

Bentley University Aces the Scheduling Test with Asure Software's Resource Scheduler

Background

Bentley University, located in Waltham, Massachusetts, is one of the leading business schools in the United States. Centered on education and research in business and related professions, Bentley blends the breadth and technological strength of a university with the values and student focus of a small college. With over 4,000 undergraduate and another 1,500 graduate students, Bentley was recently ranked #1 in state-of-the-art campus facilities in The Princeton Review's Best Colleges guide, #30 on BusinessWeek's top 100 undergraduate business schools, and #4 in PC Magazine's Top 20 Wired Campuses.

Challenge

Bentley University recently completed a \$17 million dollar renovation to its library. Headed by Dr. Phillip Knutel, executive director of academic technology, the library, and online learning, the goal of the renovation project was to create a "hub" of academic life at Bentley that reflected the university's stature in technology, research, and campus life. Because Bentley's curriculum includes an emphasis on team projects to help simulate real world business environments, one of the primary objectives of the new library design was to create a series of group study rooms to foster collaboration.

Prior to the renovation, there were a limited number of group and individual study rooms and managing them was often problematic. First and foremost, the library used a paper-based "reservation system" which was located and managed by library staff at the circulation desk. Unfortunately, this process required students to call or physically come to the Library Services desk to check availability during the library's hours of operation. Further, because of high demand, students were found "squatting" in these rooms for entire afternoons or evenings, preventing other groups from utilizing them fairly.

So the question became, if Bentley was creating what was to be the most high tech library on any college campus in the country, what technologies would help better manage and maximize utilization of these group study rooms?

Solution

Bentley took a two-step approach to scheduling and managing their library group study rooms. First they installed interactive room display panels at the entrance to each study room. The display panels allow users to book a room from any campus computer or by using the interactive display located outside of each room. Every display panel also features LED indicator lights that indicates if a room is free (green light) or occupied (red light). What appealed to Bentley about the room display panel technology is that it allows students to view room scheduling information on-line, and offers impromptu scheduling using the touchscreen. So rather than relying on Library Services staff to schedule the rooms, students could do so themselves.

While the touch panel technology greatly improved the scheduling of the group study rooms for those on-campus, Bentley realized there were additional needs for improved off-campus access through Bentley's network firewall and a need to scale up for thousand



Resource Scheduler Provides Bentley University with Results

- Dramatically increases utilization of shared study rooms, leveraging investments in 24 rooms within the envelope of a 60,000 sq. ft. building
- Eliminates reliance on library staff to manage and monitor room scheduling and student use
- Expands student access to rooms and eliminates "squatting" of study rooms by students
- Enhances student collaboration
- Maximizes room efficiency by ensuring groups are using study rooms rather than individuals
- Supports environmental conservation by eliminating paper-based scheduling



of users. As a result, Dr. Knutel began searching for a customizable webserver-based system that could integrate with the touch panel technology to enable off-campus access, and offload the demand from the units to speed up the reservation process.

That's when Bentley turned to Asure Software, a leading provider of cloud-based workplace management solutions. AsureSpace™ Resource Scheduler is a web-based application that allows users to search for and reserve shared workspace and other rooms and resources quickly and easily. And as Dr. Knutel discovered, it also integrates with a variety of interactive room displays to form a complete solution that provides extensive, configurable study room management and scheduling.

After evaluating Resource Scheduler, Bentley found it was the perfect complement to the investment they made in the touch panel technology. From the off-campus access and speed of the integrated system to the authenticated, simplified scheduling interface it provided, Bentley was convinced it would not only meet, but exceed their expectations. Asure Software and Dr. Knutel worked closely to configure the system to meet the needs of the Bentley community and, Dr. Knutel strongly feels, libraries everywhere.

"This has been an unparalleled joint effort and the outstanding staff we worked with at Asure Software truly listened to what we said, took very detailed notes, and worked out the issues in a collaborative, iterative process" said Dr. Knutel. "Working with Asure Software has been phenomenal. We had identified problems that Asure Software had to address by configuring the system the way we needed. Time and again the development crew did just what we asked until we got to where we are today. It was probably the single best development effort in in the time that I've been at Bentley."

This close collaborative effort paid huge dividends to Bentley. Using the Resource

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Scheduler solution, students are now able to access the reservation system using their same campus login ID – either from inside or outside the firewall. They can view the free/busy time of any group study room and make a reservation at any time from just about anywhere. And by working with Asure Software, the system has been configured so that specific reservation rules are followed, such as restricting students from booking a room for more than once a day or for longer than two hours. Further, students are required to press a "Start" button on the touch panel located outside of each study room to confirm the start of their meeting. If they don't do so within 15 minutes of the reservation time, rooms of "no shows" are released back into the system and made available to any other student, resulting in a highly efficient use of rooms.

Results

Following the implementation of Resource Scheduler with the touch panel technology, Bentley experienced immediate success from both the student and administrator perspective. In contrast to the previous paper-based system, or even the stand-alone touch panel system, students are able to view the free/busy time grid to check room availability and make a reservation in advance from any laptop or desktop PC. However, while this self-service model certainly presented a number of benefits, configuring the system to enforce certain reservation rules has created more opportunities for other students to leverage these study rooms. As Dr. Knutel explains, "The group study rooms are now being used more fairly, equitably, and by a larger number

of students." This is particularly true for graduate and other students living off-campus where web access allows them to reserve study rooms just as those who are on-campus. Ease of use of the study room scheduler has also been a huge benefit to both the students and library staff. "With 1,200 new students each year, the question became 'How do you make a system so intuitive that people can, without training or having to read directions, understand what do to?' The ideal was an elegantly simple user interface. So what we worked with Asure Software to design was a system that anybody at a glance can understand." Resource Scheduler has also saved a tremendous amount of the library staff's time. For example, students booking rooms themselves frees up library staff to focus on actually providing services.

Resource Scheduler eliminated the need for staff to spend their days booking 24 study rooms, resulting in one library staff member enthusiastically stating "I guess dreams really can come true." So what's next for Resource Scheduler at Bentley?

Dr. Knutel hopes to leverage presence detection capabilities in each study room so that room utilization is tracked automatically to ensure that groups, not individuals, are using group study rooms. Bentley may also consider how to deploy Resource Scheduler in other areas of campus and perhaps integrate it with their HVAC systems to automatically manage energy consumption based on room occupancy, thereby reducing costs and Bentley's carbon footprint. See the system in action at <http://library.bentley.edu/>

