

# Raising the standard

A new initiative from RealService aims to improve occupiers' perception of the property management profession.

Following on from the Property Industry Alliance's Occupier Satisfaction Survey which found that occupiers in the UK rate their level of satisfaction at below 50 per cent, the RealService Best Practice Group (RSBPG) has designed a new framework which aims to raise the standards of customer service in property management.

The framework puts greater emphasis on areas felt most important to occupiers – notably environmental issues, building insurances, reducing occupier costs, rental policies and working in communication and partnership.

The RSBPG, which also devised the Service Charge Compliance Index, is backed by the British Property Federation (BPF) and is a not-for-profit benchmarking and best practice group of 20 UK property owners, managers and investors.

Louise Freethy, business unit director at RealService who is responsible for running the RSBPG, said: "The framework is a measuring tool for looking at how well organisations are delivering customer service. Effectively, it's a self-help score-card that property owners can use to measure their performance level."

The new framework is divided into six headings known as 'building blocks' – Service Strategy; Customer Solutions; People and Leadership; Supply Chain and Client Management; Operations; and Measurement. Under the framework owners and managers are required to provide extensive evidence to support proof of best practice.

"There are 25 areas of criteria," Freethy explains. "Organisations are required to supply evidence on our online system in the form of documents, a self-scoring system and a synopsis. Once this has been submitted we go about verifying the evidence. Scores are confidential and once released, organisations can view them in the RealService Best Practice Index."

CoreNet Global UK is a member of the RSBPG. Its representative, Alan Carswell, director of real estate at Stanley Black & Decker, said: "Listening to the views of the end customer and measurement of best practice are essential if the industry as a



whole is to establish benchmarks that can then be used to measure improvements in this key area.

"This group of owners and managers is seeking to lead and one of the key challenges that we all face is to engage on these issues with an ever increasing audience and thus drive improvement across the entire industry."

Ian Fletcher, BPF director of real estate policy, headed a RSBPG Working Party set up to design the new framework. He said: "Having the involvement of occupier groups in the development of this new index has been a welcome litmus test to ensure the index continues to remain relevant and challenging."

"The new index is rightly more searching, but being a participant in the BPI and member of the wider Best Practice Group provides a unique combination of challenge and peer group support. The leading companies that support the Best Practice Index have shown that benchmarking

customer service is not only good for their customers, but good for their companies in identifying areas to improve the performance of their businesses."

RSBPG chairman Paul Harding, who is international director of professional services at DTZ, added: "Members of the RSBPG have been at the forefront of improving customer service for the past six years. While the latest Occupier Satisfaction Survey indicates that the industry as a whole has a long way to go, our members are at the vanguard of change and continue to work together to improve customer service to occupiers and share best practice."

For more information visit the RealService website: <http://www.real-service.co.uk>. ■

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