

Old Dominion Manages Maintenance Issues More Efficiently with SchoolDude's MaintenanceDirect™ and PMDirect™

Old Dominion University (ODU) is located in Hampton Roads, Virginia, one of the world's major seaports. Since the early seventeenth century, Hampton Roads has been the state's gateway to the rest of the world and the world's gateway to Virginia for commerce and industry, recreation and culture, and national security. Today it is a complex of seven major cities, a microcosm of the opportunities and challenges of contemporary urban America. It is also a major center for research and development and a home for extensive scientific and technological activities in marine science, aerospace, ship design and construction, advanced electronics, and nuclear physics.

Within Hampton Roads, ODU serves as one of the main engines of higher education and academic research. With an enrollment of more than 23,000 students, the University offers 70 bachelor's and 60 master's degrees as well as 36 doctoral degree programs and two educational specialists degrees. ODU's eminent scholarship and innovative and engaging teaching foster nationally recognized programs. A determined entrepreneurial approach to problem solving drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships with government, business, industry, organizations, and the arts.

The hub of this activity is ODU's 185-acre campus in Norfolk. Much of the responsibility for keeping these multi-dimensional grounds up and running falls on the shoulders of Frank Thrift, manager of the University's Maintenance Support Center. According to Thrift, that job has become considerably easier since ODU began using a number of solutions from SchoolDude's Facility Management Suite.

Change for the Better

ODU had worked with several maintenance software vendors, with less than satisfying results. "We were having a lot of problems with the system we had in place, including poor reporting capabilities and upgrades that didn't work well from our perspective, so I researched a number of available alternatives," says

Thrift. “Many of these were out of our price range, but one provider stood out as having everything we needed at an affordable price: SchoolDude.” In June 2008, ODU implemented SchoolDude’s Maintenance Direct and PM Direct; since that implementation, says Thrift, “things have changed for the better.”

“Originally we had people call into the Support Center for virtually all work that needed done,” he explains. “They would say, ‘Room “XYZ” is too cold,’ so we would create a work order and send it back to one of our shops manually.” With SchoolDude, the system is now online. Staff make their maintenance requests online, and the system gives them feedback by e-mail (e.g., that a work order has been created, when the work has been completed). “So the process is fast, simple, and our customers are more satisfied. Today the calls we receive are a fraction of what they used to be. We used to get 150 to 200 calls a day. Now we might get 10,” notes Thrift.

ODU uses MaintenanceDirect, a powerful, on-demand work management tool that helps organizations streamline the entire work order process, from request to completion, for work orders for the whole university. This includes all the maintenance groups: structural, mechanical, motor pool, grounds, housekeeping, and more. For the larger mechanical systems on campus, ODU uses PMDirect, an online preventive maintenance scheduling system (cmms) that helps create, assign, and manage recurring maintenance tasks efficiently and offers more than 350 templates to help quickly establish effective preventive maintenance programs, despite the challenges of limited resources.

“The programs, being online, have made us much more efficient,” says Thrift. In most ODU maintenance shops, staff has the option of going to an onsite computer; but in two shops that now have wireless capabilities, workers have been outfitted with netbooks. Thrift says this upgrade has yielded additional efficiencies. “Once we assign work to a shop, the shop supervisor assigns it to a worker,” explains Thrift. “Now the worker pulls out his netbook and sees the work wherever he is, so he doesn’t have to come back to the shop for orders. This process saves time, and time is money.”

Going Green, Getting Greener

Moving to SchoolDude has also helped ODU eliminate paper. The school used to use three-ply paper because of the demand for copies of work orders, which was expensive, in the range of \$50 a box. “We would go through a couple of boxes a month, and now that we’re not using paper anymore, it is another way the programs are paying for themselves,” says Thrift. He adds that the paper savings fund the netbooks being used in the wireless shops.

“This is definitely a green procedure, eliminating all that waste,” he says. It also is consistent with the goals of the Division of Student Affairs “Go Green” initiative, also instituted in 2008.

A Positive Consensus

According to Thrift, everyone from the top down at ODU is happy with the maintenance process now in place. “I think the efficiency of MaintenanceDirect and PMDirect has helped drive up confidence in our organization,” says Thrift. “Before there was a lot of finger pointing if something went wrong, because the details would get lost in the paperwork. Now, with everything online and traceable, we can pinpoint virtually everything; that has worked to our advantage, because it’s validating the work we do.”

Thrift is quick to point out that SchoolDude’s support has backed up this positive effect. “The SchoolDude customer service people are second to none,” he says. “They’ve always been helpful from day one. I still call them all the time, whenever I have a question. I like that about 99 percent of the time I get people I’m familiar with and who have worked with me in the past to help me with any problem. That makes things go more smoothly.”

Thrift’s happiness with SchoolDude’s support is matched by his supervisor’s pleasure with how well the solutions are working for ODU. “My big boss just can’t get over how good the system is, and he’s not an easy person to please,” says Thrift. “He’s a metrics-minded man, and he expects a system to do what he needs it to do. SchoolDude has done this, which is amazing for a system that isn’t custom made for us.”

Loving “the Dude”

One of the University’s few concerns about the products was the name. “Being a university, we weren’t too fond of the name ‘SchoolDude’ at first,” says Thrift. “So we got around that by always referring to ‘MaintenanceDirect’ or ‘PMDirect.’ Of course, some of the e-mails that go out have the SchoolDude logo, and staff around the campus tell us, ‘We love the Dude,’ and things like that. So I guess those concerns about the name might have been misplaced.”

With more efficient, greener, less expensive, and better communicated maintenance operations, it’s not too hard to imagine this being the case.

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PULL QUOTE

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— Frank Thrift, manager of Maintenance Support Center, Old Dominion University

RESULTS/BENEFITS

- Better visibility into facility support services
- Powerful reporting capability
- Better accountability: easy to track costs, assess staff productivity, and manage ongoing issues for facilities service
- Fast, efficient transition
- Improved communications that close the loop
- Increased productivity
- Greener...