

Microsoft Outlook® is an outstanding tool for personal scheduling and may work for basic room reservations. But organizations whose meeting and event scheduling begins to take on a higher level of complexity tend to find themselves needing a product specifically designed for that purpose.

What are the signs that you've outgrown Outlook for room scheduling and resource management?

- **Stressed schedulers.** Your job would be simpler if your system had automated room search capability that provided you with a list of available rooms from which to choose rather than having to "invite" rooms until you find one that is free. The ability to search on criteria like room type or room features would also be helpful.
- **Too Many Tasks.** To be optimally efficient, you need to be able to book people, rooms and services in one operation instead of as multiple independent tasks.
- **Room requests in your Inbox.** You've moved toward a "managed space" approach on some or all of your rooms, where they must be requested and then the request must be approved.
- **Stacks of service order forms.** An increase in the number of service orders (A/V equipment, catering, etc.) scheduled makes automated notifications about service additions or changes a necessity.
- **Bare shelves in storage rooms.** You need a system that notifies you when you attempt to book more of a particular resource item than is available.
- **Sliding dividers.** You're now responsible for managing rooms that have moveable walls or partitions and can be subdivided or used in their entirety, as the event warrants.
- **Irritated attendees.** Visitors begin to comment on meetings that were scheduled in rooms that were either too big or too small. You need a system that not only lets you indicate the capacity for a room but that also validates that capacity against your expected attendance.
- **Scurrying setup crews.** As your facility gets busier, you realize you need to specify adequate setup and teardown time before and after bookings to ensure that rooms are in good condition for every meeting or event.
- **Illegible ledgers.** You need to begin recording information on meeting-specific cost centers and allocating charge-backs, and you're struggling to keep track of it all.
- **Lots of sticky notes.** The capturing of additional information (project number, visitor information, setup type, etc.) during the booking process becomes a priority.
- **Forking flowcharts.** Your booking processes have evolved to include multiple types (workspace reservations, meeting room reservations, video conference reservations, etc.).
- **Confusing calendars.** Complex reservations involving non-pattern dates and times have become more prevalent.
- **Ho ho horrible miscommunications.** You need to be able to prevent the scheduling of rooms on holidays.
- **An abundance of file folders.** Meeting organizers begin requesting that you manage attachments related to their session and also provide links from the meeting information to websites.
- **Fingers drumming on desktops.** Upper management is requesting an array of reports (operational, sales, utilization, etc.) that you can't currently provide.

If you recognize even a few of these signs, you may want to consider moving to specialized room and resource management software like EMS. And since EMS can be integrated with Outlook, you can work within that familiar personal scheduling interface while having one-click access to self-service room reservation and resource booking functionality.