

EMS Case Study *The Ohio State University*



Background

Founded in 1870, The Ohio State University is one of the largest higher education institutions in the country, with an enrollment of approximately 50,000.

As the “home away from home” for its large student body, the Ohio Union is live with activity from early in the morning until late at night. The current facility was built in 1950, but the union’s history goes back to the late 1800s, when The Ohio State University was the first public institution in the U.S. to have a student union. Today, the union hosts roughly 12,000 events each year.

The Last Straw with an Underperforming “Solution”

In the mid-1990s, the Ohio Union purchased a computer-based scheduling program that was touted as an “industry leader.” Before long, however, they started to recognize a number of flaws and shortcomings in the program. Poor reporting capabilities, a weak event search function and an inefficient pricing process were entries on a growing list of complaints.

When a new assistant director came to the union, she quickly identified that the existing scheduling tool was falling short of the staff’s expectations and needs.

“I think the last straw was when we were trying to generate yearly reports for our assistant vice president of student affairs and getting nowhere fast. The database was so full of duplicate entries that we couldn’t even manipulate exported data to make any sense of it. It wasn’t producing accurate numbers,” she says. It appeared that it was time for a change. She continues, “We had come to a fork in the road: Either spend lots of time and additional money to right a wronged and dysfunctional system or get a new one.”

Fast Facts

- The Ohio State University replaces flawed scheduling system with **EMS Enterprise**; creates user-friendly **campus-wide scheduling system**
- **50,000** students; 12,000 events yearly in the Union
- EMS **converted data** from old system to new EMS Enterprise in just a few hours

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Converting Without a Hitch

As the Ohio Union staff began discussing the idea of replacing their existing system, the assistant director's previous experience with EMS stood out in her mind. "I knew EMS would meet our needs better than the old program was."

After installing EMS Enterprise, the next issue was getting data from the old system into the new one. Rather than entering it manually, the Ohio Union arranged for the EMS technical staff to perform a data conversion. In the course of just a few hours, building and room definitions, a list of customers and contacts, historical and future reservations data, and other information were duplicated in the EMS system.

The union staff had their concerns about whether such a large, complex task could be completed quickly and accurately. "We were leery about the process moving so quickly," says one staff member. "But once the data conversion was underway, things came off without a hitch."

Here Today - Campus-Wide Tomorrow?

Having successfully moved their old system to EMS, the Ohio Union staff is now reaping the benefits. "Things here are going really well," one staffer beams. "EMS is much more user-friendly than our previous system. It helps the Event Services team with their efficiency and their ability to provide great customer service to our clients."

Among the improvements they are seeing are:

- Faster, more efficient reservations process
- Increased ability to forecast facility usage with statistical reports
- System-generated pricing discounts
- Improved communication with clients via emailed Confirmations
- Better dissemination of information internally using an array of standard operational reports
- Enhanced search capabilities and the elimination of duplicate client entries

Not only are the staff and management at the union happy with their new system, it's possible that one day all the operating units on campus may be using EMS Enterprise to manage their events. Talks of centralizing all scheduling operations at OSU in one system are underway. No matter how those discussions turn out, the union staff is pleased with how simple it was to move to EMS and impressed with what a difference the system has made for their facility.

For more information on Dean Evans & Associates, and the company's event management and master calendaring software products, go to www.dea.com or contact the Sales department at sales@dea.com or 1.800.440.3994 ext. 863.

