



PROVIDING AUTONOMY TO A LOCAL AUTHORITY

Industry

Public Sector

The Company

Essex County Council, which governs the non-metropolitan county of Essex in England.

"People had lost faith in the old system because they couldn't search and book rooms in a way that worked for them – but that's all changed. There aren't more meeting rooms, it's just that we're now much better at managing what we have."

– Amber Taylor, Account Manager, Swiss Post (Accruent partner)

8,000

USERS WITH AN EMS LOGIN

22

SITES ACROSS ESSEX

1

HQ IN CHELMSFORD

THE CHALLENGE

Before working with Accruent, the Essex County Council struggled to find a solution that was flexible and fluid enough to meet their booking needs. The scope of work for Essex County Council is incredibly broad. This meant that how, when and why meeting rooms were used changed from one day to the next. Similarly, rooms were not used for meetings alone. Instead, they were also used for conferences, storage, training and even social care interviews, with usage spread across multiple offices and sites.

Their previous provider did not have the functionality needed to meet these needs. Instead, people booking rooms had little to no visibility into how rooms were being used or how long they were in use for. This lack of transparency led to:

- Inefficient processes
- A disproportionate amount of work for the helpdesk and office receptions
- Lack of visibility into the suitability of rooms
- Difficulty making changes to how and why meeting rooms were being used
- Huge logistical task of managing the varying meetings and attendees
- Increased workload for those responsible for managing room bookings

“The fact our previous provider was not cloud-based caused real problems, particularly when it came to upgrading the software. It was so slow that, by the time we’d gone through a process to get an upgrade, the next one (upgrade) had come out. That’s how long it would take. It was totally unsuitable to our needs.”

– Amber Taylor, Account Manager, Swiss Post

THE SOLUTION

After seeing its benefits in other parts of the organization, Swiss Post advised Essex County Council to implement EMS to help manage their vast estate of meeting rooms, facilities and office spaces. Now, whether it is needed for a briefing, a charity fund raising or for a booking by solicitors or surveyors, everyone can see exactly what a room is being used for and for how long. People are also able to quickly source and book the space that is most suitable to their needs without clogging up management time with requests or changes. A single sign-on (SSO) system also means that it is quicker and easier for Essex County Council to liaise with meeting room owners to process requests for refreshments, IT facilities, and other support services.

EMS also provides Essex County Council members with:

- Clear event-type information for each room use
- Autonomy with bookings and a quicker ability to make changes
- Email notifications and text messages with booking updates, requests, or confirmations
- SSO capabilities, which provide everyone with a unique log-in and easy identification
- A cloud-based platform, which allows for updates to be made rapidly



“We had a situation where a room went from being used to hold senior manager meetings to being used to house records for a criminal case. Overnight, we had to move the contents and replace them with filing cabinets. These kinds of extreme changes in usage are not uncommon. Having to request and action those types of changes was one of the key elements that put us off the competitors because we needed to move from being managed to self-managed – and nobody else we spoke to could do that.”

– Amber Taylor, Account Manager, Swiss Post

THE BENEFITS

Essex County Council is already reaping the benefits of using EMS. The easy reporting system makes it possible to get an overview of the status of rooms instantly, while a detailed map function helps guide people to exactly where they need to be. People booking rooms can also see detailed images of each room, which is critical in determining suitability and mitigating any last-minute changes or requests. Because the previous room-booking pressures have been alleviated, it has also helped Essex County Council expand their offerings to employees; now staff can book desk space for flexible working, as well as book breakout areas for meetings that don't require a dedicated room. This function has a knock-on benefit in freeing up space for others.

Overall, benefits of EMS include:

- The ability to customise room requirements prior to searching and booking
- Improved safety, as room types and services are now better suited to meet attendees needs
- All the necessary information is in the cloud so people don't need to call or come into the office to get answers to basic questions
- The ability to highlight more subtle features, like if a room has a high volume of natural light, storage space, or a panic button
- Users have access to room images and a detailed floor plan. They also have the ability to book things by map
- Room set-up or occupancy can be adjusted, a measure put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic

“Just because a room is not in use, does not make it inactive. Now we can apply simple measures, like colour coding, to differentiate between pending or confirmed, which is incredibly useful.”

– Amber Taylor, Account Manager, Swiss Post

THE RESULTS

EMS is delivering real results to Essex County Council, particularly when it comes to time saved. EMS has enabled better planning, improvements to reporting, a vast reduction in administrative support time and more comprehensive data capture. This combination helps deliver a much-improved user experience at every stage of the process, as well as a safer environment for employees.

Overall:

- SSO has saved the helpdesk an estimated 300 hours per annum
- Accruent hosting has reduced workload for the in-house IT team
- Booking approval process now includes confirmation that risk assessments have been completed
- Visibility has improved, as receptionists now get detailed daily reports each morning
- Planning is much easier now that the helpdesk can quickly identify if support services like security or police attendance are required
- Clarity of meeting owner has improved accountability

“Training in EMS was fundamental to us making the most out of the system. Not just in highlighting its benefits, but in critiquing why we were doing things and showing alternatives. As a result, we have ended up with much more functionality than we had before.”

– Amber Taylor, Account Manager, Swiss Post

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