TODAY’S KEY CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER ED FACILITIES MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

(...AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM)

KEY CHALLENGE #1:
Do More with Less
In June 2012, facilities professionals serving colleges and universities across North America were invited to take part in an extensive facilities management survey. From answers to the 43 questions in the survey, six key challenges have been identified which facilities and maintenance personnel are facing today, and will continue to face in the near future. In this series of reports, SchoolDude focuses on these six challenges and how to overcome them.

**KEY CHALLENGE #1:**
Do More with Less

It’s the battle cry of the new economy . . .

“Do more with less.”

To thousands of higher education facilities and maintenance pros across North America, it’s not some cliché; it’s the new “business as usual” on their campuses. It should come as no surprise that, when asked to identify their top three challenges, almost half of all survey respondents listed economic and budgetary concerns as their number one issue.

Doing more with less means improving productivity, while also maintaining and/or reducing expenses. This would be a tough enough task on its own, but along with reduced resources, today’s higher education facilities managers also face greater demands for services than ever before. A Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) can help departments deal with this one-two punch, and the survey shows that many institutions are satisfied with the results their CMMS provides.

However, with the parallel problems of fewer resources and greater demands expected to become even more pronounced, higher education facilities directors should ask themselves a question;

“I don’t have a CMMS. How do I choose the one which will help me the most?”

“My CMMS helps, but can I do better?”
The survey results offer substantial insight regarding the benefits of CMMS in general and individual vendors in particular. The data gathered shows overall productivity gains, as well as additional benefits in the areas of ease of use, total cost of ownership, customer service, reporting and documentation, and mobile utilization.

**Overall Productivity**

Over 65 percent of the survey participants believe they have generated at least a 50 percent productivity improvement from their investment in a CMMS, including over 35 percent sharing that they believe they have generated at least a 75 percent productivity improvement. This is encouraging news, given that colleges and universities are now expected to “do more with less” on a continuous basis. An efficient, full-featured CMMS is essential to provide facilities pros with the leverage to respond to these constant challenges.

**Ease of Use**

To obtain substantial productivity gains from a CMMS, ease of use is a significant consideration. However, if a system is developed purely with simplicity in mind, it may lack the capabilities and features you need. Typically, higher education facilities departments can’t afford to take staff members off their jobs to train them in the use of complicated software. The best CMMS offerings provide a powerful set of tools for users, while being sufficiently intuitive to provide users with maximum functionality following a minimal investment of training time.

Among all of the CMMS vendors featured in the survey, 89 percent of SchoolDude users rated their system favorably for its balance of strong functionality and ease of use. No other vendor in the survey attained a favorable rating higher than 67 percent.

**Total Cost of Ownership**

Tight budgets need software solutions that deliver significant value. To justify the investment in a CMMS, it must clearly add value and help the facilities department reduce expenses. According to the survey findings, over 50 percent of the respondents indicated that the value they receive from their CMMS investment exceeds or far exceeds their investment.

The total cost of ownership is greatly influenced by the need for investments in hardware, software, and support. In recent years, more CMMS vendors have turned to the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model, sometimes referred to as cloud computing. SaaS has been increasingly embraced by colleges and universities as a means of reducing ownership costs. With a SaaS-based CMMS, institutions do not purchase or maintain expensive servers and other hardware to deploy their systems. As a result, dependence on technical support and the
Costs associated with it are minimal. SchoolDude users indicated a minimal need for campus IT support for their SaaS-based system, with 87 percent of users rating their level of dependence on campus support resources as *not at all* or *very little*.

The functionality of a SaaS-based system versus a legacy client-server system is often imperceptible to users. In fact, the survey findings indicate that a number of respondents were actually using a SaaS-based CMMS and were not aware of how and where the system was hosted.

**Customer Service**

Having a system that cuts your expenses only solves half your problem. With the ever-increasing demand for facilities and maintenance services, your CMMS needs to help you respond to customer requests and concerns.

