

Case Study: University of Leicester

The Current Service

The print service has recently moved to an off-campus facility, though it is still formally a part of the University and not a separate entity. The service runs high speed Xerox digital copiers (colour and black & white), one and two-colour presses up to B2 size which are also used for full colour work. About half the work undertaken is litho. The University's demand for black & white copying has stopped increasing.

A recent VFM study reflected well on the service for its VFM, customer service and for the excellent management.

An on-campus reception area based in the Library serves both graphics and print. Some over the counter work is undertaken at the reception. This joint reception area will continue nearby after the present changes to the Library are complete.

Departments do not have to use the University print service despite the VFM study showing that they often paid 48% more for going outside.

No formal arrangements exist to ensure the internal service gets to quote for all print work needed by the University, and a significant amount does go elsewhere. This figure is diminishing as recently, opportunities to tender for distance learning work have resulted in two large internal contracts being won by the print service.

The service also manages the University-wide copier contract for which each department pays on the basis of usage.

The Journey to the Current Service

The service grew out of a print facility for administration which was then rolled out to other departments. Staff costs and consumables have always been charged for. All machine purchase and hire has also been funded from income over the last 16 years and, since 2004, the service has been full cost recovery including the lease costs on its building, utilities etc.

The service has had a long term commitment to the development of staff and has taken on apprentices.

Three years ago the turnover was £1M; this has now increased to £1.4M of which £380K was external income.

The service has a business plan agreed with the University and can make investments consistent with this.

At periods of high demand and tight deadlines, the staff work overtime.

Just-in-time buying is undertaken to ensure that stock levels are kept low, but when the management gets to hear of a future increase in price of certain materials, extra stock is bought in to reduce the impact of cost rises.

Positive Messages from this Case Study

The print service has a very simple mission which is to deliver a cost effective service on time. If the service says it can do a job then it will do so on time and to the agreed budget however it is produced.

This is an example of a service which is run as a business and which covers its costs, invests in the future and which provides an effective value for money service to the University.

Some Issues

All staff are employed by the University and come under the same HR policies. This has included recent job evaluation which seems to give little or no credit for entrepreneurial activity, as shown for example by the print manager. There is also no ability to pay bonuses related to performance.

The status of the service as a part of the University may not minimise the VAT liability. This is being investigated.

The fact that the University does not mandate going through the University print service means there are some departments spending more than they need to and money is going outside the University.

Acknowledgement

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