

# CHURCH EXECUTIVE

## Unseen green: Software as stewardship?

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Churches make more efficient use of resources by implementing scheduling software.

*by: Tom Schek*

In recent years, the environmental stewardship of churches has become an important topic, as it should be. In fact, everywhere you turn these days you see green products, initiatives and solutions. Sometimes, however, it's the green you don't see that is having a significant impact on the environment.

Since the mid-1980s, software companies have been producing products that increase facility scheduling efficiency and reduce energy and material waste. For most of those two decades that effort has gone unlabeled. The companies involved have probably never thought of it as being green or environmentally aware — it's just one of those rare win-win situations where something that makes sense for the environment makes dollars and cents for organizations.

If your church makes it a priority to treat the earth gently, there are some very tangible ways in which using well-designed facility scheduling software and an interactive Web calendar can make a significant difference.

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### Effective staffing

Smaller, more efficient scheduling staff: When activity volume increases from year to year, one option for handling the additional events is to increase the headcount in your scheduling office and on your setup crew. However, more employees mean more office space, additional commuters on the highways and in general, a larger carbon footprint. A better, eco-friendly option is to help your existing staff work more effectively. Facility scheduling software gives you the tools you need to significantly increase your church's scheduling efficiency.

Meeting and event space optimization: Having the means to quickly and easily reserve the right rooms with the appropriate setup and teardown time between sessions can make a world of difference in how space is used and ultimately allow you to do more with less. Churches that are considering expanding their facility or moving to a larger one because of the perceived lack of space internally often realize after implementing a facility scheduling system, that they have all the room they need.

The nearly paper-less office: While few scheduling operations can claim to be 100 percent paperless, there are a number of functions within a facility scheduling system that can help you achieve near-zero paper consumption. The ability to e-mail reports directly from the system, the availability of online space request forms and integrated event task reminders are just a few.

Resource optimization: As with space optimization, the accurate scheduling and tracking of resources (A/V equipment, catering supplies, etc.) allows churches to do more with less. Instead of purchasing additional data projectors for example, an organization might find that its existing inventory can readily meet the demand when scheduled more carefully. This practice gets to the heart of the so called "Three R's" of waste prevention: reduce, reuse and recycle.

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### **Eliminate energy waste**

HVAC integration: The heating and cooling of unoccupied rooms can be a major source of energy waste and a major drain on your budget. Well-designed scheduling systems integrate with a church's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to provide room occupancy information that can be used to automatically adjust room temperatures between an energy efficient set point for empty rooms and a comfortable setting for events.

*Data recycling:* The Three R's concept can be applied to data, too. Through interfaces with a number of other systems (digital signage, Web calendar, room diagramming and many more), scheduling software can eliminate the person-hours spent re-keying event-related data, as well as, the associated overhead.

In short, churches can save time, energy and money through the unseen green of facility scheduling software.

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