



Data Conversion Options with EMS

Getting Your Scheduling Data into EMS

Switching systems can be intimidating, but there are multiple ways to migrate to EMS without losing your valuable scheduling information. The options range from a customized data migration to manually entering the data. Each method has its pros and cons.

Customized Data Migration

For a customized data migration, DEA creates a tailored program to read from your old database and rewrite your information into corresponding fields in EMS. The advantages of a customized data migration are that most data relationships are maintained, and that the transfer of most information takes place quickly, albeit after days of programming and testing.

No two scheduling databases have identical layouts, so data often has to be moved into a field that is fairly similar, but not a perfect fit. This requires the migrated data to be thoroughly reviewed and edited. EMS will inherit any data limitations of the previous system, which can lead to significant time spent fine tuning data.

In some cases, the difference in layout is significant enough that certain information cannot be automatically transferred and must be manually entered in EMS.

Because of the time DEA invests in mapping one database to another, there are significant labor-related charges for customized data migration. The cost of this method increases with the level of completeness and accuracy your organization desires.

Strategies for Success

- Set funds aside specifically devoted to data conversion that are independent of your training budget.
- Before the conversion, clean up your existing database as much as possible, removing data that is unnecessary, inaccurate, etc.

Data Import Utilities

Data import is a process in which EMS utilities are used to import lists of rooms, resources, holidays, groups and reservations into the EMS database. An advantage to this approach is speed. However, you must prepare files for import and only certain data can successfully undergo this transition. Data imports don't capture room booking resource details, such as pricing and catering information attached to specific spaces. You will have to manually enter these details into EMS.

Like a manual conversion, the "cost" of using data import tools is simply the time you invest. Data import tools come standard in Enterprise-level EMS systems.

Strategies for Success

- Keep everyone on the same page when executing a multiple-stage data import.

Make sure all team members know, for example, when data from building No. 1 will be imported and when data from building No. 2 will be imported. This prevents confusion between edited data and any recently imported data that still needs to be retouched.

- Take thorough notes during your EMS training. This will come in handy when imported data needs to be re-touched.
- Use all the column formatting tools in Excel and save files as tab delimited files for easy import.

Manual Conversion

Manual data entry definitely has some advantages, and the first is that problems with the source data can be identified and corrected. While there is always the possibility of human error, scheduling employees are familiar with the current system's data and what they'll need from EMS in the future. The source data could be questionable, but employees can recognize and rectify the information rather than transferring faulty data into your new EMS software. With manual entry you are able to ensure your data is very "clean" and user friendly.

The second advantage is cost. With a manual process, you invest staff time but do not have to make any additional payment. A manual data conversion's cost can vary depending on the complexity of the data structure and other factors. While typically the most labor-intensive approach, the cost is offset by the benefit of the first-hand knowledge and experience your staff gains.

The third and longest lasting advantage of performing a manual conversion is the depth of understanding you get from knowing your EMS software "inside and out." Organizations that take the time to perform a manual conversion gain greater knowledge of their new system's capabilities and consequently they are more likely to use the system to its fullest capabilities.

Strategies for Success

- Bite the bullet: Taking the staff time now to enter “clean” data in EMS will pay off later. The quality of the data you put in EMS directly affects the quality of the information you get out of EMS.
- When possible, avoid running parallel systems in both your old database and EMS. No one wants to spend time entering the same data twice. Instead, convert at the pace that’s convenient for your organization by:
 - a) Choosing a “drop-dead date” in the future when you’ll stop entering information into your old system. This gives staff time to practice on the EMS system, while still taking care of day-to-day schedules.
 - b) Making a gradual transition. Pick a future date and start entering bookings backwards until you’ve caught up to the present date.
 - c) Flipping the switch by taking advantage of a normal pause in work. If your organization typically shuts down over the holidays or for another period of time during the year, use that time to manually enter all of your reservations, bookings and other information into EMS. Once all of your data has been converted, simply begin using EMS.

	Pros	Cons
Customized Data Migration	Preserves most corresponding data. Quick transfer of information. Avoids running parallel systems. Can be tested, refined and re-worked.	EMS inherits limitations of the previous system. Cost of DEA programmers' time. Staff doesn't develop knowledge of EMS. Heavily dependent on DEA.
Data Import	Imports high-level lists to EMS. Quicker than a manual conversion. Self-directed implementation.	Can only import certain data. Must manually enter booking details. Cost of staff time to re-touch reservations. Requires technical expertise.
Manual Conversion	Clean, user-friendly data. Staff gains an understanding of EMS. Flexible dates to go live with EMS. Lower cost of staff and/or temporary employee time. Does not require technical expertise. Self-directed implementation.	An investment of staff time is required. Possibility of human error.

To learn more about EMS conversion capabilities call 1.800.440.3994