How Your Organization Can Benefit from Meeting Room Booking Software
# Table of Content

- Market Trends Impacting Meeting Room Booking ..................................................................... 2
- Challenges of the Meeting Booking Process ........................................................................ 3
- The Solution: Meeting Room Booking Software ................................................................. 4
- Important Benefits ................................................................................................................. 4
- Types of Meeting Room Booking Software ......................................................................... 5
- 10 Things to Look for in Meeting Room Booking Software .................................................. 6
- Resource Central: Meeting Room Booking Software for Microsoft Outlook® ..................... 7
- Advantages of Resource Central ............................................................................................ 8

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*How Your Organization Can Benefit from Meeting Room Booking Software*
Meeting scheduling is a routine activity in the workplace, yet it can be complicated and time-consuming if you don’t have an efficient booking process. Meeting organizers are tasked with getting a group of busy people together at the same time and place. This may involve communicating back and forth with attendees via email or phone. Once everyone agrees on a time to meet, meeting organizers have to find a meeting room as well as order audiovisual equipment, catering, and other services. When they’re finished coordinating a meeting, meeting planners may find that they’ve spent more time scheduling the meeting than they’ll spend in the meeting itself. However, it doesn’t have to be this way.

A growing number of companies are replacing manual, error-prone booking methods with meeting room booking software. Meeting scheduling software streamlines the meeting room booking process and enables staff to complete meeting arrangements instantly. Users can search for available meeting rooms, book meetings, invite attendees, and order associated services from a single, user-friendly interface. This gives your staff better control of meeting planning and eliminates the need to use several different systems to schedule meetings. Your organization as a whole stands to benefit from the implementation of meeting room booking software because meeting room management processes have a direct impact on your overall performance and financial standing.

**Market Trends Impacting Meeting Room Booking**

Market trends encouraging organizations to adopt meeting scheduling systems include workforce mobility, mobile technology, visitor management, digital signage, and environmental sustainability. Flexibility is key in today’s business environment. Using a centralized meeting booking system that can be accessed from any location, over any connection, and on any device is critical as the workforce becomes more mobile. Staff members need to be able to log in and book meetings, even when they’re away from the office. This maximizes productivity and the Return on Investment (ROI) of meeting room software.

Advancements in mobile technology have also led to an increase in meeting room booking software usage. We’ve come a long way since the clunky mobile phones of the 90s, and mobile technology has begun to permeate our daily lives. According to the International Telecommunication Union, there are 6.8 billion mobile subscriptions worldwide. Portio Research predicts that mobile subscribers worldwide will reach 8.5 billion by the end of 2016. Mobile devices are becoming the medium of choice for accessing the Internet. More than two-thirds of Internet users surveyed by Accenture use mobile devices to access the Internet on a daily basis. In response to this trend, some meeting room booking software vendors have developed applications that...
give users the ability to plan and schedule meetings on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets.

The more meetings a company has, the more visitors they are likely to host. This has created a demand for visitor management tools that speed up the visitor check-in process and give guests a strong first impression. A meeting room booking tool that comes equipped with a visitor management system allows receptionists to quickly register external meeting attendees, print name badges, and notify hosts that guests have arrived. This streamlines visitor registration and makes visitors feel more informed and welcome.

The increasing popularity of digital signage is another market driver. Digital signage is any type of digital display that’s connected to a computer or playback device. It typically consists of LCD, LED, or plasma screens, or even tablet devices like the iPad. Technology market analyst firm ABI Research predicts that the overall market for digital signage in the US will grow from nearly $1.3 billion in 2010 to almost $4.5 billion in 2016. Digital signage can be used to clearly display meeting information outside of meeting rooms. Unlike static paper signs, digital signs display current, up-to-date information because they are integrated with meeting scheduling software. This eliminates confusion regarding whether a meeting room is available or occupied. Digital signs with touch screens allow users to book, cancel, or extend meetings on the spot. There are also advanced digital signage solutions that display Wayfinding information, visitor greetings, RSS feeds, videos, and other dynamic content in addition to meeting information.

