

CHALLENGES

- Improve a cumbersome and complicated reservation process not scalable for growth to a new facility
- Automate labor- and paper-intensive work practices fraught with workarounds
- Decrease the long lag times between a request and confirmation
- Develop consistent policies to ensure predictable and reliable services
- Reorganize and streamline responsibilities and activities to meet customer and provider expectations
- Track and calculate direct and indirect costs of operation

SOLUTIONS

- Analyze the current room and events planning processes, identifying opportunities for improvement
- Redesign processes to be both scalable for growth and more efficient
- Utilize technology to provide transparent, 24/7 services to clients
- Restructure room and event planning operations and redefine tasks and responsibilities

RESULTS

- An intuitive process that clients can easily navigate
- Self-service, real-time, web-based 24/7 access for clients
- Better use of staff time
- Cost savings in time and money



HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Delivering Customer- Focused Room and Events Planning

Harvard Law School (HLS) is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is the oldest continually-operating law school in the United States. HLS offers a broad range of instruction in both traditional and emerging legal fields. It is supported by the largest academic law library in the world. HLS students come from every state in the United States and more than 70 countries around the globe.

Profile

A Harvard Law education prepares students for success in law practice, business, public service, teaching, and other careers. Nearly 2,000 students attend HLS each year, pursuing Juris Doctorate, Master of Law, and Doctor of Juridical Science degrees.

Challenges

In support of its many programs and activities, HLS offers a room and events scheduling support process for events, facilities, security, custodial, media services, and catering. Several factors led to consideration of how these services could be delivered in a more efficient, effective, and high-quality manner:

- The majority of events clients were internal; however, the external "rental" business was growing.
- HLS was in the midst of a building project that was to nearly double room availability.
- An events software system supported some functions, but not all, and was not used by all service providers.
- All "spaces" on campus could be scheduled for both academic and events planning purposes, allowing for potential conflicts.

Strata Information Group

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"We needed a comprehensive plan to support this growth. SIG led us through a process that was great at helping us identify what was working well — and what wasn't. They worked with us to develop a plan to implement a new process with new technology. Now students, faculty, and staff have 24/7 access to reserve rooms. The result was a seamless transition to the new space."

— John Arciprete, Director of Facilities and Operations

An initial study suggested that the current process was fragmented, inefficient, labor-intensive, and paper-driven. It was operated using inconsistent policies, tracked with shadow systems, and would not scale to accommodate the new building. HLS then determined the best approach to improvement was to completely redesign how HLS delivered these services.

Where to Start?

Harvard Law School more than doubled the number of reservable rooms on campus when it added a new 250,000-square foot structure: the Wasserstein Hall, Caspersen Student Center, Clinical Wing Building.

HLS required an objective third party that had a proven track record with the institution and an outstanding reputation in the higher education marketplace. For some time, HLS had been working with Strata Information Group (SIG) on several projects and considered SIG a trusted partner for delivering quality services and support. Based on this experience and SIG's 27 years of supporting higher education institutions, HLS was confident in engaging SIG to assist in the Room and Events Scheduling redesign.

Getting Underway

When SIG assisted the institution with the procurement of a new student information system, it led Business Process Analysis (BPA) workshops focused on Room and Events Scheduling. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Map existing processes highlighting bottlenecks, workarounds, manual procedures, and redundancies
- Analyze the maps of the current processes and identify obstacles and potential opportunities for improvement
- Form a working group to explore in more depth the requirements to improve the process

Developing Solutions

With guidance from SIG, the group conducted a series of activities:

- Meeting with service providers and clients to identify issues with the current process
- Identifying new process requirements
- Developing an efficient, consistent, and reliable process that maximized room usage and availability

The next step was to develop new policies followed by the acquisition of a new software application. SIG assisted HLS in the acquisition with the following:

- Development of a detailed vendor demonstration script
- Evaluation of three vendors based on the script to determine which vendor could best support the new process
- Development of recommendations
- Solicitation of pricing proposals from vendors
- Selection of the product that best supports the new process and policies

Once the new event planning 24/7 web-based application, which provided auto-routing to service providers and real-time updating of spaces, was acquired, HLS needed to establish the organizational structure that would support it:

- The Events office was moved under Facilities.
- Staff was redeployed.
- New leadership was hired.
- Communications to all service providers and clients was issued.

Results

At the ribbon cutting opening of the new building, HLS had not only new spaces to celebrate but also newly redesigned room and events scheduling services. The new process and policies allowed for end users to access spaces in real time, with options confirmed automatically in an easy-to-read format; all views of rooms included photos and layouts with default room set-up; and a daily schedule was posted in each room. All requests and confirmations were auto-routed to service providers through the 24/7, web-based events applications. Results were efficient processes and tracking, cost savings, and a high level of satisfaction from customers.