Overview

Industry: Real-estate

Customer profile:
Richmond Housing manages more than 8,000 homes. It's a not-for-profit organisation offering low-price homes and highly values customer satisfaction.

Challenge:
Richmond Housing moved to new office locations with more meeting rooms and needed a complete solution managing everything from booking resources to ordering catering.

End result:
Richmond Housing selected the meeting room and resource scheduling solution Resource Central as it built on Outlook®. This enabled the company to manage it all within one system.

Most Carbon-Efficient Building in London Optimises Room Utilisation

Richmond Housing chose to implement a new, more capable resource booking system as part of their re-location strategy and selected Resource Central from email experts Essential Computing.

Early in 2011, Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) and its subsidiary Co-op Homes moved to a purpose-built office in Teddington. The prestigious new building was designed to be much more energy-efficient and lower cost to run than its previous offices. As testament to its goals, the building is rated as the best in London for environmental performance.

According to Mr Riaz Ashruf, Infrastructure Manager at RHP, "30% of our power supply needs are met by solar panels on our roof, we also have state of the art insulation, sensor-operated lighting and even a rain water collection system for flushing toilets."

The new design also provided a working space that would help its teams work even better together to provide exceptional services to its customers. This includes an open-plan layout combined with an increased number of meeting rooms available to both staff and community members.

"We went from having just two meeting rooms to eleven. To ensure optimum efficiency and utilisation we wanted to incorporate a dynamic new strategy for managing the process of booking of rooms, equipment and even pool cars and catering", explained Riaz Ashruf.

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Resource Central

▶ Saves time and frees up staff for other important tasks.
▶ Integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Outlook® and Exchange.
▶ Gives users an overview of all available meeting rooms and shared workspaces.
▶ Easy to administer and use.
▶ Displays important details about meeting rooms, including images and location.
▶ Handles all changes and cancellations.

"Resource Central has enabled us to keep working within our existing calendar system, but it gives us the additional structure and functionality we needed."

Prior to the move the Housing Group had been using standard Outlook® calendar for booking rooms, but staff were inadvertently deleting bookings and often ended up with duplicate bookings. The housing group chose to implement a new, more capable resource booking system as part of their re-location strategy and selected Resource Central from email experts Essential Computing.

Enhanced Capability that Builds on Current Outlook® Usage
Resource Central is specifically designed from the 'ground up' to work with standard Microsoft Exchange, Outlook® and other industry-standard infrastructure including Active Directory and ActiveSync.

Mr Kayvan Rahmani, Project Manager at RHP, commented, "As we were so used to using Outlook® for booking staff meetings, it was vital to keep the process of booking meeting rooms linked. We didn't want to have two separate systems.

Resource Central has enabled us to keep working within our existing calendar system, but it gives us the additional structure and functionality we needed. This includes the ability to request additional resources such as projectors and pool cars. There's also built-in workflow to send resource requests to our facilities and reception staff.

Improved Resource Usage Visibility
Importantly, we can now also capture information that shows us how efficiently we are using our rooms and cars. We can also collect data for departmental costing purposes, such as catering.

Advanced Flexibility & Control
There's a lot of control in Resource Central, such as rules as to how far in advance staff can make bookings, who can book what rooms, who should receive requests for resources, and so on. There's also lots of options we can offer. We had a planning session that included representatives from all parts of the company to discuss what services we needed to provide and how.

At present I would say we're only using Resource Central at around 50% of its potential. In time we plan to add in the ability for staff to request additional services such as catering and serving times", explained Kayvan Rahmani.

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Phased Rollout Strategy

With over 250 staff members the Partnership decided to implement a staged rollout across a department at a time.

Continued Mr Kayvan Rahmani, "We went for a 'train-the-trainer' approach and got our super users together in one room. We also set up a guide on the intranet and our communications team have been putting out information on the new services. It has been easy for users to pick up working with Resource Central as they are just extending what they do already when booking meetings in Outlook®."

The Selection Process

As well as integration with Outlook®, RHP looked for good technology from a stable author, backed up by a continuous support service. The Danish author of Resource Central, Add-On Products, is a long-standing Microsoft partner. Its UK partner, Essential specialises in providing solutions that add value to Microsoft Exchange and has a 20-year track record of delivering high-quality consulting and support services to corporates.

Concluded Riaz Ashruf, "Essential has provided a great after-sales support service and the consultant that helped us with the implementation was very patient in explaining the options that were available to us."

Further information
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About Resource Central
Resource Central is a premier booking solution from Add-On Products that allows you to book resources, equipment, catering, and other services. Resource Central integrates with Microsoft Outlook® and the Exchange Server, simplifying the process of scheduling and organizing meetings.

About Add-On Products
Add-On Products specializes in developing add-on functionality for Microsoft Outlook® and Exchange and digital signage software. More than 400,000 clients around the world rely on Add-On Products' solutions to serve their employees and customers.

Our Products:
Resource Central – room booking solution – reserves resources and requests associated services in less than 2 minutes
Ariadne - digital signage software - full-scale solution providing Wayfinding, meeting overviews, pictures, video, RSS feeds, etc.
Digital Sign Service – software for digital meeting room signs – displays meeting booked in Outlook® on touch screens
Exchange Central – group calendar – provides overview and scheduling of appointments
WebTeam Central – group calendar – provides web-based overview and scheduling of appointments
Mailbox Central – email signature management – improves email branding and campaigns

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