Case study: Telephony purchasing support for Leeds College of Building

1. What was the challenge?

Leeds College of Building is the only specialist further and higher education construction college in the UK. The student population has increased in recent years and there are currently around 7,500 learners.

In 2014 the phone system was deemed no longer fit for purpose, but the college were unsure on how to go about replacing it or how to articulate their requirements in a tender document. The ICT manager Ian Knight attended an event where he learned about the potential support from Jisc. "When I heard the telephony purchasing service mentioned, I knew that's what I needed to do: write a tender and get it seen by Jisc for some expertise and advice on whether people are going to know what I want," he explains.

The college subsequently contacted their Jisc Account Manager for further support.

2. How did we solve it?

Jisc provided support to the college through the [Telephony Purchasing Service](#) which included:

- Impartial technical guidance and procurement advice to help get the project started
- Guidance from the telephony team on forming an accurate specification for the telephony system, based on their use cases and requirements
- Examples of telephony system specifications from other FE providers to enable the college to consider what might best meet their needs
- Use of the pre-qualified list of suppliers and dynamic purchasing system to ensure best value and quality of service
- Guidance on assessing bids and determining the winning tender

Jisc helped the college to articulate what they needed to retain, in terms of traditional telephone connections (ISDN) and the voice traffic that could move to IP, along with the hardware needed including servers and handsets. Ian says, "The process was simplicity itself and really helped us drive this through in a cost effective and timely manner."

Ian says, "Without Jisc's help and advice as a third party to read through the tenders we wouldn't have got the precise phone system that the college wanted." Moreover, the service is OJEU compliant (Official Journal of the European Union) so the organisation could be assured that the suppliers were meeting rigorous international standards.

3. What were the benefits to the student experience/ organisational IT/ teaching, learning and assessment?

Student experience: The investments in technology support the learning provider's blended learning approach. The simplicity of the new system means that academic staff can run webinars using simple plug and play web cameras and interact with their students online with ease.

Teaching, learning and assessment: Many of the college's assessors are on the road for up to five days at a time, visiting apprentices around the UK from Aberdeen to Cornwall. The new telephony system means assessors and lecturers can use their college phone number even when they are out in the field.

Organisational IT: Behind the scenes, the new system is saving staff time and effort. For example, instead of using cumbersome physical hardware to handle calls, college receptionists can manage them on their screens using simple drag and drop features. This leads to quicker call-handling and a more professional image for the organisation.

Developing the business: The new systems have also enabled the learning provider to acquire new business. In September 2016 the college begins a trial of the UK's first ever undergraduate level highways planning qualification. The first 45 students will be spread over a wide geographical area, with just five of them based near the main site. Ian says, "Part of winning the contract for that qualification was our ability to offer regular online tutorials for students and lecturers to keep in touch. We won't see those students onsite until December, but during that time they will have two or three webinars and the opportunity for a weekly online tutorial."

4. What were the benefits to business efficiency, and other savings?

The college is saving £4000-6000 a year in call costs and line rental. Further, a unique benefit of the Jisc Telephony Purchasing service is that the organisation now has free calls from any mobile numbers to telephones on campus. Ian says, "That wouldn't have happened without Jisc's support."

The college also enjoys greater protection for its systems using SIP or Session Initiation Protocol. Before the work, someone with malicious intent could replicate a phone number and make an expensive call on it, but the new system offers greater security from such scenarios.

Finally, using the Jisc service saved the college around two months of time on the estimated duration of running a full OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) procurement themselves.

5. How are Jisc adding value to this work? How does it tie in with other products and services on offer?

Eduroam

In 2014 the college's new wireless system went live, and as a result they deployed eduroam with Jisc's support during summer 2015. eduroam allows users access to the internet through a single wi-fi profile and set of credentials. Students can now move seamlessly between sites and other educational establishments in the city without needing to constantly look for and log into different wi-fi connections. It has changed the face of working not just for students but also staff; for example, student services advisers now use tablet devices to quickly provide students with information anytime anywhere using their eduroam connection.

Resilient links

Jisc also provided resilient links from Leeds College of Building sites straight into Janet, the Jisc-provided education and research network. Ian said, "It's fantastic just for the speed of people logging on, but Jisc won the work on price alone. It's a no brainer." The organisation saved £7000 on the cost of the inter-site link by using Jisc rather than another supplier. The cost of the work was around a seventh of the cost of the highest bidder, and less than half of the cost of the other commercial providers.

6. More information

Find out more about the Telephony Purchasing Service and how Jisc can support FE and skills providers.

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