

**Facility Manager Proves Her Worth**  
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In little over six month, Barbara de Nijs Bik, Director, Facility Services for Intercontinental Hotels, headquartered in Atlanta, upgraded more than half of the space at Ravinia Three located at I-285 and Ashford-Dunwoody Rd. so that employees were more comfortable, had more effective workspace and to everyone's surprise, also saved the company over \$2,000,000 annually in rent and operating expenses through this exercise.

“We exceeded our President’s expectations and overall, the entire employee reaction was very positive even though we provided them with slightly smaller workstations,” said de Nijs Bik when reviewing the impact of the work she and her team provided after Intercontinental’s business realignment strategy in 2004 and 2005. Originally in four buildings in the Central Perimeter area, the business realignment was focused on developing employees to their full potential. The ability to take this business mission and align it with real estate and facility requirements proved to be the successful strategy that reduced costs, at the same time improving employee satisfaction and morale, an often impossible feat.

The key strategy, to align the facilities strategy with the overall corporate strategy, was a success due to the ability to uncover vital information by working with all business units in organizing the plan. Intercontinental realized that specific spaces were no longer needed and we able to let leases expire, saving substantially on rent and operational costs. Another alignment success was the creation of additional conferencing space and an upgrade of videoconferencing facilities that allow workers to save time and travel costs through additional videoconferecing.

Since de Nijs Bik moved to Atlanta in the early 80’s her career path has been typical of most successful Facility Management executives. “I just fell into the profession, like most of us,” she says when discussing her background. After a customer service and customer service management stint, she took on responsibility for “computer training and setting up office procedures back in the days of the first, very large desktop computers,” she relates. From there she continued to successfully manage office details and got her first real Facility Management

responsibility when she was asked to build out a 30,000 square foot facility. “I didn’t have the direct experience, but knew I could do it,” she says. “It really takes someone with drive and an I-can-do-it attitude to take on new tasks and excel at them.” She took on more and bigger projects and was promoted to Director during the 2003 realignments.

With responsibilities for space planning, design and construction projects, security, safety and disaster preparedness, all furniture purchasing and reconfigurations, and real estate administration for the Americas, de Nijs Bik is a fairly typical Facility Manager, if such a position exists. Depending on the size of the organization, Facility Managers can range from single managers contracting most of their work to third parties, to managers of large staffs including architects, designers, project managers, all the way through maintenance workers within the facility. When discussing her role at Intercontinental, de Nijs Bik gives credit to her contacts and professional associations through the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) for providing additional educational and networking opportunities. Last year she successfully sat for the Certified Facility Manager designation examination and is one of about three dozen Atlanta-area CFM's. She even met her husband through the Association's annual conference six years ago in Dallas.

The International Facility Management Association (IFMA) is the largest and most widely recognized professional association for facility management, supporting approximately 17,300 members. The Association’s members are represented in 125 chapters, 16 councils and one Special Interest Group (SIG), in 52 countries worldwide. Globally, IFMA certifies facility managers, conducts research, provides educational programs, recognizes facility management degree and certificate programs and produces World Workplace, the largest facility management-related conference and exposition.

The Atlanta Chapter of IFMA has almost 500 members and provides networking, education and community service opportunities for its professional and associate members.