sector. Therefore, it is important to investigate the ideal behavioural competencies needed in an asset manager. This study focuses on the identification of the roles and responsibilities of asset managers in managing the federal assets such as building and its facilities. This paper also investigates the ideal behavioural competencies needed in an asset manager and the relationship between the effect of their behaviour and their roles and responsibilities in managing the federal asset. In order to achieve the research objective, methods such as a literature review and a survey questionnaire were used. A literature review explores all of the variables and information and it was then used to form a questionnaire. Data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and factor analysis. Results of the study found that there are a total of seventeen (17) main roles and responsibilities and six (6) ideal behaviour of an asset manager. The results of this study also showed the relationship between the behaviour and the duties and responsibilities of asset managers as positive behaviour are needed in other in order to productively and effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities. To ensure effective comprehensive asset management in the federal facilities sector, it is suggested for all the federal ministries, department and agencies to increase and develop behavioural competencies that lie within their asset manager.

# Keywords:

Asset managers, Behavioural competencies, Manager’s role, Federal facilities, Malaysia.

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# BACKGROUND OF STUDY

# According to the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA), facilities management, or also known as asset management or maintenance management is a profession of environment that involve multi professions especially, management. The British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) define asset management as a multi-disciplinary organizational function within the built environment that revolves around the people, place, and process with the purpose of improving and upgrading the quality of life and productivity of the core business. Atkin and Brooks (2000) describe asset management as a strategic approach to improve, manage, and operate a building, in order to support the objectives of an organisation. Therefore, asset management is a multi-discipline profession within the built environment that improves, upgrade, and manages the building facilities for the building users in order to create a friendly environment and improve the core-business productivity according to the organization’s objectives.

# At the earlier stage, asset managers were seen to have no relation to business, management, and the built environment profession. This is because asset managers were seen to largely involves around building maintenance, cleaning, and service (Arkin and Brooks; 2000) which appears as the traditional ways to maintain and service building (Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi, 2010). On the other hand, Payne (2000) suggested that the asset managers is an area of business and management practices, which were drawn from pure organizational management, engineering, and other sets of skills from the different industry. Meng (2015) stated that during the late 1980s and early 1990s, asset management has evolved from the property and construction industry to form a new industry. According to the IFMA, asset management has become noticeable in the early 1970s which resulted in the establishment of International Facilities Management Association (IFMA) in the 1980s and since has spread around the globe with JFM, in Japan and BIFM in Britain. Asset management in Malaysia has only recently been adopted to the system, as Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi (2010) pointed out, asset management in Malaysia started to developed in the second-half of 1990s. Moreover, according to the Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi (2010), asset management in Malaysia started with the government privatized non-clinical support in hospitals to three asset management companies in 1996. It then followed by an international seminar on FM in Kuala Lumpur in 2001 which resulted in the establishment of Malaysian Association of Facilities Management (MAFM) in 2005. Due to the recent development, the roles and responsibilities of asset managers are still approaching a level of maturity (Payne, 2000; Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawawi, 2010), therefore, it is important to investigate the roles and responsibilities of asset managers. Additionally, it is also essential to identify the ideal behaviour needed in an asset manager in order to productively and efficiently carry their roles and duties.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

# Roles Of Asset Managers

# Atkin and Brooks (2000) suggested that the roles of asset managers differ according to the organisation and the group in order to fit the objective or the purpose of the group. Chotipanich (2004) agrees that the roles of asset managers differ based on the organisation constraints, characteristic, operation procedure, and objective. Mohd Isa et al (2016) give an example of sports facilities in Malaysia is managed by a non-profit organization such as the local authority (PBT) or the State Stadium Cooperation. The facilities for the sports building are designed according to the aspirations of the government to provide the most optimum facilities for the community. Additionally, the equipment and facilities are managed accordingly in order to ensure the operation, safety, and functionality of the facilities is in the best condition for the users.

