

Are audits the panacea for service management in FM?

Professional, punctual, legally compliant and data-compliant - these are just some of the demands on professional facility service providers. At the same time, they are subject to high price and competitive pressure. If this is not always achieved to the desired quality and fullest satisfaction, it can quickly become a problem. But what is the reason for this and where can the levers for uninterrupted and legally compliant operation be identified?



Figure 1: Are audits the panacea for service management in FM?

Today, clients outsource many of their facility services to professional service providers. This applies to the purchase of individual services such as maintenance cleaning, green care or maintenance as well as the outsourcing of complete packages, including strategic management services. Because the service provider's extensive expertise and professional structures can be drawn upon, less internal know-how is needed, which is advantageous. Meanwhile, outsourcing brings with it as a disadvantage a certain loss of unrestricted control and access to the services. Therefore, a basic trust and partnership between service provider and client are necessary. As the latter is not always the case and due to a certain basic mistrust, clients of facility services arrange for external audits to control the quality of the contracted services. Reasons for this are: Checking the fulfilment of the contract, mandate of the internal audit, finding optimisation potentials or dissatisfaction with the service provision.

With each other instead of against each other - striving for improvements together

When an audit is announced to the service provider, it triggers uncertainty and unease in the auditee. Initially, there are defensive reactions, as the term "audit" - derived from the English (to

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Use added value - look at established processes

In a broader sense, an audit provides a deeper insight into the condition of the property. Particularly with regard to the value retention, usability and technical availability of a property, holistic observations are optimal for identifying over- or undersized service packages. Those who admit their own imperfections can transfer the focus to internal company processes, in addition to reviewing externally provided services, in order to optimise them and identify weaknesses. A neutral view of established processes is crucial here. This also applies to the topic of sustainability of facility management processes, which can be easily integrated into existing audit concepts and with the help of which, for example, the degree of fulfilment of set climate targets can be measured, controlled and monitored. In order to permanently establish quality changes in service provision in the company, external consultants help to design a long-term approach with regard to audit priorities and intervals.

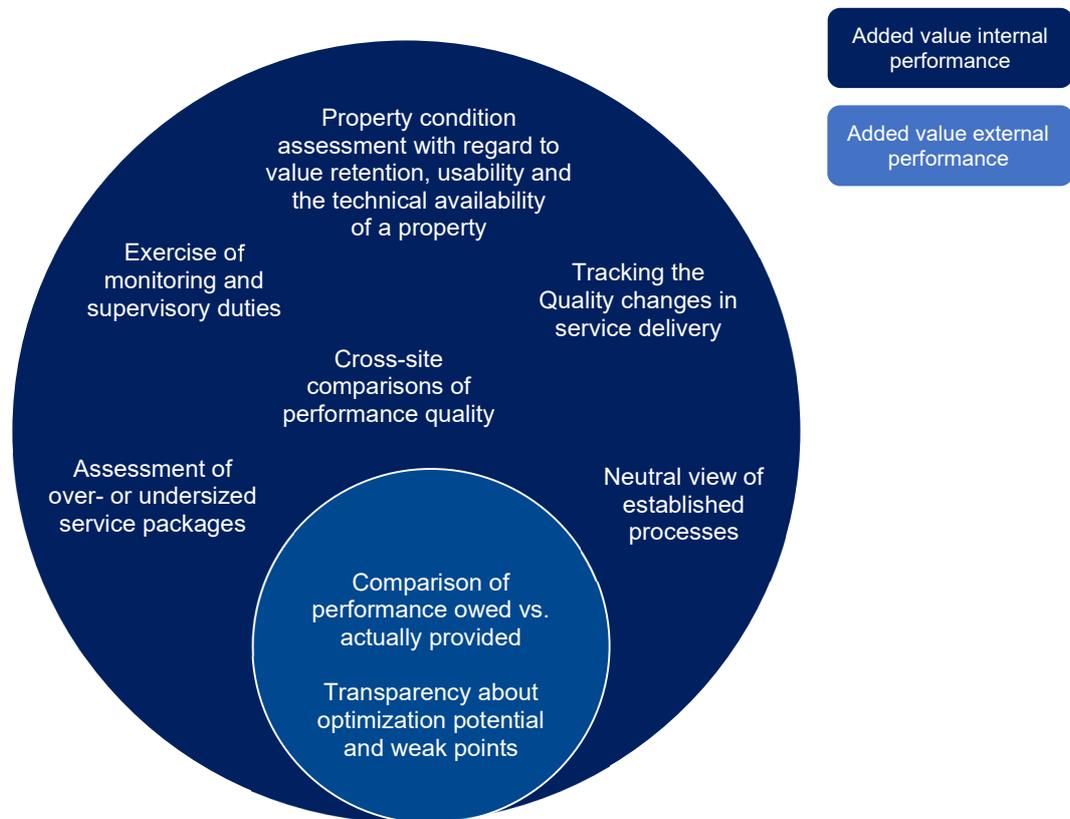


Figure 3: Overview Added value of audits on internal and external performance.. © CANZLER GmbH.

Trust is good, control is better?

In many cases, clients use audits to fulfil their monitoring and supervisory duties as operators of real estate and facilities and as employers. In principle, it is possible to transfer operator duties to internal and external service providers. However, the business owner cannot avoid his duty of supervision according to § 130 I OWiG by doing so! If the business owner is ignorant of essential regulations applicable to his building operation, he must either acquire the knowledge himself or organise a controlling system to derive measures from deficiencies found internally or externally (BayObLG NJW 2002, 766). Operator responsibility cannot be fully delegated, only the tasks and competences. Because trust is good, control is better and supervision is a duty.

And in the future?

Technical and regulatory requirements will become increasingly complex in the future. In order to deal responsibly with these issues in service management, attention, expertise and corresponding personnel capacities are required. This is supported by externally conducted audits, which are particularly useful for complex real estate portfolios. These represent key data results that do not replace regular quality and performance controls by the client. Software solutions and data standards are being further developed in order to systematically manage controlling as a client. Intelligent IoT solutions take over the evaluation of sensor data to determine whether maintenance was carried out on time. The subsequent completeness check of the documentation can also be software-based. With increasing outsourcing of facility management services, the importance of the higher-level and strategic service controller is growing. Continuous benchmarking and cross-site comparisons of performance quality become essential in order to make decisions about future cooperation and contract renewals. The human component of the auditor with his experience and as a mediator and "between-the-lines reader" will become more important as the level of automation increases.

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