



Meeting Meetings' Expectations

One Australian Firm Brings EMS System Up Down Under

Background

With more than 200 partners and 1,600 staff members, Blake Dawson Waldron (BDW) is one of the largest law firms in Australia and the South Pacific region. Founded in the 1850s, the firm became a fully integrated national partnership in 1988, with offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Perth, as well as London, Shanghai, Jakarta and Port Moresby. BDW serves a variety of national and international clients in the areas of commerce, industry and government.

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Blake Dawson Waldron's management believes in the power of technology to deliver more effective legal services. The firm's Legal Technology Group, made up of lawyers and IT professionals, is recognized for its cutting-edge work in products and services like their Virtual Deal Room, Electronic Discovery of Files and E-mails (eDiscover®), and Virtual Lawyer Systems.

The Problem

As tech-savvy administrators, Blake Dawson Waldron employees knew that scheduling the many meeting rooms,

car spaces and teleconference phone lines — as well as the management of associated catering and equipment requests — in its multiple offices using independent personal calendaring software, was time-consuming and labor intensive. What's more, without a set of standard procedures for reserving space, the process was bound to involve errors and inequities.

The driving force behind the move toward an electronic system was Valarie Canestra (National Administration Manager) and Rick Durnford (Sydney Administration Manager). Canestra and Durnford were specific in how the system would align with the team's future strategic directions.

Carol Lawton is an Information Technology Project Manager for BDW who works closely with all of the firm's Australian offices. For a five-month period, she facilitated a review committee made up of Canestra, Durnford, service department managers, receptionists and key representatives from the firm's IT departments and service departments to evaluate facility scheduling software systems. EMS became a candidate based on both Internet research and a recommendation from another prominent Australian law firm.

According to Lawton, in order meet the firm's requirements, a software package would have to provide a number of features and benefits:

- a reliable, central data repository;
- a Web-based booking form;
- multiuser accessibility;

Case Study

- improved communication between receptionists/various service groups;
- e-mail integration; and
- bookings locatable by the use of a search interface.

If a company outside Australia provided the product, it was important that the support relationship was workable.

EMS Enterprise met the software specifications, and Dean Evans & Associates met the support specs. Says Lawton, "We had a lengthy product analysis and selection phase, and we found DEA's patience and support during this period to be excellent."

The Solution

With the review process complete, the firm selected EMS Enterprise as its event management solution.

"EMS satisfied our requirements right out of the box," says Lawton. "Remote tech support, training and implementation have also met our needs.

"Don't allow your technical consultants to leave," she says. "They don't seem to sleep — they are often working with us by phone or e-mail in our working day, which is late evening for you."

Sydney and Melbourne were the first BDW offices to come online with EMS. Between the two sites, EMS provides more than 900 people with secure access to room and resource booking information. In the course of their first four or five months on the system, Sydney and Melbourne have combined to create more than 2,000 reservations and 5,000 bookings per month for client meetings, internal meetings, seminars, events, teleconferences and parking space management.

BDW is also utilizing Virtual EMS, the Web-based component of EMS Enterprise. According to Lawton, the availability of Virtual EMS has improved and streamlined the firm's facility scheduling workflow — another of BDW's software evaluation criteria. Users submit requests via Virtual EMS to receptionists who review and then approve/amend/reject them.

The firm sees other benefits in its Sydney and Melbourne offices:

- Increased productivity. Staff members are using a single integrated system for the management of meeting rooms and associated catering and equipment orders. EMS has improved and streamlined workflow procedures.
- Greater accuracy in reservation requests. Virtual EMS supports the creation of mandatory fields on the Web Request form.
- Faster reservation retrieval using the powerful EMS Enterprise browsing function.
- Simplified handling of recurring events. EMS allows an unlimited number of bookings in each reservation.
- Reduced paper use.
- Improved reporting, using the system's wide variety of operational, sales and statistical reports.

The Future: Crossing the Continent

In Blake Dawson Waldron's Sydney and Melbourne offices, EMS has proven to be a great success. With the upcoming release of EMS Enterprise Version 3.0 and its time-zone functionality, BDW will bring its Perth, Canberra and Brisbane offices online and reap the benefits of a true enterprisewide, cross-continent deployment. ❖

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DEAN EVANS AND ASSOCIATES, EMS ENTERPRISE, VIRTUAL EMS AND THE COMPANY'S OTHER EVENT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE PRODUCTS, CONTACT TOM SCHEK IN DENVER, COLORADO: TOM@DEA.COM.

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