# Thus, an asset manager should focus on the managing the facilities according to the objective of the organization. Therefore, it is important for asset managers to familiarise themselves with the organization and its objectives. Next, Roper and Payant (2014) suggested that an asset manager needs to be smart and aware of the bureaucracy system. Arts and Mann (1995) categorised management level decision in asset management into three categories, which are i) strategy, ii) tactical, and iii) operation. Strategic management level is a systematic approach to improve, operate and maintain facilities economically by using engineering and comprehensive business principles. Tactical management level, as Booty (2009) defines is the priority of risks towards the organisation, in the period of two to five years’ time frame, while operational management level is the decision that involves with strategic and tactical levels in everyday operation, usually within the yearly budget (Best et. al, 2003).

# Since the establishment of MAFM in 2005, Malaysia has adopted asset management into the system, as they are prioritising the improvements of the national asset management, especially to the federal facilities asset management (Kamaruzzaman and Ahmad Zawai, 2010; Mohd Isa et al, 2016). The Malaysia government has created a system to keep the record of the government asset called ‘Sistem Pengurusan Aset Tak Alih Kerajaan’ or in short, mySPATA. According to mySPATA (2015), there are 39,284 registered federal facilities and asset in Malaysia that are frequently used by the public. Malaysia government (2012) has created a strategic plan to improve asset management in Malaysia, namely ‘Asset Management Plan’, which are revised every three (3) to five (5) years. The Asset Management Plan acts as a guideline for federal ministries, department, and agencies as a reference to synchronize the Malaysian government plan for asset management with the organization’s current management plan and objectives. Thus, the organizations’ management plan and their system will constantly change according to the standard set by the government. This changes will influence the roles and responsibilities of the asset managers, as well as the behaviour of the asset managers as they have to cope with changes in their management routine.

# This paper intends to investigate the roles and responsibilities of asset managers, study the appropriate behaviour needed in asset managers, and find the relationship between the roles and behaviour of asset managers. This paper intends to assist to assist the development of asset managers in Malaysia by identifying the roles and responsibilities of asset managers. Additionally, this paper aims to improve the quality asset management profession by investigating and recommend the ideal behaviour and skills needed in asset managers in order to work productively and efficiently. It is believed that this paper will help to improve the quality of life and productivity of an asset manager for them to work efficiently in managing the facilities and providing a better infrastructure for the use of building users.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

# In order to reach the objectives of this study, the methodology used for this study is divided into three phases that are; i) Phase 1, ii) Phase 2, and finally iii) Phase 3.

# Phase 1 involves literature review. This study requires a deep understanding of what asset management and their behaviour, as well as identifying the precedents study regarding the topic. Hence, one of the methodology approaches is by a literature review. Sources such as journals and books were explored as well as any related case studies that were previously made.

# Phase 2 is a questionnaire and was tested in a pilot study to see the effectiveness and precision of the questionnaire. Changes were made from the pilot study to improve the questionnaire before beginning the official survey. The designation and development of the survey for this study were adopted from the Czaja and Blair’s (2015) by following their proposed five steps, which are:

# i) Preliminary survey design,

# ii) Pre-testing,

# iii) Final survey design,

# iv) Distributing, and

# v) Data analysis and report.

# The questionnaire is divided into three sections Section A, covers basic information about the respondents, such as position or profession, gender, and working experiences in the federal department or agencies. The second section, Section B, then covers the roles of asset managers in federal facilities in Malaysia, where the respondents rate the importance of a role with a five-point scale ranging from not important to very important. Lastly, section C questions the respondents of the behavioural competencies of asset managers in Federal Facilities Assets in Malaysia. Each behavioural competency is also rated on a five-point scale, of not required to very important.

#  Finally, all five steps that were proposed by Czaja and Blair leads to Phase 3, where all collected data and information were gathered, before they were analysed. A software namely Statistical Package for the Social Science, or in short, SPSS was used to analyse the findings from the questionnaire.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

# The survey was conducted at the Facility Management Division in the Ministry of Work Malaysia. A total number of two hundred and eighty (280) set of questionnaires were distributed but only a hundred and fifty-two (152) sets were returned, which makes the overall effective response rate of 54.29%. The respondents comprised of Top Management (1%), Senior Principal Assistant Director (3%), Principal Assistant Director (5%), Senior Assistant Director (9%), Assistant Director (36%) and finally Implementer Group 1 (37%) and Group 2 (9%), thus shows that the survey involves all levels of management such as strategic, tactical, and operational management. The results of the questionnaire show that not only a diverse field of profession, such as building and quantity surveyor, as well as electrical and mechanical engineer are involved in the asset management. The survey also highlighted the different levels of education within the FM Department, where the majority of the employees are a degree holder (48%), followed by 27% of diploma or certificate levels, 15% are Master’s holders, and SPM and Ph.D. holders are at 9% and 1% respectively.

