

Case Study: University of Plymouth

The Current Service

The current service comprises a front of house service to a full range of print and copy services which are largely outsourced. The service has front of house staff who also undertake some while-you-wait copying and scanning but who largely act as a very customer-focused interface to the service. There are also 3.5FTE designers.

All scanning for reprographics work is undertaken locally with files sent by ftp to external printers based in Swindon and London. Litho printing is undertaken by some local printers and an overseas printer based in Dubai for large corporate publications. When the University went out to tender for a framework agreement its geographical location limited the number of companies interested in undertaking small litho or digital printed jobs.

Paper procurement is undertaken by the service. Departmental copiers and multi-function devices are also managed. The University first started putting in managed MFDs in 2001 and now has 240 round campus. The University, together with the print manager is looking at the financial and environmental benefits of trying to move away from so many laser printers. An audit has been undertaken. There would be savings on printing and also on the provision of network sockets (costed at £700 per annum). There are always tensions in trying to make reductions in what people see as their personal freedom. The central service is also keen to encourage departments who share buildings to share devices - but this is a challenging aim.

Remote Printer has been rolled out but take-up is slow. A web-based version is to be rolled out which will enable use from home (possibly also a good student service) and it is expected that this will increase in use. The Eprint Direct product is being considered with local scanning and central printing.

Online stationery ordering and softcopy proofing is also to be rolled out.

The service is about to be extended to encompass a printing service previously offered by the students' union.

The service has a standard 3-day turnaround with a cost per copy of 1.7p (less than in 2001).

The Journey to the Current Service

In 2001 the manager of the Print Service sought funding from the University for capital reinvestment for litho printing and copying facilities. The cost was high but the need was urgent. At the same time the University was looking to rationalise its estate, focusing on one main campus. The question as to whether the investment was needed came more sharply into focus when there were possible space savings if the service was provided in a different way.

An initial review was undertaken by the internal auditors with a number of options but no clear recommendation. A review by Wyse Solutions was then undertaken. This initially did not include the print manager but, following his involvement, the review was finalised and accepted with the print manager being asked to implement some radical changes with input from the consultants.

The changes implemented included:

- Closing down litho in a short timescale
- Closing down high volume copying and outsourcing it in six months
- Having a framework agreement for all outsourced print to include a matrix of suppliers to help with all areas of output.

Ambitious targets were set and the changes took two years to happen.

Print staff were reduced from 24 to 12 staff. The design and photography team were reduced in size. Investment in digital photography and in the management information system were undertaken. The delivery service for all print was developed with the University's post service.

Staff have been retrained to enable them to undertake customer facing services and/or scanning to prepare work for transmission to outsourced suppliers.

All costs are recovered through internal charges.
These include utilities and space charges.

Quality management is maintained by checking all jobs and that is considered to be a cost worth adding on locally. Financial control is maintained by undertaking all jobs through the central service.

Positive Messages from this Case Study

It is possible to undertake such a massive change without lowering the end service. Turnaround from external suppliers is overnight even to relatively remote locations.

Service speed, quality and financial management and control have not been compromised.

Some Issues

The changes took longer than anticipated and, like all radical changes including staff, were very difficult at the start.

Although some of the problem solving has been transferred to an external supplier, when things do go wrong it is not possible to put them right straightaway as it might be with an in-house unit.

Acknowledgement

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