The move toward meeting room booking software is also part of a larger trend championing sustainability. Going green has become an increasingly attractive business strategy. Two-thirds of more than 2,800 companies surveyed by MIT Sloan Management Review in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group say they have made sustainability a permanent agenda topic within their companies. Moreover, nearly a third of the companies surveyed said that the adoption of sustainable practices has added to their profitability. Meeting room booking software supports green initiatives by maximizing the use of existing meeting rooms and resources, which results in a lower carbon footprint and reduced energy consumption.

### Challenges of the Meeting Booking Process
Meetings are a necessary part of business, but what isn’t necessary is the amount of time spent arranging them. According to a study conducted in September 2010, business professionals spend 4.75 hours of a typical workweek arranging an average 8.9 meetings. With the amount of time that businesses spend scheduling meetings, they could take Friday afternoon off every week.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Booking Challenges:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Wasted time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Scheduling errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Damage to employee morale and client perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inefficient use of meeting rooms and resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meeting booking woes affect businesses of all sizes, from small businesses to large enterprises. But the more meeting facilities a company has, the more
complex planning and scheduling meetings becomes. The process of scheduling a meeting, finding available meeting rooms, checking the availability of attendees, and ordering extra services can be drawn-out and complicated without the right software for the task. Some consequences of not using meeting room booking software include wasted time, scheduling errors, damage to employee morale and client perception, and inefficient use of meeting rooms and resources.

**Wasted Time**
Paper-based booking methods, spreadsheets, and other outdated tools that add significantly to the workload of busy administrative staff. Manual processes for arranging meetings, such as phone calls, emails, and post-it notes, lead to a lot of back and forth communication, which is a major time killer that leaves a lot of room for error. Using a variety of different systems and procedures to book meetings and schedule resources also makes it impossible for users to get a quick overview of booked meetings and available meeting rooms.

**Scheduling Errors**
Organizations with complex, multi-step meeting booking processes typically use separate systems to book meeting rooms, invite attendees, order catering and other services, and register visitors. Scheduling errors occur frequently because information regarding the availability of a room isn’t always accurate or cannot be accessed at a moment’s notice due to a lack of synchronization between disparate systems. Moreover, changes and cancellations aren’t communicated immediately to meeting attendees and service providers. This could result in meeting rooms being double booked, attendees showing up to cancelled meetings, or catering being delivered at the wrong time or to the wrong meeting room.

**Damage to Employee Morale and Client Perception**
Without a cohesive, centralized system that provides a quick overview of meetings, meeting rooms, and attendees, meeting organizers end up relying on their own memory to keep track of things. Not only does this lead to mistakes, it also creates uncertainty and frustration among staff and visitors alike. Visitors will be left with a poor impression of your company if meetings don’t start on time, meeting rooms aren’t available when they’re supposed to be, or attendees don’t show up promptly to meetings. This can harm your ability to keep important projects on track and win new clients.

**Inefficient Use of Meeting Rooms and Resources**
Meeting space is a valuable resource. Not having the ability to monitor and analyze meeting room and resource usage leads to inefficiency as well as higher real estate costs and energy bills. For example, you might be heating or cooling empty meeting rooms that aren’t in use or hosting empty meeting rooms with a maximum capacity of 50 people.

**The Solution: Meeting Room Booking Software**
If you’re finding it difficult to book meetings and schedule resources in a timely and efficient manner, meeting room software may be the solution you’re looking for. Meeting scheduling software streamlines the meeting booking and resource scheduling process by providing users with a complete overview of available meeting rooms and attendees. Users can order associated services, such as catering, seating arrangements, transportation, and audiovisual equipment, at the same time as they book meetings. Work requests are automatically sent to service providers, eliminating the need to fill out and fax work requests.