# *Actual Roles of Asset Managers in Federal Asset Division Malaysia.*

# Chotipanich (2004) argues that the role and function of asset managers differ according to the institution or organisation as it should be designed to fit the institutional objective. However, some scholars, such as Roper and Payant (2014) argued that the role of asset management should be standardised to strengthen the position of asset managers in an organisation. The Malaysian Prime Minister Office (PMO) stated that agencies equipped with federal asset management should be responsible for the control and management of is assets (Mohd Isa, 2016). The PMO has laid out a list of responsibilities of asset managers that are being appointed by assets owner to lead the Facilities Management Unit. Some of the responsibilities listed by the PMO is to manage the asset registration, to provide a method for asset management implementations, and to manage information and reports on asset management. The roles and responsibilities of asset management are listed in Table 1 and Table 2 as below. From the literature review conducted, there are approximately seventeen (17) roles of assets managers that are relevant based on the experience in federal facilities assets management in Malaysia were identified and all seventeen were listed in the survey questionnaire. In the questionnaires, the respondents were asked to rate in five-scale points on the importance of the roles listed. The questionnaire was then analysed to rank the top seven most important roles of asset managers based on the respondents, and they are as per Table 1;

|  |
| --- |
| *Table 1: Top seven (7) important roles of asset managers based on the respondents* |
| *a.*  | Determine the level of service of an asset. |
| *b.* | Act as the representative of asset owner. |
| *c.* | Assist in asset planning and creation. |
| *d.* | Manage asset disposal. |
| *e.* | Manage information and reports on asset management. |
| *f.* | Coordinate and monitor asset operators. |
| *g.* | Support service in promoting the sustainable environment in federal facilities asset management. |

# The other ten roles without any ranking or particular order are as follow:

|  |
| --- |
| *Table 2: Important roles of asset managers* |
| *h.*  | Provide a method for asset management implementations. |
| *i.* | Manage assets registration. |
| *j.* | Manage the operation of assets.  |
| *k.* | Manage the maintenance of assets. |
| *l.* | Support service on influencing organisational policy towards asset management in federal facilities asset management. |
| *m.* | Provide guidance, hands-on coaching, and consultation to elevate employee’s motivation and generate real process improvement. |
| *n.* | Manage all federal facilities assets in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies through assets life cycle. |
| *o.* | Manage resource requirements of an asset. |
| *p.* | Conduct awareness programs regarding the implementation of the asset management and maintenance of an effective asset to agency officials. |
| *q.* | Cooperate with other parties (ministries, agencies, public etc.) as a liaison officer. |

# The top seven ranking of the roles are significant as it shows that the roles of asset managers are not limited to assets usage and maintenance, but they are managing the assets whole lifetime (PMO, 2012). Upon researching this study, it has been identified that the role as support service (role g.) are often neglected by organizations as the roles were not stated in the Asset Management Policy 2012. However, scholars such as Kincaid (1994) argues the role is important for asset managers to influence in promoting the sustainable environment.

# *Behavioural Competencies of Asset Managers in Federal Facilities in Malaysia.*

# Section C of the questionnaire was designed with the adaptation from Dulewiczs (1998) Personal Competencies Framework where forty-five (45) behavioural competencies are grouped into six categories, which are;

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a. | Intellectual. | b. | Personal. |
| c. | Communication. | d. | Interpersonal. |
| e. | Leadership. | f. | Result oriented. |

# The respondents were asked to rate the importance of these categories that are required in an asset manager (refer Figure 1). The results show that communication and leadership followed by the result oriented character are an extremely important behaviour to have in an asset manager. Intellectual and personal and interpersonal behaviour are also important behaviour to have.

