



**Gosselin/Martin Associates**

The Expertise & The Difference in Recruitment, Retention, & Career Development

**2022 Healthcare Facilities Management  
*Fall Survey Results***

**Gosselin/Martin Associates  
December 2022**

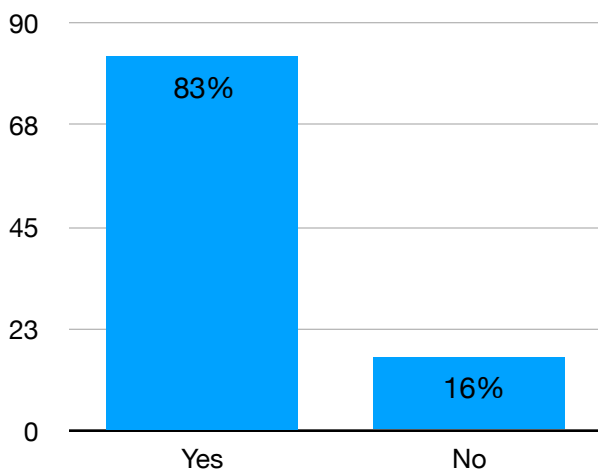
This Fall, Gosselin/Martin Associates conducted a Healthcare Facilities Management Survey. The results of that survey, as well as brief conversations with some survey respondents, are presented below. The survey ended in September. We appreciate all who replied, thank you.

## Engage employees

*“FMs are hard to find, especially good ones, and I feel the organization realizes this and shows us appreciation. Turnover is costly both in dollars, efficiency, and morale. My organization has let us know they recognize that. Just that shift in attitude reduces energy wasted on stress so I can divert that same energy into productivity.”*

*Tracy Heidenreich, Facilities Manager II,  
CHI St. Gabriel's Health, CommonSpirit Health, Little Falls, MN*

### **Do you feel that your organization values your role in the organization?**



We wanted to lead our end user comments section with that positive assessment. Wouldn't it be great if that sentiment was universal? While it is not, our survey did find that more people than not felt valued by their organization (see left).

Tracy says the level of stress has been "thick" in the past couple of years, with Covid, retirements, and new and sometimes contradictory information appearing daily, especially at the beginning stages of Covid.

"I'm straightforward and honest with staff," which he says helps to keep them engaged and connected.

Another way to remain connected is to have engaged management.

"It matters a great deal that upper levels of the organization show up and visit our facility. They see it and look at it and make an honest assessment of it. They meet with the team and listen to what they say, and then after they leave, they follow-up. Their transparency and communication is nice, and very much appreciated by staff."

Visibility remains a critical leadership attribute.

