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## Event Management Software Speeds Scheduling, Tracks Resources

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Harrison Medical Center

By Jennifer O'Connell

While the debate on how best to manage electronic health records rages on, healthcare facilities are quietly reaching a consensus on best scheduling practices when it comes to facilities management.

Efficiency and accuracy are prized by the Harrison Medical Center, a healthcare network that has significantly grown in the last decade, and the Kettering Health Network, a teaching healthcare network in Ohio, that is also

expanding its operations. Both hospitals utilize meeting and event scheduling software solutions to keep their facilities running smoothly, while continuing to serve their communities.

Harrison Medical Center has evolved from a small community hospital founded in 1918 to the largest healthcare provider in Washington State's Kitsap and Olympic peninsulas.

The center provides standard medical care, performs 13,000 surgeries a year and acts as a regional hub for specialized care in cardiology, oncology and pediatrics. As one of the primary healthcare providers in the region, Harrison employs more than 2,300 health professionals.

Over the years, the hospital expanded from one busy location to five campuses, caring for over 90,000 patients. As the center's facilities grew, so did its need to stay efficient and organized when it came to getting the most out of its staff and space.

Scheduling meetings and events was problematic, first with an antiquated DOS-based scheduling system and then with a Windows-based system that was difficult to navigate, said Brenda DeBock, one of the scheduling system's main users.

By 2001, the staff at Harrison Medical was eager to find an event management solution that utilized leading-edge technology, would prevent double bookings and was practical for users.



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Harrison made the decision to purchase scheduling software specifically designed for meeting and event planning.

“(It)is faster than the other scheduling systems we’ve used,” DeBock said. “But more importantly, it’s much more user-friendly.”

Four of Harrison’s education associates enter nearly 2,000 reservations into the database each year, including those events’ time(s), date(s) and expected attendance, DeBock said. Some bookings also require A/V equipment, such as overheads, microphones, computers, data projectors and videoconferencing setups – all of which can be added into scheduling software.

The electronic “reservation book” allows this information to be used for one-time events or conveniently carried over for reoccurring events, which saves DeBock’s staff the time it would take to reenter meeting and event data.

Once the meetings and event information is plugged in, four dietary department staff members access it and add requirements for catering services.

Communication has been streamlined, with Harrison staffers viewing the schedule of events from any computer linked to the medical center’s intranet using the web-based component of the system. DeBock estimates that several hundred of her coworkers make use of this quick and convenient access method.

This sophisticated scheduling solution has kept everyone on the same, detailed, digital page for the last nine years – a period that saw the addition of Harrison’s latest two medical campuses.

Thousands of healthcare providers are enjoying the benefits of virtual, automated and tailored scheduling technology. Success stories like Harrison’s are encouraging other healthcare providers to adopt and expand their facilities’ use of scheduling and event management software.

Jeanne Warrick, Kettering’s room reservation administrator and physicians’ lounge coordinator, said she depends on scheduling software to keep track of the various work spaces and resources for this expanding healthcare network.

Warrick said using the facilities management software to schedule meeting spaces, manage catering services and keep track of tables, chairs and A/V equipment in 17 of the growing network’s buildings has proved to be efficient and effective.

“It has saved us a bunch of time, but it’s also very convenient when you have a network as large as us,” Warrick said. “It’s literally a one-stop shop. It really has kept everything organized and when you’re in a growing organization as large as ours, we need to make sure everyone is happy.”

Kettering staff has relied on the scheduling software to grow with them as their network – and their need for meeting and event planning – continues to expand.

“Our network has grown since we purchased this system. We’re just growing by leaps and bounds. We’ve got about 9,600 employees at this time,” Warrick said.

While Kettering and Harrison are both substantial healthcare networks, scheduling software works for smaller healthcare systems and individual facilities.

The needs of each healthcare organization greatly vary by their facilities, activities, specialties and size. Likewise, the capabilities and cost of individual event scheduling software systems differ widely by company. Healthcare groups interested in scheduling software should research different options thoroughly to determine what event and meeting management system will best serve their staff and ultimately their patients.

*Jennifer O’Connell is the Communications Coordinator at [Dean Evans & Associates, Inc.](#) DEA is the maker of Event Management Systems (EMS) software. EMS is used by thousands of organizations around the globe, including single-facility providers, medium-sized health systems and some of the largest healthcare networks in the country. She can*

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