

Case Study: London South Bank University

The Current Service

The service at London South Bank University is run by two people – one full time and a 0.6FTE assistant. Their role is to provide a full range of printing and reprographics to the University all of which is outsourced. Associated with this is a design and scanning service. The service is located in the Centre for Learning Development and Support and has close links with Marketing and PR departments.

Ricoh provide the reprographics service and have a small on-site print room. All jobs are charged back to the departments and Ricoh provide management information to enable this. The manager undertakes checking of meter readings and volumes. All jobs have a job docket. Ricoh have had the contract for over three years (the original contract was for three years with a possible two year extension).

In addition all distributed copiers are centrally managed with cards and cash payment on all. The University is looking to move towards a strategy for output management, including laser printers with a move to multi-function devices and a focus on value for money. The price for a “local click” is higher than for a “central click” to encourage volume work to be produced on high volume machines. The University’s commercial partners Ricoh check all local copiers round campus on a daily basis. There is an on-site engineer.

Deliveries are sent to the University customer with samples to the print manager for checking.

There is online ordering.

Scanning to file is an additional service.

The University is looking at wireless printing – some printers have wireless cards in them. They are looking at the issues and the potential demand.

The University is also looking at a range of broad-based card solutions including Oyster cards used elsewhere in London. Currently a cashless system PALMS is to be replaced by pcounter.

The Journey to the Current Service

The current manager used to manage a print and reprographics unit with offset litho and copiers in place. An investigation of demand was undertaken and this led to some service improvements and increased volumes. However there were increasing concerns regarding health and safety (chemicals, COSH, safe manual handling where access for deliveries was not good, RSI due to volume of work, ozone from toner dust), concerns re skillsets for making service improvements, particularly for offset work. There were also concerns that, given the HR policies at the University (generous holidays and other leave allowance), it was impossible to compete with external printers.

The service moved to digital copying (Xerox Docutecs) and stopped doing offset litho work. This worked well but the volumes were insufficient to get the per-copy rate low enough on the Xerox machines. Some service enhancements were possible such as the numbering of carbon sets automatically and the use of the machines for variable data which was promoted.

Space, however, was a big issue for the University and the building lease ended at the same time as the Xerox lease and the issue of whether such a service was viable was revisited. The University at that time was also buying print through the Stationery Office which had 24/7 availability.

It was decided (10 years ago) to market test with the possibility of creating a new print room. A decision was made to outsource copying. The first contract was awarded to Tactica Solutions (Stationery Office). A subsequent tender was awarded to ServicePoint (service delivery) and Ricoh (the machines and back of house). The staff were transferred under TUPE arrangements (five staff with others leaving through natural wastage or under voluntary arrangements).

Their costing model did not work and although prices looked attractive finishing and other important add-ons to the basic copy were expensive.

The Print Manager identified the need for the University to keep some level of control of the contracts in financial and quality terms. There was a high risk of the University being “ripped off” and there were also some security issues which were identified as a potential risk if the entire service was outsourced (e.g. exams).

It was decided to retain management control of the outsourcing and, following a re-tender process, to appoint Ricoh Document Management to run the service.

Positive Messages from this Case Study

The decision to do something as a result of the building and machinery leases running out provided an opportunity to look afresh at what the University needed.

The current situation with managed outsourcing of all print and reprographics services enables a flexible service which can be changed.

There is a good working relationship with Ricoh and their staff.

The employment and funding by the University of the print manager who has responsibility for the contracts and quality and financial management ensures that the University’s interests are paramount.

The University, in going down this road, has converted its responsibilities for capital expenditure, staff salaries (and their sick pay, pensions etc) into a cost per copy model.

For the departments the result is a responsive and managed service which is developing to meet their needs.

Some Issues

The University is using service providers who are in the market for profit and the University has to be reasonable in the way it negotiates – the University has to accept prices that enable the companies to survive and to be sustainable. It is also in the University’s best interests for the partner companies to invest and develop services – in a way that the University has chosen not to do itself. Ricoh work with the University on an open book basis with an added percentage margin.

Acknowledgement

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