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Ferrum College Reduces Paper Processes & Data Entry with Event Management Software

CLIENT

Michael Vaughan, Manager of Conferences & Events, Ferrum College

GEOGRAPHY

Ferrum, VA

POPULATION

1,200 students

CHALLENGES

Prior approaches to event management consisted of paper processes and data entry and were time-consuming and prone to error. The campus needed to streamline event management procedures, preferably within one system.

RESULTS

Ferrum College now has an efficient event management process using a cloud-based, mobile system that provides more accuracy and time to focus on growth and customer service.

EVENTS

When Michael Vaughan, Manager of Conferences & Events, began his role at Ferrum College in Fall of 2018, the campus's event management process was in need of an upgrade. Being a campus that calls the Blue Ridge Mountains home, its 360-degree beauty and quaint tranquility makes it an ideal venue for summer conferences, camps, tournaments and more, in addition to the internal events the campus hosts during the active school year.

Michael's team consists of him and one other full-time employee, as well as a dozen student workers that add varying support year-round. The team is responsible for the planning and coordinating of internal and external events that could be as simple as setting up a few tables for a small student meeting or overseeing a large banquet, wedding, camp, etc. requiring extensive setup, catering and lodging. With this much to balance, the outdated way they were trying to manage their workload under their former software was only slowing them down.

"There was no way to sync the reservation portion, or if there was, it was not user-friendly, with the calendar. We were using three systems," says Michael. "You'd have to enter the information from the customer, manually enter it into the calendar, manually enter it in the software to reserve it, and then manually confirm and manually bill. It was all manual, so there was just duplicity of work left and right. So I said, 'Hey, we need something more efficient.'"

He found that efficiency when the team began using Dude Solutions Event Manager™ in early 2019, though the culture change didn't come easily. Facility use requesters were used to the old process and resisted the new initially, but by February the system had 426 on-campus reservations logged. With that many reservations, time was of the essence. Thanks to no longer having to input information manually, they now had more time than ever before.

"This has not only streamlined the workload, but we had students doing their work hours in the office just basically doing data entry to synthesize all this, leaving great room for human error from the data having to be entered so many times. This has helped cut down on that a lot," he says.

"There were a lot of hours where they'd be going in and checking it and saving it. A whole crew was doing that all the time. Now, my assistant and I primarily review all reservations. We can manage the workload and put the students on more productive tasks versus just doing data entry. We're now able to put our staff in more customer-facing roles. Going from where it was a daily task of manual entering and checking multiple times a day, now

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the students don't have to check it ever. We now have the time, because of the way the system is set up, to go in and, in literally a couple clicks, manage all the requests in a few minutes and move on."

In addition to freeing up more time for what's important, Event Manager has also made the workload easier thanks to mobility. Unlike previous desktop-based systems the campus had used, Event Manager is a mobile solution, meaning it can be accessed anywhere using multiple devices.

"We went from a desktop software located on a few computers on campus to web-based where we could go into the portal any time. The efficiency factor was immediate. With a mobile system, we can allow people to set things up on their mobile phones, give setup details, see if anything is missing, etc. And even me on the job, I don't have to run to my computer every time I want to check something on an event. I can just pull it up on my phone or iPad and check out the details, so I can respond to whatever need wherever I am at the time," he says. "This software has streamlined not only our office but the improvement of our calendar, the look of it, the ease of use, the ability to grow and scale to our community so that we now can target information to specific areas of campus or the community around us."

When asked why Ferrum College chose to partner with Dude Solutions for their event management needs, Michael included that the response from the company was different than other software providers they had looked into.

"The biggest thing with them was cost and also just trying to get correspondence from them. We had made several attempts to get different types of things from them, and didn't get squat. Not even a return email. For the bang for our buck, you're [Dude Solutions] giving us the features we want, the automation, the mobility, the professionalism, the better customer service, the integration, it's cloud based — all those things were part of our requirements. And you came within a budget range that would be reasonable for us long-term, which would allow us to grow our revenue stream."

Throughout 2019, Michael and his team have worked closely with Dude Solutions to improve upon what they have and take it even further. Beginning with working alongside their appointed implementation team, he adds that the partnership was different than former companies he'd sought support from.

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"We have talked to them [the implementation team] extensively. Implementation was absolutely stellar. Timely, knowledgeable and the follow through…we'll submit a request and you guys go in and close those and check them and give us a summary. There's always a follow-up email. The professionalism has been stellar. It allows us to know it's all going to be addressed and not be put aside and forgotten. That's been huge."

As for what Michael says the campus couldn't live without when it comes to Event Manager, he says, "The whole package. If we didn't have this, we'd just be doing everything by hand like in the Stone Age. For us, this is crucial. It's become a vital piece of what we do and how we do it. We're definitely excited about it. The price-to-benefits ratio has been excellent. Your partnership with us has been excellent. It really allows us to focus more on the job and grow the business."

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