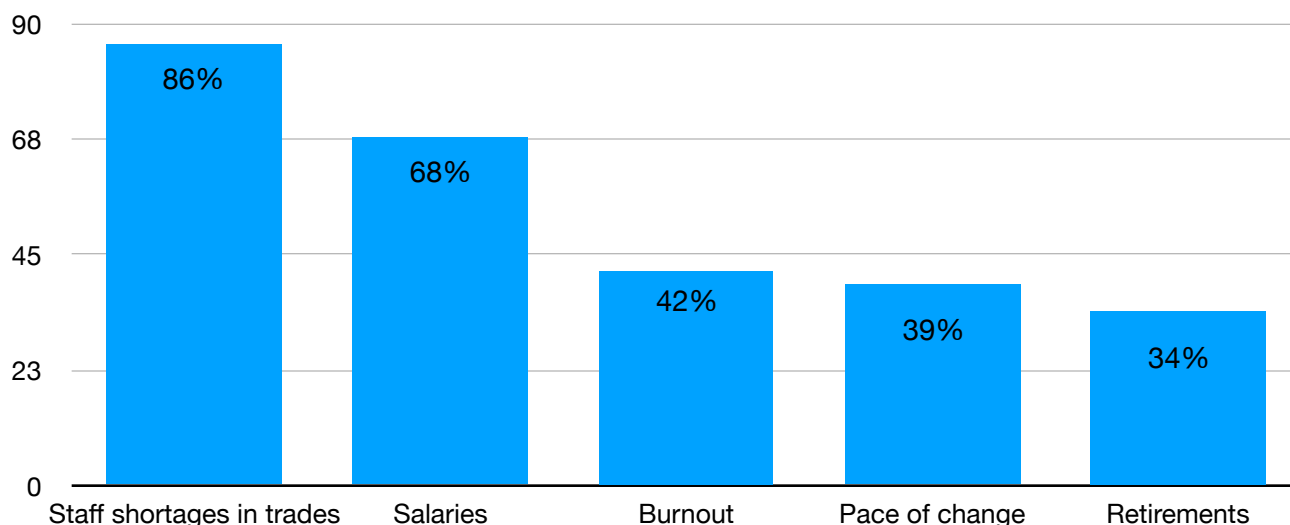
## Dollars for deferred

*“For me, deferred maintenance is becoming an issue that has not been there before. A lot of competition for capital dollars is creating challenges.”*

*Don Sheets, Director - Facilities & Construction  
Bryan Medical Center, Lincoln, NE*

In an era of decreasing budgets and staff, competition for dollars that will be used to fund deferred maintenance was mentioned frequently by survey respondents (as were exorbitant lead times for critical equipment like generators and air handlers). Don talked about a strategy

## What are the most significant issues facing healthcare facilities management in 2022?



he uses as he tries to capture dollars against flashier, more exciting projects that garner the attention of C-Level leadership.

“I compare the facility to their home or their car. You replace things at your home or with your car regularly. Now imagine that need for more than 3 million square feet of space. Most of leadership has nice cars and they routinely maintain them for them to run best. I tell them the facility operates under the same principle. You have to be careful, though, if you are dealing with a boss who drives an old car and doesn’t maintain it. Then that approach may not work for them!”

Don says that you need to be the “squeaky wheel” to get dollars for deferred maintenance and that every year it becomes harder to get those dollars. But he also offers this vital caveat: “My leadership team knows I am not asking for the moon. They know I am reasonable.”

### “I still need to get the job done”

*Since COVID, multiple people never came back to work and left the department. This has left the remainder of the department doing more with less, including myself. I support two large metropolitan hospital campuses but also cover two in other states. I am on the design and build team of two new greenfield sites (future hospitals).”*

*Kevin Deitsch, Senior Project Manager, Planning & Construction, Intermountain Healthcare, Broomfield, CO*

In a matter-of-fact manner, Kevin accepts the new work place reality, all while acknowledging that work/life balance is a “bit chaotic” in 2022.

“I am training two new employees in the department. Prior to 2019 this workload would have been split with four other co-workers, but those co-workers do not exist today. The phone never stops. I went on vacation and thought I had everything covered in my out-of-office email, but I had calls and emails before I even left the tarmac. The phone, the emails, the texts, it never stops.”

Kevin says there is no quick fix to many issues that impact design and construction project work, including lack of staff, inflation driving up project costs, and long lead times for just about everything.

“Could it fix itself in 3 or 4 years? I don’t know. I couldn’t get wood doors for a project. I could get the frames, but not the doors. Then when you have frames, subcontractors don’t have the workforce to install them. I have a 24 to 30-week lead time on doors. I carry on and do what I have to do. You still need to get the job done.”

## **Inflation's impact**

*As the financial belts are tightened an FM's role will become more valuable as they bring creative cost savings ideas to their organization.*

*Dean Pufahl, Director Enterprise Facility Services,  
Froedtert and The Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI*

Dean was one of only three survey respondents to mention inflation's significant and ongoing impact on today's market dynamics.

“Inflation is going to be the number one driver in the next three years. Locked managed care contracts will limit revenue, but the expense side and labor costs will rise and push more organizations into the red. If 50% of healthcare organizations are in the red now (according to AHA), what will the outcome be?”

Dean mentioned the importance of directors begin able to show an ROI for cost-cutting initiatives they propose to leadership.

“We insourced a formerly outsourced contract and achieved savings. We showed hospital leaders that we would attain a significant ROI if insourced. If you can illustrate ROI to leadership, they will support cost-saving initiatives.”

With labor cuts, hiring freezes, and the rising cost of utilities, Dean says the situation could worsen and that “the economy will impact the health care industry as it tries to correct.”

