

Event Planning & Coordination

Tuesday, January 8, 2018

DISCUSSION LEADER: PERRY SWOPE @ POTOMAC SCHOOL

Events are no longer occasional one offs — there are multiple events daily. It's unlikely that there is a perfect system — whether it's custom tailored & automated, interfaces with work-order management, or the old-school paper system. Facilities staff is frequently overwhelmed, and events are sometimes not aligned with calendars, which create obstacles. Enhancing communication and the approval process is one measure to improve process.

Indeed, several leaders discussed at what point the facilities department is brought into the event process. Several school facility staffers are engaged early on in calendar planning and coordination; other staffers are simply advised after plans are formalized and instructed on what is required.

Facilities is a department that is not singularly focused in its discipline, said Perry Swope. This is in contrast any other department on campus. Facilitating the needs of students, teachers and staff — everyone. Its what what we do. Everyday.

James McDowell, Langley, referenced that the executive secretary for the head of school distributes a master request form, while facilities and IT are copied. Events are registered, filed and facilities staff checks events daily. Likewise, Gustavo Catalan, Stone Ridge, advised that facilities staff share events calendar, and facilities staff representative attends weekly meetings for upcoming events to ensure appropriate set ups and breakdowns are aligned.

Valerie Proudfoot, event coordinator at Madeira, relies on automated system that School Dude has engineered. She attends weekly meetings with assistant to the head of school and coordinates two-weeks in advance for food, set ups and linens. She noted that a new event, which does not have precedent, requires additional considerations and further engaging client on what is expected, which is relayed to the facility coordinator.

Dale Temple, Washington International School, advised that select events are often contracted out, which limit last-minute changes because of costs associated with change orders. The cost of events has in the past reached six figures, and not surprising, leadership is evaluating measures to limit operating costs, particularly this kind of expenditure.

Blake Henry, Potomac School, said that he relies on a newly implemented software-based system. Included on event distribution list is the assistant to head of school and folks that set-up events. Blake said that it's not uncommon to return to events scheduled two weeks out. This ensure conflicts are resolved. Information is then relayed to assistant to head of school and set-up staff, so that team is appraised and engaged.

Rick Todd, Academy of the Holy Cross, would appreciate returning to the ten-day in advance set-up rule, although it is not always adhered due to the nature of fast-paced event plans and changes in scheduling.

Others noted that a unique feature of facilities staff is the vision to see the needs of all others on campus (students, teachers, administration, food service, transportation and maintenance).

Mark Emory, Gonzaga, has the benefit of outsourcing many of the schools set-ups. The same company also provides maintenance and other facility services in the event that it's required, particularly with a robust athletics events schedule. Its affordable when compared to time and a half for our guys, said Mark.

Steve Sawyer, Sidwell, relies on an outlook-based system and the school's administrative council is engaged. Typically, the owner of the space approves appointment request, which is imported to a master calendar, which can then be viewed universally. In contrast, Diana Ortiz uses a green sheet form, which arrives from administration and filters down to facilities. Athletic events sometimes pose obstacles, and information is sometimes more sluggish for select events. IT requirements are also frequently not detailed, and last minute requirements create problems to facilitate needs.

Ed Hamer, Madeira, referenced that work order management reporting illustrated that eight percent of facilities time is spent on taking care of events, which has increased slightly over the years. Ed asked those assembled, who pays for attic stock of chairs? Are budget codes going back to the department making requests, or is it simply facilities' burden? Perry added that there are few occasions, for instance, that transportation says no to any event despite its budget.