



Search...

Log In

Home	Ecosystem	Facilities	Management	Architecture	Marketplace	About us
------	-----------	------------	------------	--------------	-------------	----------

SFN Team · Jan 10

# The Right Software for Facilities - A Quick Guide for Operators (Part 1)

This month marks the start of our “Best Practice of the Month” series, focusing on how to choose the right software solution for squash facilities. We’ll review various software platforms, interview facility operators, and feature companies that offer solutions to enhance the customer experience, simplify operations, and increase profitability. Note that we’re excluding coaching or squash-analysis tools to keep the spotlight on management software.

## A Chat with Jess Nicol



Jess Nicol, Co-Founder + CEO of Nicol

Our first conversation is with SFN expert **Jess Nicol**. Along with her husband, **Peter Nicol**, Jess has extensive experience in managing facilities. They already operate a venue in New York and are opening another in New Jersey that combines squash, pickleball, and padel. Jess initially used fitness-industry software but soon recognized the need for a system built specifically for racket sports. Here are the five areas she considers essential.

### 1. The Core: A Powerful Booking System

“The booking system is our heart. It must be easy for members to book and still offer essential functions—from individual reservations to group classes.” – Jess

A user-friendly booking system encourages members to make regular reservations. It also manages subscriptions and connects players looking for partners. Jess initially tried a software solution from the fitness industry, which offered a user-friendly booking app but struggled to meet the specific needs of a squash facility. For example, it lacked a clear court grid, made organizing group sessions difficult, and provided no

straightforward way for members to find partners by skill level. Jess considers this last point essential for building an active community in the club.

#### To Be Explored Further in Our Next Articles:

- Must-have features for any booking system
- Integration strategies with apps or websites
- Addressing payment and tax considerations

## 2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

**“It was crucial that the CRM system was seamlessly integrated so we can respond to our members’ behavior and support them in the best way possible.” – Jess**

A reliable CRM fosters long-term member engagement through automated messages and targeted outreach. Integration with the booking system saves time and reduces the risk of errors. Drawing on her own experience, Jess highlights the importance of detailed reporting in this context: tracking whether a first-time walk-in eventually becomes a member, monitoring drop-off and return rates, and knowing how members progress through various offerings. In the interview, she stresses that many booking platforms lack these advanced capabilities, making a separate but fully integrated CRM essential. Jess also explains how automated messaging can be triggered by user behavior—if someone attends a beginner class, for instance, they’ll receive a follow-up prompt to keep playing or consider membership. This coordinated approach helps deliver a seamless, personalized experience to every member while freeing up staff to focus on direct interactions instead of manual data entry.

#### To Be Explored Further in Our Next Articles:

- Key data points and reports for membership management
- Automated outreach campaigns to boost engagement
- Best practices for integrating CRM with booking software

## 3. Communication: Efficient Member Networks

**“We’re currently using group messaging services to connect players. It’s not perfect, but it’s pragmatic and quick to set up.” – Jess**

Simple communication tools allow members to find partners and keep in touch. Building a community is proven to increase participation and loyalty. From her own experience, Jess notes that her club tested various platforms before ultimately settling on a familiar messaging app. By creating separate chat groups for different skill levels—ranging from beginners to advanced players—members can quickly find suitable partners. Although she admits it’s not ideal in every respect, the simplicity and widespread adoption of this solution make it highly effective for fostering an active and engaged community.

#### To Be Explored Further in Our Next Articles:

- Evaluating in-app chat versus third-party messaging
- Moderating online communities to keep them active and friendly
- Tips for scaling communication as your facility grows

## 4. Extra Features: Value-Added Options

**“We have a ton of requests for video playback from players and members, so we’re installing cameras on the back of each court. It’s basically a feature that people pay for when they book.” – Jess**

Beyond basic court bookings and member communication, Jess believes that additional functionalities can greatly enrich the overall club experience. She points out that many operators overlook features that go beyond simple reservations or CRM integrations—such as advanced reporting on multi-sport usage, or dedicated tools for events, tournaments, and box leagues. While there are plans at her venues to install a new system for match playback, Jess emphasizes that it’s still in the early stages and that real-world feedback will only come after several weeks of operation. What she finds most valuable, however, is any technology that can help provide a clearer view of participation across all sports.

#### To Be Explored Further in Our Next Articles:

- Potential add-ons that bring extra value (box leagues, events)

5. User Experience & Support

“One of the biggest pain points has been finding a software partner who can adapt the product to our specific needs and strategies.” – Jess

Robust support is crucial for resolving technical issues quickly and tailoring the software to a facility’s unique model. Reflecting on her own experience, Jess explains that standard, off-the-shelf solutions rarely matched every requirement—especially when it came to integrating new features for multiple racket sports or handling specific reporting needs. She notes how communication with the developers became an ongoing priority, often requiring dedicated channels like private messaging groups to relay user feedback and request adjustments. This level of direct collaboration, according to Jess, is what ultimately helps the software keep pace with evolving business strategies and ensures long-term satisfaction for both operators and members.

To Be Explored Further in Our Next Articles:

- Evaluating customer support and response times
- Balancing customization with off-the-shelf solutions
- Long-term software partnership strategies

Costs and Benefits

“We put a lot into software, but the efficiency gains and saved time make it absolutely worthwhile.” - Jess

Monthly fees or per-booking charges vary, so facility operators must decide which model best aligns with their goals. Reflecting on her own expenses, Jess notes that although the upfront and recurring costs of multiple software components (e.g., booking platforms, CRM integrations, and hardware installations) may seem high, the improved member experience and operational efficiency more than justify the investment. She points out that a reliable, all-in-one approach—where key functions like sales automation, communication, and even potential premium features integrate smoothly—often saves staff hours of work and eliminates the need for patchwork solutions. This streamlined setup, Jess explains, ultimately frees up resources for growth, making the total cost a strategic investment rather than a sunk expense.

Facility Managers—We Want Your Insights!

What challenges have you faced when choosing software? Which features are most important to you? Share your thoughts in the comments or email us at team@squashfacilities.net. We’d love to include your experiences in our upcoming articles!

SFN



©2025 SFN (Squash Facilities Network) / [Privacy Policy](#) / [Accessibility Statement](#)