

## **Hertfordshire Career Services**

Hertfordshire Careers Services Limited (HCS) is a company limited by guarantee with no share capital. Building on the firm foundations laid by the County Council Careers Service, the Company was formed in 1995 when it acquired the contract to deliver the statutory careers service through competitive tender.

HCS is now recognised as a high quality provider of careers management and development services working across both private and public sectors in Hertfordshire and the UK.

The core business of the company is to develop, promote and deliver services, to both individuals and organisations, to facilitate:

- Preparedness for work;
- Career planning change and development within work;
- Contributing to the wider economic development and prosperity of both the individual and local area.

The company portfolio has developed considerably since its inception and now includes working across both private and public sectors in Hertfordshire and across the UK. They are a major contractor to Connexions Hertfordshire and the lead deliverer for the Hertfordshire nextstep, Train to Gain, Education Services and Hertfordshire Response to Redundancy.

## **The Project**

HCS had historically provided their own Information and Communications Technology (ICT) function. A strategic business review had identified the objective to undertake a strategic sourcing review which was completed with Quantum Plus from the outset. Quantum Plus project managed the outsourcing lifecycle up to transition whilst supporting interim ICT management during the same period.

Scope of services outsourced included helpdesk; infrastructure, hardware, server and network support; user support/training; operating system support; project management of a schedule of works; TUPE.

Key to the objectives was finding a way of delivering flexible, responsive and cost effective solution which would meet both the current and future requirements of the business.

## **Project approach delivering best practice**

Led by Quantum Plus the Project Team used best practice project planning guidelines. The main elements of the process were as follows:

- Define business objectives and agree sourcing strategy;
- Define requirements;
- Agree programme of work;
- Select a shortlist of suitable tier matched suppliers;
- Due diligence;
- Request for Proposal (RFP);
- Respond to supplier questions/clarifications;
- Review supplier proposals and evaluate against requirements (HR, financial and operational);
- Supplier presentations, delivery site visits and customer references;
- Evaluation and selection of preferred supplier;
- Contract negotiations and award;
- Transition to new supplier (ihotdesk).

## Execution of the project

The project commenced in November 2006, with completion in July 2007. The team held regular project/risk review meetings, providing tight control over the programme as required. Presentations to HCS staff were conducted at key stages throughout the project.

The Project Team consisted of a consultant from Quantum Plus and stakeholders from HCS's Finance, ICT, Business, and HR together with sponsorship from the CEO. In addition, the team worked with law firm Hawkins Russell Jones.

## Objectives and Benefits

HCS was facing a point in their planning where it was recognised that the current ICT department could not support the current business needs or future organisational strategies and objectives moving forward with its then current operational service delivery. The principal objective of the project and a major innovation for HCS was to provide ICT services that would enable HCS to create a competitive advantage by delivering a future proof architecture and consistent service delivery levels to meet the business needs then and in the future.

Many forces drove HCS to consider new ways of doing business and delivering their services through remote and mobile users and customers. These included increased competition, new technologies, increasing operational cost and more demanding, enlightened customers. They required a true partnership with a provider that would bring to the table thought leadership and innovation enabling the HCS business to make step changes to the way they did business in the future.

Although HCS was driving business change through and adopting new approaches the ICT team were not a part of the strategic management of this and, as such, were not proactive in the services or support offered.

The Project Team were confident that a new contract i.e. new supply model would better meet the requirements of HCS. However, as the project progressed, the team's expectations were exceeded and actual benefits achieved were greater than originally anticipated. These business objectives from the project and benefits achieved are detailed the table below:

Objective	Benefit achieved
Improve service from ICT	A new detailed Service Level Agreement (SLA) was created and included in the RFP and prices submitted were based on this comprehensive requirement.
Access to wider skill base	Selected supplier that could apply the relevant resource and skills to meet HCS's business demand.
Facilitate rapid change	Supplier has a proven track record.
Provide more robust service continuity	Supplier has a proven track record of delivering and exceeding service levels and has disaster recovery facilities.
Strategic IT management support to HCS	Supplier has delivered the value added input from their strong account management team and processes and assisted with developing a future roadmap of ICT services, based on the HCS business plan and delivered a number of projects that have already recognised improvements and benefits to the business.

Objective	Benefit achieved
Ensure technology refresh	Supplier has a track record of delivering technology refreshes successfully and with minimum disruption to the business.
Improve market perception of HCS	Selected a very reputable service provider whose professional partnership with HCS would benefit and improve market perception.
Ability to react more rapidly to external influences	Supplier has a relatively large number of staff and is able to deploy sufficient resource to assist HCS with projects and change.
Predictability and flexibility of future costs	<p>Cost predictability based on a clear set of defined services, governed by an SLA was achieved by the implementation of the contract.</p> <p>Greater visibility over costs, incorporating a better understanding of the key cost drivers within ICT service provision and how those costs relate to the actual business need.</p> <p>Effective management and forecasting of operational costs for budgetary purposes.</p> <p>New price was driven by a number of parameters allowing flexibility, therefore, if HCS's business requirements alter there is a mechanism to allow the price of the service to reflect any changes.</p>
Implement proven and repeatable procedures across the IT function	Supplier's service delivery is based on ITIL and recognised project methodologies.
Similar cultural fit and appropriate tier match	Supplier recognised the importance of the cultural alignment for HCS and the size fit. This allowed HCS to benefit from faster integration, adoption of staff and a better ongoing relationship.

### Why this project is different

HCS is a relatively small organisation and was aggressive in its strategy to deliver a mechanism that would support the significant business changes that were foreseen for the organisation. It clearly recognised the need to partner with a professional ICT delivery organisation that would fit the cultural requirements of HCS, fully support the TUPE of staff and deliver organisational objectives. HCS was committed to make this significant step change to the culture of its organisation and it was critical that any change project of this nature was achieved effectively by the project team, whilst maintaining adherence to the objectives the organisation had set itself.