**Benefits Meeting Room Software:**
- **Save time**
- **Automatical handle of cancellations**
- **Prevent errors**
- **Monitor meeting room usage**
- **Streamline visitor management**

Meeting room booking software replaces disparate systems with a single, easy-to-use solution that consolidates all activities related to planning and scheduling meetings. A meeting room booking tool brings various departments within your organization in sync and automates communication with meeting attendees and service providers. By tackling the complexities of managing meeting room bookings, changes, cancellations, and invoices, meeting room software lightens your staff’s workload and enables them to plan and schedule meetings with greater ease.

**Important Benefits**
A number of significant benefits emerge when you implement meeting room booking and resource scheduling software, including the following:

**Save time**: Meeting room scheduling software saves meeting room users, facility managers, receptionists, and other staff members time. Users can quickly view available meeting rooms, invite attendees, order extra services, and review useful details about each meeting room, such as their maximum capacity and floor plans. Meeting room software enhances your staff’s productivity and frees them up to focus on key areas of service.

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How Your Organization Can Benefit from Meeting Room Booking Software
Handle all changes and cancellations automatically: If a meeting is changed or cancelled, the system is updated automatically. This means that attendees and service providers are notified immediately and have time to adjust their schedules.

Prevent scheduling errors: All information about meeting rooms and schedules resides in the same system, which is updated in real-time. Providing users with access to up-to-date meeting information in a centralized location prevents double bookings and other errors.

Monitor meeting room usage: A good meeting room management system allows you to generate reports about meeting room and resource utilization, so you can identify ways to optimize your existing resources and lower costs.

Streamline visitor management: Meeting room management software that comes equipped with a visitor management module speeds up the visitor check-in process by automatically notifying hosts of a guest’s arrival and printing name badges for guests. Providing visitors with a seamless, hassle-free experience upon arrival gives them a strong first impression of your company.

Types of Meeting Room Booking Software
After deciding to implement meeting room booking software, companies can go down one of three paths:

1. Subscribe to SaaS or Cloud-Based Software
Software as a Service (SaaS) is a hosted service that is accessible via a web browser. The subscription fee for SaaS is typically charged on a per-month, per-user basis. SaaS can be tempting in the short-term or medium-term because there are no upfront installation costs or maintenance expenses to worry about, but the recurring fees will cost you more in the long run. Furthermore, SaaS isn’t as flexible as other types of meeting room booking software – it may not be adaptable to your company’s unique scheduling processes or integrate as easily with other software your company uses, such as your ERP system. Security is also a concern because the data that users input doesn’t reside in your company’s computers and is entrusted to a third party service provider. In addition, SaaS poses performance worries and outages can occur since the application is accessed via the Internet.

2. Develop software in-house
This option requires significant investment in development and ongoing maintenance. However, it gives you full control over the application and the ability to tailor it to your specific needs.

3. Buy off-the-shelf-software
This option is the most cost-effective in the short-term or medium-term because there are no upfront installation costs or maintenance expenses to worry about, but the recurring fees will cost you more in the long run. Furthermore, SaaS isn’t as flexible as other types of meeting room booking software – it may not be adaptable to your company’s unique scheduling processes or integrate as easily with other software your company uses, such as your ERP system. Security is also a concern because the data that users input doesn’t reside in your company’s computers and is entrusted to a third party service provider. In addition, SaaS poses performance worries and outages can occur since the application is accessed via the Internet.

Although SaaS and cloud-based software are related, they are not one in the same. Similarly to SaaS, cloud-based software simplifies installation, deployment, and maintenance and can be up and running in a matter of minutes. For example, Microsoft Office 365 is a cloud-based email and calendaring solution that has nearly all of the capabilities of the full, on-premises Exchange without requiring you to manage the Exchange infrastructure. The difference with cloud-based software is that the data is on servers you control and there are no restrictions on moving data into or off of your cloud infrastructure. SaaS is suited to smaller companies that require an inexpensive solution, while cloud-based software is suited to larger firms that have more resources and want better control of sensitive data.
2. Develop Software In-House
Large organizations with internal software development staff may consider building a custom meeting room booking system in-house. This can take many months to develop in addition to diverting your IT staff’s focus away from core business activities. Developing your own meeting room booking software in-house is also a costly endeavor. Many organizations don’t have a realistic idea of what it will cost, and the effort and expense of keeping the software current may exceed their expectations.

