

Case Study: University of Southampton

The Current Service

The University has a framework agreement with eleven suppliers for outsourced print. This is managed through the Procurement Office. Print Tiger is used as the interface from buyers on campus to the suppliers. Departmental approved buyers log on via a secure web site and enter their specification which goes to all print suppliers on the list. The departments are expected to choose the lowest price and then send their artwork which may be produced in-house or by an external design agency. The Marketing Department undertake design work for departments as well as central marketing materials. The framework agreement is believed to be delivering 12% savings with the vast majority of print now going through the agreement.

There is an internal print service which has two SRA3 two-colour presses and digital copying in monochrome and colour. The service is run on a cost recovery basis. The print service can bid for work entered into Print Tiger. There are some jobs which can be undertaken most effectively in-house and the Procurement Office advise departments that this is the route for certain types of job.

The University is moving towards shared multi-function devices from printers on the desktop. This is seen to have both financial and environmental benefits. The drive is coming from the Procurement Office with the support of Information Services and the relatively newly appointed Environmental Manager.

The Journey to the Current Service

The head of procurement wished to take a more strategic view of purchasing in general and print was one area of concern and one where benefits could be envisaged. It was also an area where there was a need to tighten up on procurement as the total spend of the University required a different approach to purchasing to ensure compliance with legislation. There was an additional incentive in the need to drive a strong centrally managed corporate identity.

Many departments and individuals were buying print and had a wide variety of expectations of suppliers. There was also a wide range of expertise from those undertaking print buying and many naive purchasers were not writing tight specifications which often lead to “add-ons” to what appears to be a good price.

Following the recognition that there needed to be a framework agreement and management of this, the University went out to tender for a list of suppliers to meet their needs. The British Printing Industries Federation helped to manage the tender process and to assess potential suppliers. Suppliers were scored against various parameters and companies were provided with scores if they requested feedback.

The process resulted in eleven print companies on the framework agreement with Print Tiger (available on PCs and Macs) as the interface. Although an e-auction process was considered this was not used. Suppliers cannot see prices coming in and the system only shows the lowest bid. If someone on campus does not wish to select the lowest bid they have to agree this with the Procurement Office. The framework agreement is a four year one and was put in place early in 2006. The Procurement Office check activity and manage the contract.

Positive Messages from this Case Study

The centrally resourced management of the service means that departments get the benefit of the prices on offer (rather than there having to be an administration charge added to the cost to cover the service).

The University now feels confident that it complies fully with legislation and the framework is bringing savings.

Some Issues

There are some departments who try to find problems because they do not like the restrictions of being required to use the framework. A hard line is being taken on this.

It is hard for the internal print service to compete in some areas where they have capability – particularly short-run digital colour.

Acknowledgement

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