



# Purchasing Tactics Bound to Backfire

How **not** to choose a room and resource scheduling system

By Tom Schek

If you're a facility management professional, selecting the software you'll use to schedule the rooms and resources in your building is one of the more important decisions you'll make. Pick the right system and you make a positive impact on your staff's effectiveness, attendees' impression of your facility, and quite possibly your organization's bottom line. Pick the wrong system and, well, you get the picture. Here are 10 selection tactics you should avoid if you want to make a sound, well-informed purchase decision.

**1**  
 Buy a product simply  
 because it appears highest in  
 your Internet search results.

Internet searches are great for helping you weed out the pretenders from the contenders, but don't assume that just because a product is at the top of your search results it's the best system for you. A number of factors can be manipulated to affect search ranking, and in some cases companies that expend a lot of money and effort to climb the list aren't spending enough of either on enhancing their products.



2

**Make decisions based on screen shots or marketing fluff.** You wouldn't buy your next house out of a catalog. You want someone to walk you through it, show you around and help you understand how it can meet your needs — the same goes for software. Ask the company's sales representative to give you an in-depth demo of the system. Most companies can do that over the Internet, providing you and your staff convenient access to both the software and the rep's expertise.

4

**Place a great deal of faith in pay-per-post blog entries.**

It's a relatively new phenomenon: Pay bloggers to say good things about your software in the hope that they can create a buzz — albeit an artificial one — on the Web. If the positive press about a product is going to play a role in your purchase decision, you want to be sure that it's being generated by users who are excited about the software, not by freelance writers who are excited about the money.



6

**Be dazzled by "cutting edge" features if the core functionality isn't solid.**

Sure, it's fully integrated with your handheld, cell phone, MP3 player and wristwatch, but does it have the features and functions you need to run your business? If the answer is "no" or even "sort of" and you're still considering buying it, you may need to stop and think about what's driving your decision.

7

**Settle for the "scheduling module" that comes with a software package designed for some other purpose.**

If room and resource scheduling are relatively unimportant tasks at your facility, handling them with a "module" might work just fine. If the efficient and effective utilization of space, services and resources are closer to the mission critical end of the spectrum, as they are for most organizations, you want a product specifically designed for the job.

9

**Select a hosted solution simply because it's hosted.**

While having your scheduling software reside off-site has its advantages, it also has certain disadvantages that you should be aware of. One is that your data resides off-site as well. In the event of connectivity issues, you may find yourself without access to your vital scheduling information for an unknown period of time. Another reason to thoroughly investigate this option before choosing it is that a number of companies that were impressing people with the "simplicity" of their hosted solution just a few years ago are no longer in business today.

**Purchase the scheduling tool you used at your last job because you used it at your last job.** Yes, most of us are creatures of habit, but getting too entrenched in those habits can mean missing out on a better option. If the product you used at your last job is still the best on the market, then by all means encourage your new company to purchase it. However, you owe it to yourself and your organization to evaluate the field. The corollary to this thought is that you shouldn't write off the software you used previously just because you're starting a new job. Again, judge the field and select the best. **fm**

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