# Figure 1: Behaviour Competencies vs Importance

# *Intellectual Ability*

# According to Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2009), the concept of intellect derived from the use of the psychometric instrument to predict the future scholastic achievement. This explains why there is various definition of intelligence. They further stated that intelligence is the ability or capacity to know, learn, and comprehend, and it does not refer to a specific ability but rather to an “inseparable quality of mind that influence the execution of all consciously directed activities” (Robinson, 1999). One of the important ability of an asset manager is their intellectual abilities. Intellectual abilities are a composite of twelve behaviours. They are judgment, planning, problem analysis, information collection, numerical interpretation, critical faculty, creativity, perspective, organisational awareness, external awareness, learning-oriented, and technical expertise. The respondents rated all of them as important behaviour to have in asset managers. Moreover, the majority of them rated judgment and planning as an extremely important characteristic to have, followed by problem analysis*.*

# *Personal Behaviour*

# The abilities are personal behaviour are adaptability, independence, stress tolerance, resilience, detail consciousness, self-management, integrity and finally, change-oriented. Personal competencies can be described as the efficiency to assist an individual performance in a workplace and the capabilities to adapt to the pressure of the job (Bish et. al 2014). A study conducted in Klang Valley by Hashim et. al in 2012 demonstrates how stress could influence a person’s behavioural and occupational performances. Furthermore, Lazarus (1966) stated that the ability to cope with stress is the connection between human and environment. In essence, when an individual approaches a condition or circumstances, the examination process in an individual will start to survey the level of danger and the find the accessible coping mechanism of the stated condition. In the questionnaire survey, the participants were asked to rate eight of the abilities in personal competency. The participants all agreed that the stated abilities are important and stressing that integrity is the main abilities to have in an asset manager. Thus, personal performance is one of the important elements that should habit in an asset manager’s behaviour.

# *Communication Ability*

# One of the extremely important behaviours of an asset manager is to have the ability to communicate. Communication comes in several of forms such as talking, listening, and writing. It is a medium for humans to interact with each other and to understand as well as to be understood by the respective person. Choon (2004) has found that there are three dimensions in communication competencies, which are; i) self-confidence, ii) respect-relational, and iii) self-image. On the other hand, Wilson & Sabee (2003) stated that there is no ground meaning of communication competence. However, Mohd. Saleh (2007) stated that communication competencies indicate a person’s communication ability by showing skills in knowledge pertinent to the communication circumstances and settings. She then further listed encoding skills needed in a manager. Communication behaviour includes reading, written communication, listening, oral expression and oral presentation. The participants of this survey have rated that these skills are important. Additionally, they rated listening is extremely important, as followed by reading and oral presentation, then oral expression and finally written communication. Therefore, communication is important to have in an asset manager.

# *Interpersonal Behaviour*

# Interpersonal skills are the ability to separate business relationship and personal relationship. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (2002), interpersonal skills, along with knowledge and motivation are able to judge circumstances and outcome of a particular subject. Ralston et al (1999) stated that managers in developed economies are more accustomed to the company and legal constraints and regulations, hence, result in advance interpersonal ability and positive relationship at a workspace. In short, lack of interpersonal skills could cause a personal and emotional judgment of a person towards their work or issue. Interpersonal behaviours composite of impact, persuasiveness, sensitivity, flexibility, ascendancy, and negotiation. The results obtained from the questionnaire concludes that sensitivity is the extremely important, followed by negotiation, flexibility, impact, persuasiveness, and ascendancy or dominance.

# *Leadership Ability*

# Leadership is one of the extremely important characters of an asset manager. Maxwell (2002) differentiate a successful person and a leader as a successful person finds the right place for himself, but a leader finds the right place for others. A leader is a person who thinks about the condition of others or company than himself. Badger view leadership as a governing behaviour of strategic decision-making and smart thinking skills, along with the ability to incorporate, support, and transform an asset through its life cycle. Fiedler (1964) stated that there is no definite style or form of leadership to lead an organisation. This is because different people have a different way of expressing its ability. However, Kamaruzzaman et. al (2016) found that leadership in asset management in Malaysia have a low score compared to other countries. To improve this, according to Abdullah (1996) suggested that an asset manager should be a role model for their behaviour grounded in their religious belief and culture. Leadership comprises of the behaviour of organising, leading, motivating, empowering, appraising, developing others are the behaviour in leadership. The survey showed that the ability to organise and lead is extremely important, followed by apprising. Furthermore, all of the participants agreed on the importance of leadership in an asset management.

