



Spotlight: Jaime Nantka - Unveiling the Unsung Heroes of Facility Management

By Darra Kubera, Director of Communications, FOS of CannonDesign

On World FM Day, we honor the invaluable contributions and remarkable achievements of the facility management community, recognizing the profound influence this profession wields in our daily lives. I recently sat down with Jaime Nantka, a mechanical assessor for FOS of CannonDesign, to explore the narrative of this hidden champion within the realm of the built environment and illuminate the tangible difference he enacts through his dedicated efforts.

From my perspective, Jaime sincerely embodies this year's World FM Day slogan, "Inspire, Integrate, Innovate: Ignite Your Career in FM," even though his entrance into this field wasn't necessarily what he had envisioned for himself. "I had intended to join the military, but needed to switch gears which led me to study HVAC at SUNY Erie (ECC). I liked the program so much that I took every course they offered; I was actually the first person in ECC history to complete every engineering program they had!"

He started his career with a global hospitality management and real estate group, quickly moving his way up the ranks from grounds personnel to task force chief engineer. At FOS, Jaime's trajectory has continued at a fast pace — on his second day he was writing records from facility condition assessment data collected in the field, which is unheard of. Now, he's the in-house guru for onboarding and training new hires.

"A lot of folks coming into the world of FM don't have a background in maintaining or servicing the actual equipment. I've found that I've excelled in this industry due to my hands-on experience. That was one of the best parts of my education at ECC, it was all about practical application — working on boilers, ripping out AC units, everything! I wasn't just reading about how to do something in a book or the theory behind it, I was out there experiencing it."

Jaime's success as a trainer for new hires lies in part with his never-ending hunger for learning. When asked about his favorite part about working in this industry, he said "I enjoy getting to see different things every day. By no means am I an expert, I'm constantly

learning, and I enjoy doing research to further that knowledge. There's always an opportunity to see something new and learn something else."

Inspiring the new-hires he trains is just one of the ways Jaime is making an impact in facility management. With conviction, Jaime explains that there are three simple ways FMs can increase productivity —

1. **Adopt a leadership style that respects and empowers employees, rather than strictly directing them.** "This shift from being a boss to acting as a mentor can cultivate a culture of respect and motivation. When employees are treated with trust and given autonomy, their productivity and feelings of value naturally increase.
2. **Acknowledging when you don't have all of the answers.** "Embracing a culture of continuous learning and open dialogue ensures that a diverse array of experiences and knowledge informs decision making processes. The skills and perspectives of our unique, individual employees can lead to innovative solutions and improvements within the organization. By actively seeking out, and incorporating, input, FMs can bolster the collective intelligence of the team and foster an environment founded on mutual respect."
3. **Embrace change.** "This is fundamental for progress in facility management. It's a driver for innovation and advancement. Your team members are a valuable resource of fresh ideas and perspectives that have the potential to propel the company forward in ways you might not have imagined. By being open to listening and experimenting with new approaches, you open the door to improvements."

Our conversation on improving the industry continues, steering towards what Jaime thinks new-age asset management should look like: "I think it should incorporate carbon-neutral assessments. Buildings and facilities are major contributors to carbon emissions, primarily through energy consumption for heating, cooling, lighting, and operating equipment. Achieving carbon neutrality in facility management involves adopting strategies to reduce energy consumption, enhance energy efficiency, and switch to renewable energy sources."

"It also means considering the carbon footprint in every aspect of facility operations, from construction and materials used to waste management and water usage. Facility managers play a pivotal role in this transition. By conducting comprehensive facility condition assessments (FCAs), implementing sustainable practices, and using tools like ones we use here at FOS, they can significantly reduce the carbon footprint of their facilities. This not only contributes to the global fight against climate change but also often results in

operational cost savings, compliance with increasingly stringent environmental regulations, and enhanced reputation for corporate responsibility.”

Outside of work, Jaime is just as innovative. From building his own engine for a truck (based off a YouTube video) to completely re-gutting and remodeling his home (including all structural, electrical, plumbing, and design) — Jaime is no stranger to hard work and continuous improvement. His warm demeanor and approachable nature make him a delight to collaborate with, fostering seamless interactions and productive teamwork. I’m sure his pets (Thor, a Samoyed Husky, and cats Sunny and Starvin’ Marvin) feel the same.

I hope you’ll join me in celebrating Jaime, and the entire FM profession, this World FM Day!