

Case Study: University of Sheffield

The Current Service

The print service at the University of Sheffield is a fully cost recover service, including recovery of space and utility costs. An annual financial contribution is made to the University; this is negotiated for a five year period and reviewed every three years. The service works on a five year Business Plan and one year Marketing Plan. Based on these plans, the service can make investments and carry forward monies across financial years. Loans are also possible.

There are 20 staff including a design team of six (one manager, three designers, one typesetter/photographer, one large format operator). The service undertakes litho (two colour), digital (Xerox machines), large format poster work, thesis binding and has a range of finishing capability in-house. The University is considering obtaining a full colour/digital press. A shift system is worked at busy times of the year in the high volume duplicating section, employing either temporary staff or utilising existing staff from other sections to support this workload (Aug-Oct and Jan-Feb).

The staff compliment includes a print buyer/estimator. The Tharsterns MIS system is used for administration (modules include Job Costing, Estimating, Reports, Stock Control, Purchase Ordering and Intranet Data Capture).

Print buying is undertaken for outsourced print (£250K outwork from a turnover of £1.2M per annum). The University Print Service is the official print buying service for the University with the exception of the Marketing Department. This forms part of the University Financial Directives and the service is benchmarked annually. The University has an approved design supplier list to give customers a choice, this was developed by the print service and marketing department.

A list of preferred print suppliers has been developed within the print service and all jobs outsourced get a minimum of three quotations. Approximately 20 outsourced printers are used for a wide variety of print applications (four litho printers take most of the work). The purpose of the central print buying function is to

ensure customers adhere to the corporate identity guidelines and also to maintain quality and cost. An administration charge is added to the cost of all outsourced print. The service is trusted within the University to give the best value for money and to ensure quality management. Regular communication meetings are held between the print service and marketing department.

There is a move away from monochrome to full colour throughout the services.

The University print service has played an important role in the development of the corporate identity in terms of ensuring that it will work, developing design and that value for money for standard items can be achieved.

The print and design teams have been co-located for over 10 years which has brought benefits to the department and the university.

The University has a marketing and communications section with a small design team. The prospectus design and print is outsourced using a formal framework agreement (EU Tender) by this department.

The Journey to the Current Service

The development of the new corporate identity which was launched in 2005 brought the print service to the fore in the University. Their very practical involvement in ensuring the identity worked across all uses has been valued.

Building up trust in the service in the University has led to the ability to work to a long term business plan which assists in planning. This is also motivating for staff.

The service has developed by having a very flexible working team able to multi-skill across aspects of the service, reducing the need for spare capacity and cover and in working flexibly to meet the demands of the University.

Positive Messages from this Case Study

The service is managing to have sufficient volume to result in financial stability despite working within the constraints of the HE sector.

Being trusted by University customers and also in terms of the financial management is crucial and is clearly delivering benefits.

The flexibility of the staffing in working across roles sometimes kept separate in other HEIs has contributed to the viability of the service.

Some Issues

The print service had to ensure the marketing department understood their position in the University in terms of workload and customers; it was difficult initially to be accepted in the round-table discussions regarding the corporate identity development.

The Procurement Office have central control of multi-function devices, copiers and laser printers and significant financial benefits could result from the print service being responsible for this.

It is difficult to obtain realistic benchmarking reports/information.

Acknowledgement

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