



DAMOVO DELIVERS THE UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND A BUSINESS CASE FOR CONVERGENCE

The higher education market is a competitive sector, with universities vying to attract the best students from home and abroad by offering a richer learning experience, closer links with local communities and specialist services, such as the £9m Media Centre at the University of Sunderland.

The University of Sunderland recognised that while its communications network met the needs of students and staff today, in the long term it would limit the University's ability to grow and offer new services. As such, the University of Sunderland turned to its trusted partner, Damovo, which has been supporting its voice infrastructure for 18 years and has significant experience in the higher education market, to consult on the future roadmap of its communications infrastructure.

Damovo reviewed the University's existing infrastructure before making its recommendations for a converged voice and data network

incorporating elements of the current platform to maximise the cost-effectiveness of the University's investment. The recommendations made by Damovo provided the University of Sunderland with a comprehensive and independent business case for convergence.

Building an ICT infrastructure for the future

Located in the heart of the North East of England, the University of Sunderland is based on two main sites and has more than 14,000 students. It has grown rapidly since gaining university status in 1992.

Sunderland Business School opened in 1994 and ten years later the University's £9m Media Centre was launched, contributing to Sunderland's aim to become "an international powerhouse for the creative industries."

...TO BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL POWERHOUSE FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

In order to meet the requirements and expectations of students entering higher education in years to come, the University recognised that it needed to expand and upgrade its communications network. The University of Sunderland's existing communications infrastructure successfully meets the needs of students and staff today, but its lifespan is limited, especially as it does not offer converged voice and data services.

Investing in a secure, future-proofed converged network would enable it to provide a richer learning experience to students, offer greater mobility to people on campus and build a communications environment that could support new technologies – such as IP telephony and video conferencing – and services, such as e-learning and collaborative ventures.

Establishing the business case with Damovo

Transitioning to a new communications environment is never a job that should be undertaken lightly, particularly when the new network has to meet future demands that might not even exist yet. As such, the University of Sunderland knew it had to investigate the options available and build a solid business case before presenting its proposals to the University's executive committee for funding.

Damovo has been maintaining the University's voice infrastructure since 1988, when it first implemented an Ericsson MD110 on the University campus. **"We have a good relationship,"** says Kevin Hayton, network services manager at the University of Sunderland. As well as maintaining the day-to-day running of its voice network, Damovo meets with the University's network team to demonstrate new technologies, such as IP telephony, from time to time.

It was during one such meeting at Damovo's Horsham-based headquarters that the University of Sunderland heard about the converged voice and data upgrades Damovo had implemented at two other higher education institutions: Aston University and Bournemouth University. **"Aston**

University had undertaken a technology refresh, which we were unable to do, but our situation was very similar to Bournemouth University, which had approached convergence by modifying its current infrastructure," explains Hayton. **"By coincidence, Bournemouth University's account manager and the University's network team were also at Horsham that day, so they came and spoke to us,"** he continues.

"They told us what the Bournemouth network had been like before and after Damovo's involvement. We are a slightly larger university but their equipment (Ericsson MD110 and Cisco Systems data network), circumstances, and way in which they had achieved migration was so close to our own situation and thinking, it was almost unbelievable."

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MAIN REQUIREMENT FOR FUTURE - A CONVERGED VOICE AND DATA NETWORK

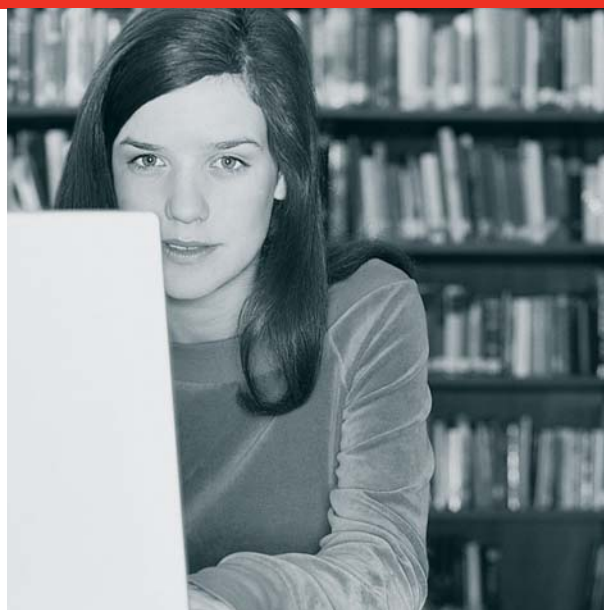
“We were in a good position to carry out a sanity check by engaging an external organisation to do a consultation and give credence to our concerns,” continues Hayton. ***“We recognised Damovo had provided consultancy for other universities, and that Bournemouth’s situation was extremely close to our own. Although we had not worked with Damovo on the data side before, we knew the company was familiar with our voice system and that it had a good operational record, so we looked to see if Damovo could offer something similar for us.”***

Identifying the University of Sunderland’s ICT requirements

In March 2006, the University of Sunderland commissioned Damovo’s consultancy and design team to review its network and provide a strategic and technical three-year migration plan, with a view to delivering its findings three months later. Despite having already spoken to the University of Sunderland about the future communications environment it needed to attract students from home and abroad, two Damovo consultants visited the site and examined the existing communications platform in detail to ascertain what aspects of the infrastructure would need upgrading, replacing or modifying.