The adage “history repeats itself” is accurate. Dean mentions that healthcare has experienced similar growth, expansion, and contraction scenarios in the past. But there is significant factor in the mix in 2022 that was not so strongly present in the past.

“High inflation. That makes the outcome of this cycle less predictable.”

## **A different kind of fatigue**

*Compassion fatigue.*

*Camilla Yamada, Healthcare Market Lead  
UMC, Seattle, WA*

*That’s interesting. I need to find out what Camilla means, I thought to myself when I read her response. So I did.*

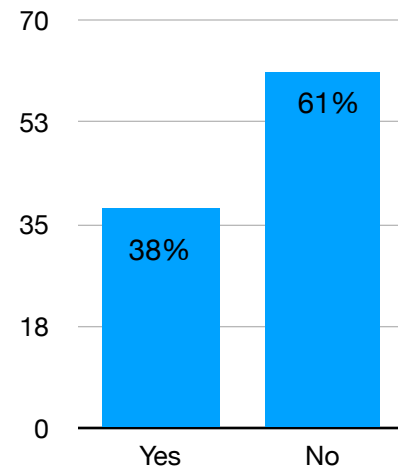
During the pandemic, Camilla was Director of Building & Engineering at Seattle Children's Hospital and mentioned *Compassion Fatigue* impacting some department employees. Compassion fatigue is similar to, but not the same as, burnout.

“Definitely, we saw it. It was tough. Only essential workers were onsite and they were the workhorses of the pandemic. It was easy to fall into it, especially mid to late 2021, when people were getting snippy as it kept going.

“Employees put a shell on to get through their days of seeing helplessness, powerlessness, and suffering, especially in the early days of the pandemic. Compassion fatigue was a physical manifestation over time, and it can be hard to identify. You become numb to the inputs you receive, lose empathy, and lose interest in things that once interested you. It was a sense of feeling numb. You just wanted to get through the day.”

According to experts on the condition, compassion fatigue has a quicker recovery time than burnout, if managed early. In addition, it is possible to snap out of compassion fatigue by reconnecting with the sense of mission that healthcare workers often feel in their work.

**Two years into Covid response, do you feel burnt out professionally?**



## **An alternate view on succession planning**

*Organizations need to allow succession planning for our older workers.*

*Jim Baron, Owner,  
Baron Consulting, Nashville, TN*

This was one of the more intriguing comments on the survey replies. We reached out to Jim to ask if he could elaborate on his meaning.

He did, and he advocated for a different approach to succession planning. While his idea may not receive support at the CFO level, where labor costs are dissected and analyzed, it deserves consideration at a time when it is difficult to find and attract qualified tradespeople.

“Let’s take an example. You have a dog leg in a steam system, and that system has been running full bore all winter. In the spring, you drain off the system, but condensate sits in some dead spots and corrodes the piping.

“When that guy who knows where those dead spots are walks out the door, that knowledge is gone. You can’t train somebody to know problem locations, unless you can find and mentor people before the knowledge walks out the door. So bring people on six months before you know your tradesperson is retiring. In the long run, it will pay you back in the mentoring and knowledge that is transferred. I know it is a tough sell to the C-Suite, but you can’t have unqualified people working on critical equipment when they don’t have the background and knowledge to do so.”

It's an approach that runs counter to most organizations thinking. What is the ROI to bring on an employee 6-months early versus the cost of system degradation due to employee skill deficits? It is a question worth considering.

### Compliance & Advocacy

*Expanding and changing compliance requirements.*

*Ed Browne, Consultant  
Arlington, MA*

Ed, a former Vice President of Facilities and Support Services, and now a consultant, used an analogy when describing compliance that befits his location close to Boston Harbor. "The tide is always coming in relative to compliance. It's ever-changing."

