Historic Atlantic College Finds A New Future With Hosted Scheduling Software Solution From NFS

Atlantic College unifies room booking procedures with hosted scheduling software solution from NFS

UWC Atlantic College is an international residential school based at the medieval St Donat's Castle, in South Wales. Each year around 350 students from approximately 80 countries benefit from a world-class International Baccalaureate educational experience at this unique establishment. UWC Atlantic College prides itself on its challenging and transformative education for 16-19 year olds.

A Stunning Setting and an Interesting History

St Donat's Castle dates back to the 12th century and has had a number of notable owners as well as many famous visitors, including HM Queen Elizabeth, The Emperor of Japan, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Charlie Chaplin and John F. Kennedy.

The school was founded in 1962 by German educationalist Kurt Hahn, whose concept was to engage young people from all nations in finding peaceful means to bring together a world divided by political, racial and socio-economic barriers, by learning from one another. In 1967 Hahn's movement became known as 'United World Colleges' and Lord Mountbatten became the organization's President. Since then a further 12 UWCs have opened and can be found on each continent.

In October 2010, the college began looking for an efficient event scheduling software system to assist in their new commercial ventures, such as weddings and conferences. Their search led to Rendezvous Events, the rooms and resource scheduling solution from NFS Technology.

The Transition to a Commercial Venue

Shyam Bharadwaj, NFS Client Relations Executive, believes that Rendezvous Events will work well for UWC Atlantic College because it is only just entering the commercial market as a venue. "Previously, events were largely for internal purposes," he says, "but now that there is a revenue generating department in place, the college needs to be able to manage its space more efficiently."

Shyam explains how UWC Atlantic College has not previously promoted itself as a commercial venue, as the availability for them to host commercial events was narrow. "They realised that there was potential for the college to be used in a commercial capacity more often, by allowing events during school times, as well as holidays. It is also a great way to make additional revenue."

Shyam notes two main business drivers for this implementation:

1. The realization that the property's beauty and location placed it in the category of a unique venue.
2. The need to generate more revenue through commercial activities – a problem faced by many educational establishments.

Rendezvous SaaS Replaces Manual System

Atlantic College looked at six different solutions and opted for Rendezvous because of the system's usability, affordability, and the flexibility of not having to own the software. Rendezvous has been installed as a hosted SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) version, so the college didn't have to make a huge, upfront investment, but still gained a powerful system, paid for on a monthly basis.

Karen Davies, Commercial Manager at Atlantic College, explains how no scheduling software had been used prior to the implementation of Rendezvous, and that bookings had been made on an ad hoc basis, with several spreadsheets being updated by various college staff.

"Since the new system has been installed", says Karen, "The college has been able to unify the booking procedures that previously existed. Having a central system is efficient and beneficial to all users!"

Another positive change is that now, all client-facing literature is professional-looking and consistent. Atlantic College has a high-quality set of documents available to send to prospects, which generates more commercial business. They can also build client/prospect databases which can be used to market the venue in the future, saving managers a lot of time.

Other Benefits

Implementation of the powerful scheduling system means that Atlantic College has been able to satisfy students and parents in terms of their accommodation needs. Internal blocks can be created so that rooms are not overbooked during term time.

"Some of the concerns of staff and parents about availability of rooms were addressed with accurate information on commercial opportunities which wouldn't impact the requirements of the college," says Shyam. "This helped overcome the challenges of commercial business at the venue."

Looking Forward

Atlantic College represents an important trend in organisations with wonderful facilities beginning to invite commercial meetings and events to be held in order generate more revenue. The market trend to use a unique venue where possible will help facilities like Atlantic College to develop their business, while the Rendezvous solution on a hosted basis offers the technology they need at an affordable price.

Atlantic College may expand their use of Rendezvous to other areas of the business, when a new trading company for commercial activities is launched in May.

"The simplicity of the Rendezvous roll-out has reassured everyone that operations will run smoothly and profitably," concludes Shyam.