Once your meeting room booking system is built, your in-house IT staff has to handle bug fixes, upgrades, customer support, and training. You have to be prepared to continuously enhance the functionality of the software based on changing business needs, technological advancements, and user input. Otherwise, the software could be rendered obsolete in a few years or less. Businesses practices could change overnight, and the software needs be flexible enough to adapt quickly.

3. Buy Off-the-Shelf Software
Few meeting room management issues are truly unique. Rather than reinventing the wheel and investing in the long-term maintenance of an in-house solution, organizations may be better off purchasing proven software that has been developed for organizations facing similar challenges. Off-the-shelf, on-premises software takes far less time to implement than custom software, yet it is more flexible than SaaS and can be configured to meet the needs of most organizations. Readymade software is typically easy to install, comes with “out-of-the-box” customization tools, and is cost-effective and easy-to-use. It is the vendor who expends resources to support, update, and upgrade the software on an ongoing basis. Off-the-shelf software vendors add and change features based on end user feedback and provide required bug fixes and improvements. Off-the-shelf software systems are also flexible enough to quickly adjust to changing business needs.

10 Things to Look for in Meeting Room Booking Software
When choosing meeting room booking software, consider the following 10 factors:

1. Ease of use
Strong user adoption is key to the success of any software. To encourage user adoption, it’s crucial to select meeting room booking software with a simple, easy-to-use interface that allows users to view, search, and schedule available meeting rooms and attendees quickly and easily. A system that simplifies the process of booking rooms and resources will gain favor with users.

2. Anytime, anywhere access
Don’t impede staff from scheduling meetings just because they’re out of the office. Look for meeting scheduling software that can be accessed via the web and on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets.

3. Established client base and support team
The meeting room booking software market is replete with startups, many of which will inevitably fail. Avoid problems by purchasing meeting booking software from an established company with a proven track record, solid client base, and good technical support.

4. Built-in reporting capabilities
Your meeting scheduling software should generate advanced and standardized reports in various formats and offer support for third party tools, so you can keep better track of meeting room and resource usage to lower costs.

5. Real-time synchronization
Meeting room booking software with a central database that is updated in real-time gives all users access to current information. This prevents double bookings and other scheduling conflicts.

6. Scalability
If your organization has meeting rooms and resources in multiple locations, selecting meeting room booking...
software that scales to multiple locations and handles bookings across different time zones is critical.

7. Ability to order additional services at the same time as booking a room
Users should be able to order catering and other services without leaving the meeting room management system.

8. Integrate with your company’s ERP system
Meeting room booking software that integrates with your company’s ERP system allows you to complete the order-to-invoice process for both internal and external service providers.

9. Visitor management module
Give visitors arriving at your company office a good first impression by registering them quickly with a visitor management system. A visitor management system alerts hosts that visitors have arrived, allows receptionists to print name badges for visitors, and frees them up to focus on other tasks.

10. Customization tools
One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to meeting room booking solutions. Look for meeting scheduling software that comes equipped with built-in customization tools that allow you to adapt the system to your business processes.

Resource Central: Meeting Room Booking Software for Microsoft Outlook®
Microsoft Outlook® is an effective personal scheduling tool, but it isn’t powerful enough to handle the gamut of a company’s meeting and resource scheduling needs. If you’re looking for a meeting scheduling tool that is more robust than Outlook® alone but is just as user-friendly, try Resource Central from Add-On Products.