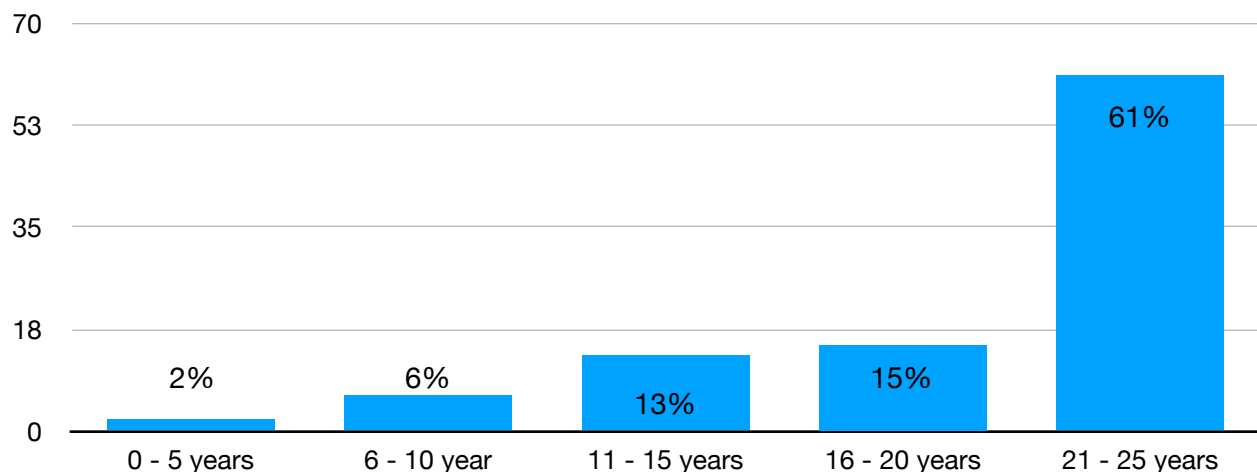
Ed noted that codes and standards are crafted and created by committees composed of experts and AHJs, such as fire chiefs and industry consultants. While well qualified, they are not always familiar with the role of a healthcare facility professional and the potential impacts of codes and standards on FM professionals.

For example, Ed mentioned a potential requirement for Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors in every patient room that was discussed with a national code authority. Ultimately, the regulation was revised to eliminate that requirement, in no small part, due to advocacy by ASHE.

"ASHE is always looking for volunteers to serve on these committees to apply the facilities management perspective to codes and standards. We need to continue to advocate for our industry. Wouldn't it be great to attain the goal of a unified code?"

Ed notes it can be challenging in today's facilities environment to get involved and stay focused on compliance advocacy with so many issues that require management focus.

### **Survey respondents were asked, how long have you worked in healthcare facilities management, or related discipline?**



## **Strategically working from home**

*"Gleaned from COVID is remote working, I try, based on schedule, to remote work once per week. Remote working is very productive as you do not have the day-to-day distractions."*

*Cory Griffiths, Director Safety  
Hutchinson Regional Medical Center, Hutchinson, KS*

Cory has been working from home on and off now for the past two years.

"I am a department of one, and the problem with in-house work is the daily fires interrupting what I am trying to complete. If I start the day with nine tasks I need to complete, I may only get to two. An example, I am responsible for completing the fleet insurance for the hospital. When I did it working in my hospital office it would take me five days. When I did it from home, it took me two days. My productivity is there, and the Vice President I report to sees that I am achieving my goals."

Clear communication with the person to whom Cory reports is needed for a successful work-from-home experience. They communicate and review Cory's deliverables so the VP can see that his goals are being met. Clear accountability and expectations are critical to achieving work from home success.

Cory mentions that employees who cannot deal with the distractions of home (pets, food, television, etc) may not make good work-from-home candidates. Self-discipline is needed.

### **Thank you**

Our thanks to Tracy Heidenreich, Don Sheets, Kevin Deitsch, Dean Pufahl, Camilla Yamada, Jim Baron, Ed Browne, Cory Griffiths, John Puckett, Jordan Smith, John Babin, Jason Lea, and Octavian Dumitrescu for taking time out of their day to speak with us. We appreciate your time and the insight you offered on these pages.

Thanks as well to all others who responded to the survey.

## Horses, leadership, and balance

*These roles are demanding, but we have to establish boundaries and take care of ourselves. That is an individual's responsibility.*

*John Puckett, Director  
University of Wisconsin Health, Madison, WI*

A positive result from the Fall survey, the majority of respondents to our survey feel they have the appropriate balance between their life and work (see below). We asked John how the responsibility to maintain this balance translates to the individual.

