

Case Study: University of Stirling

The Current Service

The in-house service provides digital printing services for the University. In-house litho printing used to be undertaken but this service ceased some years ago. There is a central design studio which manages a print buying service with 12 suppliers appointed through a framework agreement. The aim is to bring as much appropriate work in-house – up to SRA3 digital colour and monochrome.

The University of Stirling has operated a centrally controlled student print service for over five years and is now looking at how the advantages of this service can be extended to staff printing. It is looking for economic and environmental benefits for the University.

The University is currently in the middle of a trial of the Uniflow system with Canon MEAP enabled multi-function devices. The service is being piloted at the Stirling Campus on five devices. Up to this point the decision to place copiers (using the national agreement) has been up to departments. The University is now looking to implement strategically placed multi-function devices and to employ “follow me” technology. The working group leading the trial are looking to move away from departmental “ownership” of copiers to an institutional strategic approach using large cost effective machines rather than small underused ones. The group has audited the number of laser printers on campus and is trying to establish volumes but this is not straightforward – paper purchases are being used to give some indication.

The Journey to a New Service

The evolving service has emerged from a strategic group comprising information services, print and procurement sections. The involvement of all parties who can provide expertise, skills and leadership has proved crucial. The group has also built up trust amongst themselves and with the University as a whole.

The working relationship between procurement and information services had already been established as a result of a project to move towards central purchasing of PCs. Information Services also had a good reputation of working in partnership with academic departments. The group started up believing there had to be a better way to manage output at the University. A lot of time was spent discussing the strategy before embarking on the trial.

The group discussed options with suppliers on the national agreement and decided that the offerings from Canon were the most suited to their environment. A print server has been purchased and is being used in the trial of the Canon software. If this is successful then it will be rolled out.

The vision is to reduce the number of devices including laser printers and to make it easy for staff to choose the most economical type of printing. The aim is to move 20% of the output to multi-function devices in their own departments in the first stage of the implementation. Later stages will be to encourage departments to share printers. It is expected that as users realise the true cost of copying and printing on smaller machines, that they will move much of their printing to the most appropriate machines including the University print service

There is no intention to make this mandatory and the process involves selling the case. A web site has been set up to inform staff.

The project is made easier because the University is relatively new and the buildings are easily accessible making the sharing of devices a possibility, if the departments are willing and see the benefits.

Positive Messages from this Case Study

The working and trusting relationship between a team involving print, IT and procurement has been crucial. A shared project with agreed aims, objectives and commitment is crucial.

Selling the case is vital – academic departments want to feel some level of involvement and control. Working out when to involve academics and to what degree is the question to be considered.

Setting of realistic targets is a lesson that the University is learning. Having spent a great deal of time in identifying the vision and investigating software and hardware offerings, it was thought that two months would be sufficient to install the software for the trial and audit of existing print and copy use. The supplier had a different view of this exercise and has worked to meet this vision, but this has taken longer than either party has expected.

Some Issues

More challenges really:

- Scaling up the pilot.
- Selling the case.

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