One of the University’s main requirements for its future communications environment is a converged voice and data network offering Voice over IP (VoIP). Any recommendations also had to take into consideration the University’s broadcast systems and the existing wireless local area network (WLAN), which supports 2,500 users in halls of residences, libraries and refectory areas.

In addition, security is of paramount concern to the University of Sunderland, especially when people might be logging onto the network not just from University PCs, but also laptops, PDAs and other portable devices. ***“We want a mechanism where a student or member of staff’s log-in rights belong to them rather than the system he or she is using,”*** explains Hayton. ***“It fits with the University’s goal of single sign on.”***



Delivering a cost-effective and comprehensive migration strategy

In June 2006, Damovo presented its report to the University of Sunderland’s network team. ***“I told Damovo what our business drivers were and our current circumstances, and left Damovo to recommend a suitable migration path. I never said, ‘I want X, Y or Z.’ so it was pleasing to see that the recommendations they suggested tallied closely with those we had already considered,”*** says Hayton.

Equally pleasing was Damovo’s recognition of the cost limitations the University of Sunderland faces and its preference to re-use elements of its existing communications infrastructure rather than replace everything. ***“I thought Damovo would recommend that we pull out our WLAN and***

“...a mechanism where a student or member of staff’s log-in rights belong to them rather than the system he or she is using”

CONSULTANTS LOOKED AT OUR CURRENT SET-UP AND TOOK THE SENSIBLE VIEW OF 'IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT'

other equipment, but the consultants looked at our current set-up and took the sensible view of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it,' admits Hayton. For example, the University of Sunderland uses a solution from Vernier Networks, which specialises in network access control. ***"It is a very useful product and Damovo highlighted it as a solution that works in its report,"*** says Hayton.

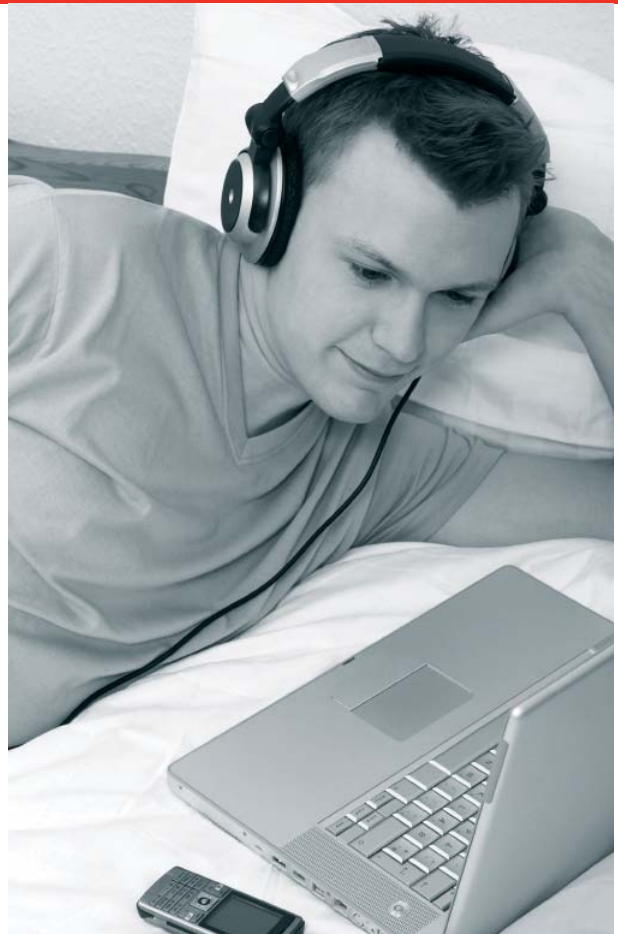
He was also impressed with the report Damovo provided including strategic and technical recommendations. ***"The way the summary and business elements linked in with our business strategy documents was particularly useful,"*** he adds.

Next steps

In August, Damovo presented its report to the network department, and in September, Damovo's findings were taken to the Assistant Director of the Executive and Business Systems Group, by Hayton and his team to bolster its business case for funding. ***"One of the major benefits of having the consultation document is that it gives us an external viewpoint, which happens to coincide with what we have been recommending,"*** says Hayton. Following this exercise, the recommendation was made and funding has been approved.

The University of Sunderland also continues to work with Damovo on improvements to its current network; in a separate bid, Damovo recently won a competitive tender to replace some old Cisco hardware that had been identified in the report, and was appointed to maintain the University's LAN infrastructure, in addition to the voice maintenance service it already provides.

Commenting on the consultancy work with the University of Sunderland, Paul Butcher, managing director of Damovo UK, says: ***"The consultancy services we provided give the University of Sunderland a clear business case and migration***



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plan for a converged communications network. Sunderland recognised our heritage in the higher education market and we wish them every success in turning their plans into reality."

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