“I have a work plan for myself every day for what I need to get done. I set goals that I can achieve in 6-8 hours, and then I plan for another 1 to 2 hours a day of the unexpected, the things we can't control that just happen. I know it is never an 8-hour work day. It is really more like a 10-12 hour work day. You know that when you work in facilities.

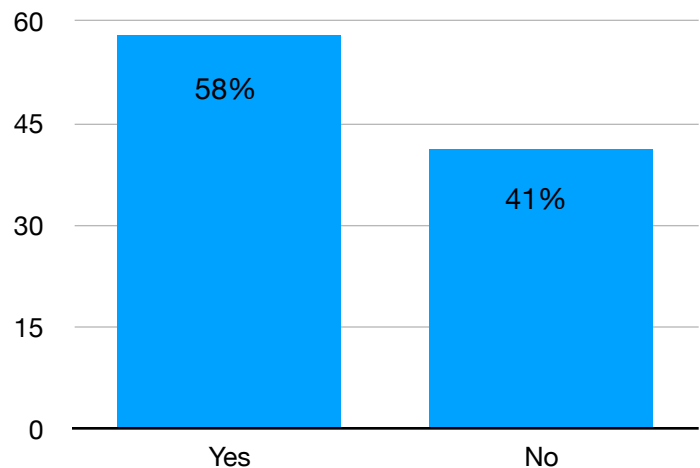
“But you also need to set boundaries between work and personal time. If I didn't go home until all my work was done, I would never go home.”

John reads to relax his mind and tries to get to bed at the same time every night to maintain consistency. He says he is fortunate to work for an organization that understands personal time and holds the employee accountable to understand balance. John recalled the words a former boss and mentor used when he (John) worked at a Montana hospital. The saying was quite fitting for the outdoors nature of the great State of Montana.

“*We don't practice the killing of willing horses*, he used to say, meaning we won't overwork our employees to the point of exhaustion, even if they are willing to do so. John says overworking employees to that point is “not leadership, it's abuse.” And that is the other key to achieving work/life balance in the management role.

“Your work/life balance is also achieved by developing and trusting staff to do the difficult work. As a leader, you can't be running from fire to fire. Empower employees so they can help with the difficult work.”

**Do you feel there is an appropriate work/life balance in your role?**





## Stepping back to move forward

*“Management Development. It's hard to get started in our industry without having someone take a step back in their careers.”*

*Jordan Smith, Administrative Director of Facilities  
AdventHealth, Tampa, FL*

It was an interesting quote, so we called Jordan. He explained that he entered the healthcare world as a Construction Project Coordinator at a Florida hospital, which was a step back in both title and money for him. He had been in Senior Level Management for a plumbing and heating firm. But the year was 2009, and with the down tick in the economy, the company Jordan was working for was closing.

Jordan was aware of the step back in salary when he entered healthcare. Still, a mentor sold him on the mission of healthcare, as well as the viability and stability of a healthcare facility's career. While Jordan says he had to take steps back, 9 years later and now with oversight of two hospitals, he is happy he did so.

“This is a rewarding career. I never thought I could have a career where I help to make sick people better.”

Relative to the employee shortage that hospitals across the country face, Jordan feels that the best approach to counter the shortage is to play the long game. Most hospitals, especially smaller community-based hospitals, don't have the budget to hire new employees before longer-term employees retire. Consequently, Jordan investigates non-traditional routes to hire employees.

“With my experience in plumbing and HVAC, I can teach new employees the technical part, the air handlers and the boilers. But if they understand people, if they get people, that is what I look for. I can teach them how a hospital works, but they need people skills.”

Jordan has made what some traditionalists might consider non-traditional hires using the criteria he describes above. He also says that “former business owners, people who have had to meet payroll and interact with others,” make good potential hires.

Jordan believes organizations would do well to create a “conscious path” for job advancement and succession planning. In other words, play the long game to staff development.

