MyPC @

University of Sheffield

The Information Commons is a brand new, futuristic building for the University of Sheffield that was born out of complete fresh thinking about learning resources for the 21st century student. The Information Commons is the ultimate workspace for students, it provides computing and library resources and offers a diverse and innovative range of workspaces to cater for individual and group study needs and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Since its launch in April 2007, the IC has gone from strength to strength, introducing several new initiatives during its first year of operation. During the first summer we worked hard to introduce a number of new facilities, one of these was the introduction of a PC booking system called MyPC, which currently allows students to book approximately 150 out of the 500 PCs in the IC (including all PCs on level 5) as well as 10 of the group study rooms.

The main benefit for students is that they now have a way of guaranteeing a PC for their use when they come into the building… there is no need for staff involvement and bookings can be made anytime and from anywhere.

Background
For the few months between the IC being opened and MyPC first being introduced, general computer use was on a first come first served basis with no time restriction on the usage. Group study rooms were booked on a simple spreadsheet that could only be opened in one location at one time to avoid any mistakes being made with the bookings; the students had to come to a particular desk and member of staff to make the booking.

Why ITS?
MyPC was chosen as it works with the Novell client used on the University's Managed desktop service, which the other packages did not. ITS were the only suppliers of MyPC considered (and quite possibly the only suppliers there are!).

Benefits of MyPC - For staff and students.
The main benefit for students is that they now have a way of guaranteeing a PC for their use when they come into the building. Students are able to make a booking via the web, which means that there is no need for staff involvement and bookings can be made anytime and from anywhere. The web pages also make it easy for users to see what is available thereby avoiding confusion and reducing the need for staff involvement.

The system allows us to set parameters for the usage of the PCs to manage and respond to student behaviour. It also allows us to monitor PC usage and provides us with information, which we can use to review policies.

We also use the system to manage our room bookings which has proved very successful and saved staff a lot of time and effort.

How MyPC is being used now.

The system has been set up so that it allows users to book a MyPC PC from anywhere just as long as they have access to the internet. Our users all have access to MUSE (My University of Sheffield Environment) which gives secure access to online university resources from anywhere in the world, within MUSE we have setup a link to the MyPC booking system. A significant advantage of this is that it allows users to book a PC from home before setting off to the Information Commons and therefore the user is safe in the knowledge that they will have a PC available to them in a specific time slot, this is especially useful during busy periods.

Within the Information Commons MyPC has assisted us greatly in setting up different types of areas with differing time restrictions. For example, on Level 1 we have a 'Quick Print Area' which allows users to book 15 minute time slots, these are designed to help users who simply just need to come in briefly and print their work off. We have also created a silent study space completely across Level 5 where every PC has the MyPC software installed. Within this area users can book the PC for up to 4 hours at a time. Our goal here when students have become more comfortable with the system is that users will only ever attempt to access this space when they have booked a PC and therefore limiting the amount of disruption with students accessing this area when it may already be fully booked.

We now also completely use MyPC as the booking system for the group study rooms within the Information Commons, there are 10 bookable group rooms of different sizes available for users to book. These rooms are extremely popular and MyPC has allowed us to set different limits for maximum access time and setup different opening hours for them.
A further example of how we have been able to use MyPC is that we only have 4

scanners available in the IC and it can be frustrating for a user when they come to the IC specifically to use this piece of equipment but the PC it is connected to is in use even though that user is not using the scanner itself. We therefore decided to install MyPC on all scanner PCs allowing a user to guarantee themselves a time slot with the equipment.

Conclusions

MyPC has been so successful that we have recently increased the number of licences and are currently looking into policy changes to see how we can improve the overall experience.
From a Technical Administrators point of view, making changes have been trouble-free and the ITS Technical Support team have been excellent in responding to our questions and also contacting us to check if issues have now fully been resolved.

This Case Study was written by Mr Daniel Courtney, IT Services Manager, University of Sheffield.

Designed by Info Technology Supply Ltd. Marketing Department.

info technology supply ltd.
Talbot house
204-226 Imperial Drive
Harrow, Middlesex
HA2 7HH
United Kingdom

Sales Tel: +44 20 8429 5255
Fax: +44 20 8429 3642

http://www.itsltduk.com