The days of writing up a work order and sending it through inter-office mail are over. Your internal customers expect to be able to contact you using methods such as e-mail and online forms. They want the ability to track their requests and monitor their progress, and they want the opportunity to give feedback through surveys or other methods. Survey respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction with SchoolDude for electronic communications, as well as for the variety of requester communication options available. In fact, 94 percent of SchoolDude clients were satisfied with their systems' communications capabilities. The survey also revealed that 96 percent of SchoolDude clients have deployed CMMS access to their internal clients.

**Reporting**

Every department in your college or university is under scrutiny to ensure that the institution’s investment is money well spent. You know that you have to document what the facilities department does, but tucking away all that information into a spreadsheet is no longer sufficient.

The reporting capabilities of your CMMS should allow you to prepare reports for campus administrators and keep track of budgets. You should also be able to measure the productivity of your technicians, develop efficient scheduling, create benchmarks, highlight areas in need of improvement, and identify potential savings.

To prove that your department is doing more with less, your CMMS has to provide strong reporting and tracking capabilities. Those capabilities should also be intuitive, making it easy to generate informative, relevant, and accurate reports. Among survey respondents, 85 percent of SchoolDude users favorably rated their CMMS reporting capabilities, while 62 percent found SchoolDude’s reporting features easy to use, higher than any other vendor included in the survey.
Mobile Utilization

Doing more with less today means being able to do it from anywhere. The proliferation of mobile technology has created a tremendous opportunity to improve efficiency and lower response times. As a result, your CMMS must have the capability of supporting mobile users.

While 29 percent of survey respondents indicated that their maintenance staff currently have the capability to access, approve, and close work orders via a mobile device, another 23 percent plan to implement mobile access in three years or less.

Readiness for mobile initiatives varied widely among respondents, but the survey found that colleges and universities using SchoolDude were among the leaders in mobile deployment of their CMMS. Among those campuses which have begun using their CMMS with mobile technologies, 88 percent have seen at least a 25 percent improvement in productivity, with 21 percent of respondents experiencing a 75 percent or greater productivity gain. Clearly, the use of mobile technology by technicians offers rich potential for lowering costs and improving service.

Survey Conclusions

The economic pressures of the last few years have had a dramatic impact on higher education institutions across North America. While many institutions have been impacted by flat or declining state budgets, many colleges and universities have also experienced an increase in enrollment from displaced workers that have elected to go back to school to enhance their career options. The lack of funding for items such as preventive maintenance, as well as the rapid proliferation of technology in higher education, has resulted in greater demands being placed on facilities professionals than ever before.

The net result has been a greater demand on an already stretched workforce. Many campuses have also experienced a reduction in the ratio of staff members to students, a trend which is not likely to reverse any time soon. Doing more with less is now standard operating procedure in college and university maintenance departments, but the capabilities and tools provided by a robust, full-featured CMMS can help manage ever-growing workloads. Survey respondents widely acknowledged the substantial opportunity for further extending CMMS work order functionality to campus staff, faculty, and students to improve response cycle times and internal customer communications.
About the Survey

In June 2012, over 300 facilities and maintenance personnel supporting institutions of Higher Education took part in a survey conducted by STS Research Advisors, an independent research firm. The complete 2012 Higher Education Facilities Management Survey Results Report is available as a download from SchoolDude. All percentages and statistics cited in this report are from the survey findings unless otherwise indicated.

Download: 2012 Higher Ed Schools Facilities Management Survey Results Report

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Founded in 1999, SchoolDude has served as the market leader in education enterprise asset management for the past 13 years with over 1 million education professionals using our solutions. We deliver cloud-based solutions to help both small and large institutions better manage their facilities, IT and business operations. We help clients save time and money by managing support services effectively and efficiently, allowing institutions to provide a safe teaching and learning environment. Today, we’re the #1 platform of cloud solutions for public and private schools, colleges and universities. Visit us at schooldude.com or give us a call at 877-868-3833 to learn more.