## Making do

*The number one issue has to be a sustainable experienced workforce. Hiring an experienced tradesman off the street is difficult in itself but adding hospital experience makes it rare. It is much better to build from within.*

*John Babin, Director, Facilities Management  
Ochsner Bayou Region*

Like most professionals reading this piece, John has had vacancies to fill in his department in the past year. He says, “we are holding our own, but I would like to build a bench. A lot of responsibility is snowballing to current staff with the shortages, and I worry about that.”

John has been advocating his management for an additional FTE to train/mentor as he knows retirements in his department are here and coming. But getting funding during tough financial times is difficult. John understands the funding predicament. But from a department perspective he wants “to be able to transfer valuable/irreplaceable experience to others (bench), before existing employees leave.”

John says that with two years of Covid and the impact of a hit by Hurricane Ida in 2021, which significantly damaged his hospital, stress and workload on current staff has increased.

“This is a great organization with great people. I’m not planning on leaving, but when I do, I want to leave it better than I found it. I want to create a bench and a succession plan. But with the way healthcare has evolved, not just in facilities but in all departments, it is difficult.”

John is working with his peers and regional leadership on ideas to help fill in employee gaps across his Ochsner Region. “Our CEO listens, so hopefully, we get that change. We have great people in the system and are trying to make the best of it.”

## **Finding fit**

*I have it because I make it a priority and don't let work consume me.*

*Jason Lea, Director Facilities  
Wadley Regional Medical Center, Texarkana, TX*

“It” is balance. Balance has not always come easy for Jason. He has worked in facilities management for more than 20 years. When he began in his management roles, he admits he did not always see balance as a priority. But as his career evolved, so too did his thought process.

“It takes a conscious effort to arrive at a point where work doesn’t consume you. Through my career changes, I have come to realize that the facility will go on without me. There will always be something to do, and you will never have enough time to do it. You can't let that stress get to you, and if it does, you need to take a step back.”

Jason says he controls what he can control, and as to what he can’t control, he deals with it the best he can.

“If they tell me I can’t hire people I say ok, what can I do to get this to be a positive? You have limits. You have to figure out how to deal with those limits. Why worry? I can’t control that decision. It is unsustainable over time if you are always operating in emergency mode.”

One last note. Here at Gosselin/Martin Associates, when we work with candidates, we tell them they should always interview the prospective employer, as the prospective employer interviews them. Jason has used this approach during his career. It is a practice that goes a long way to ensure that his approach fits with the organization’s approach.

“You have to consider not only the financial piece, but also will work allow me to maintain what is important to me. Family and balance mean a lot to me.”

Sage advice.

## Rural challenges

*I had several open positions over the course of the pandemic that have been filled, but I always worry about the next employee that might leave or retire and the stress this will add to the existing employees in terms of schedule and workload.*

*Octavian Dumitrescu, Facilities Manager  
St. Elizabeth Medical Center, Ottawa, IL*

Though part of the more extensive OSF Healthcare System, St. Elizabeth is located in rural Ottawa, IL, roughly 80 miles from Peoria and Chicago. Octavian recently lost one of his trade-staff to a more lucrative opportunity at a nearby nuclear plant.

“You are looking for people who live, or like to live, in rural areas, so it can be difficult to find and replace talent. We are the largest employer in Ottawa, but it is tough for us to compete with larger markets like Peoria. Many of the applicants I get have no experience at all in the trades. I have had some success with internal transfers from EVS and Dietary. I have some employees within a few years of retirement, so there is no good answer.”

Like most in the facility management field, Octavian manages by the mantra that if a problem needs to be solved, you solve it for the good of the patient. We asked Octavian what keeps him coming in every day, despite the challenges of short staff, long lead times, and tightening budgetary guidelines.

“I worked in manufacturing before coming to healthcare. Here, you work with people and patients. It is a huge difference. In manufacturing, it is productivity and numbers, which there is in healthcare, but you don’t deal with patients in manufacturing. Here we do. I like that.”

## On retiring

With the well-chronicled and much discussed grey tsunami ongoing, we had to ask the **R** question. The answers did not surprise. Because we have written and podcasted on the topic extensively, results are presented without comment.

### ***Are you considering retirement from healthcare facilities management? If yes, when?***