# *Results-Oriented Behaviour*

# According to the NRC (2008), the United States General Accounting Office (GOA) has implemented Result Act (1993) where they will invest 15 years of effort to improve their federal organisations. In 1997, they have found significant improvements when an agency adopted the disciplined approach of Result Act to improve effectiveness, where one of it is results-oriented goals. Furthermore, the GOA (2001) wrote that an organisation’s people, are the most crucial asset in managing for results, and they have identified four government-wide challenges, where one of them creating results-oriented organisational culture. This is a precedence example to justify the importance of results-oriented behaviour in an organisation. Arizona Department of Administration (2012) describe a person or an organisation with result oriented competencies as a person or group consistently delivers the required business results, set and achieve an achievable yet aggressive goal, consistently provide quality service and productivity, and maintain focus on the agency goals.

# In short, results-oriented is the ability to have a business sense and risk-taking, followed by decisiveness, energy, concern for excellence, initiative, tenacity, customer oriented. Based on the survey made, the participants voted decisiveness and customer oriented as the extremely important behaviour in an asset manager. This shows that decisiveness is an important key in results-oriented behaviour and it proves asset managers in Malaysia supports the ‘People First, Performance Now’ policy.

# *The Relationship between Asset Managers’ Roles and Behaviour*

# Factor analysis was being used to define the relationship between the roles of asset managers and the behaviour of asset managers. Based on the findings, the behaviour categories are now divided into two components, which are: i) emotional competencies, and ii) intellectual competencies. Based on Spearman Rho Correlation, behavioural competencies do interact with the roles of asset managers. For instance, in order to manage the operation of an asset or coordinate and monitor asset, the asset management needs to have a business sense and the ability to develop others. As Boyatzis (2008) mentioned, an asset manager should be able to use emotional competencies to distinguish, realise and use emotional information of another to attain successful achievement. Another example is when an asset manager needs to provide a method for asset implementation management, they need to be able to think critically and be able to plan carefully. In conclusion, the roles and behaviour of asset managers do correlate with one another; hence, it is important that they have the skills and proper behaviours to align with the values and objective of a federal asset manager.

# CONCLUSIONS

# This study aims to identify the roles and behavioural competencies of asset managers in Federal Facilities Management in Malaysia. Additionally, the relationship between the behaviours and roles will be discovered throughout this study in order to find the ideal behaviour competencies of asset managers in Malaysia. The methods used to assist this study is by a literature review and a survey questionnaire, followed by data analysis and understanding. The questionnaire survey was conducted at the Facility Management Unit in Ministry of Work Malaysia. Two hundred and eighty (280) sets of questionnaires were distributed and only one hundred and fifty-two (152) questionnaires were returned back. A total of seventeen (17) roles and forty-five (45) behaviours of asset managers were found and categorised into six categories.

# Out of the seventeen roles of asset managers, the respondents have rated top seven most important roles and responsibilities of an asset manager. They are;

# a) Determine the level of service for an asset,

# b) Act as a representative of asset owners,

# c) Assist in asset planning and creation,

# d) Manage asset disposal,

# e) Manage information and reports on asset management,

# f) Coordinate and monitor asset operators, and

# g) Support service in promoting sustainable environment in federal asset management.

# Next, the respondents have ranked from the most important to the least important behavior of an asset manager. They are;

# a) Communicative,

# b) Leadership,

# c) Result-oriented,

# d) Intellectual,

# e) Personal Behavior, and

# f) Interpersonal Behavior.

# From the questionnaire survey, the respondents agreed that the ability to plan (from Intellectual), integrity (from Personal Behaviour), judgment (from Intellectual), and persuasiveness (from Interpersonal Behaviour) are the extremely important behaviour and ability to have in an asset manager. The study also identifies the relationship between the roles and the behaviour of an asset manager, where the behaviour of an asset manager significantly influences the role and vice versa. In conclusion, in order to achieve the objective of the organisation as well as to improve the asset management in Malaysia, asset managers should obtain the ideal behaviour of an asset manager that has been listed in this research paper.

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