Benefits of Resource Central:
- Short learning curve
- Customizable
- User-friendly
- Accessible anywhere
- Real-time information
- Automated communication
- Full guest registration module
- Integrates with digital signage
- Time zone support
- Supports multiple languages
- Reporting module

Resource Central is a certified add-on solution for Microsoft Outlook® and Exchange. It’s a complete meeting room booking and resource scheduling tool that provides your staff with one-click access to room reservation and resource booking functionality within Outlook®’s familiar scheduling interface. Users can complete meeting arrangements instantly, from finding and reserving meeting rooms to booking associated services.

Resource Central is a centralized calendar that provides staff with an overview of booked meetings, available meeting rooms, and attendees’ schedules. Resource Central also displays important details about each meeting room, such as selected images,
maximum capacity, directions, and floor plans. When booking a meeting, users can order associated services, including transportation, catering, and seating arrangements, using a “one stop” order form. Normally, it takes about 7-12 minutes to arrange a meeting, but Resource Central allows users to schedule meetings, including all extra services, in just 2 minutes. This saves you approximately 10 minutes per meeting.

Advantages of Resource Central
Key advantages of Resource Central include the following:

Short learning curve: It takes little time to get your staff up to speed since the reservation of meeting rooms takes place within the familiar Outlook® environment.

Customizable: Resource Central can easily be tailored to reflect your company’s resources and corporate branding.

User-friendly: Because Resource Central is a natural and integrated part of Outlook®, it offers users a straightforward and intuitive booking experience.

Accessible anywhere: Resource Central can be accessed from remote workstations, through Outlook® Web Access, and via smartphones and tablets, so staff can plan and book meetings when they’re away from the office.

Real-time information: Resource Central seamlessly integrates with the Exchange Server, ensuring that all parts of the system are updated with current information. This keeps your group calendar accurate and up-to-date without requiring you to refresh it.

Automated communication: When you book a meeting and order associated services, invites are automatically sent out to attendees and work requests are forwarded directly to appropriate service providers. Meeting organizers receive automatic notifications reminding them that their bookings are approaching and providing them with the option to cancel.

Full guest registration module: Resource Central’s visitor module is a complete visitor management tool that speeds up visitor check-in, sends email notifications to hosts when visitors arrive, and allows receptionists to print visitor badges and perform barcode scans to keep track of registered visitors.

Integrates with digital signage: Resource Central seamlessly connects with digital signage solutions, so you can display current meeting room information on digital signs right outside of meeting rooms. Digital signs work as an extension of your meeting scheduling software, allowing for impromptu meeting booking at the meeting location. When rooms are booked, information is sent directly to digital signs. Digital signs tell you at a glance whether a room is available and have touch screens that allow users to book, end, or extend meetings. Add-On Products also offers an advanced digital signage solution called Ariadne, which not only displays meeting information, but also RSS feeds, videos, images, and other dynamic content. Ariadne is appropriate for digital signs on video walls and in lobbies, break rooms, and other areas of a building.

Time zone support: Scheduling meetings for attendees in multiple locations is both quick and easy with Resource Central because the system handles reservations across time zones.

Supports multiple languages: Resource Central is perfectly suited to companies with offices in different countries as it is available in 13 languages: Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Finnish.

Reporting module: Analyzing how meeting rooms are being used is key to optimizing room and resource utilization and lowering costs. Resource Central generates reports that provide a big-picture view of meeting room and resource usage, helping you make more informed management decisions.

Notes
About Resource Central and Add-On Products
Add-On Products specializes in developing add-on functionality for Microsoft Outlook® and Exchange that saves clients time and money. More than 400,000 clients around the world rely on Add-On Products’ solutions to serve their customers and employees.

Resource Central is an add-on for Microsoft Exchange and Outlook® enabling scheduling, including ordering additional services, in less than 2 minutes.

To find out more about Resource Central, Add-On Products’ meeting room booking solution for Outlook®, visit www.add-on.com, request an online demo, or download a free trial.