



CIHS Assessment Helps Plymouth University Prepare for ISO20000 Certification

Background

Founded in 1862 as a school of navigation, Plymouth is now the UK's 15th largest university with around 27,000 students and more than 3,000 staff. A leading academic institution, Plymouth has twice been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher Education, has won numerous accolades for its teaching and research, and was ranked the UK's third best education establishment to work for according to a 2015 survey.

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ITSM in a Device-Centric Environment

Since 2007, when the first iPhone was released, device ownership has exploded. A major study conducted by Google in 2015 found that the average UK consumer owned 3.3 devices, and concluded the UK was 'one of the most connected countries in the world'. For a university with 27,000 students, over 80% of whom are on-campus, this has necessitated a massive investment in IT infrastructure and service management.

“As a university we have over 23,500 hardware and software assets, on top of student and faculty owned devices, all of which are routinely connected to our network,” said Gary Bayliss, Head of IT Service Management at Plymouth. “Over the past two years we've been through a significant transformation programme in order to turn our IT provision into more of a corporate professional service. We wanted to develop a service that was transparent and fully accountable, and which also met best practice standards.”

According to Bayliss, who comes from a service management background in the private sector, when he arrived at the university there was a long way to go before ISO20000 accreditation could be considered.

“Prioritisation should be fair and consistent,” explained Bayliss. “That's part of the SLA. Everybody should get the same level of service, it shouldn't come down to who shouts the loudest. We need to say this is what we deliver, these are our standards, these are our processes, and this is what we'll be accountable for.”

A veteran of three previous ISO20000 implementations, Bayliss pushed hard to convince his colleagues that working towards accreditation would dramatically improve both quality of service and cost-effectiveness.

Fast-forward to early 2016, and these predictions had been borne out. Through a range of service adaptations designed to meet business needs, service metrics had been improved across the board.

In fact, through a variety of automations and system improvements, around 25% more services were provided with 15% less staffing.

But as the university drew closer to ISO20000 compliance, it became more and more difficult to identify areas for improvement. Without scrutiny from an expert outsider it would be very difficult (and potentially expensive) to achieve accreditation.

Past Experience and a Recommendation

At this point, the university decided to bring in an outside consultancy to assess their newly renovated IT service in line with ISO20000. Past experience was at the top of their requirements list, but in the end it was a recommendation that pointed them to CIH Solutions Ltd.

“Of course cost was a factor, as it always is, and we did look at other options. As a public organisation we do have to look at a number of vendors before we make a decision,” said





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Service:

ISO20000 Assessment
(High Level)

Anatomy:

Introductory workshop
(1 day)

Process owner interviews
(5 days)

Result:

Dashboard of all services with red/amber/green ratings at ISO20000 requirement level, including next steps.

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Bayliss. “In my opinion, though, there’s nothing better than a recommendation. One of my senior managers had worked with CIHS before and she was very clear that they had done a great job.”

CIHS were invited to give a presentation on how they would deliver the assessment, and provide examples of how they had solved similar problems in the past. It was immediately clear that the plan, a 5-day intensive assessment, was precisely what Plymouth University needed.

Finding (and Filling) the Gaps

Right off the bat, the university’s expectations were exceeded.

The week started with a group briefing, in which a consultant from CIHS spoke directly to the university’s process owners.

Bayliss explains: “It was pitched at the right level for the people in the room. If you’re delivering this sort of briefing you have to determine the competence and maturity of your audience very quickly. If you pitch your message too high or too low it’s going to be a disaster. I think CIHS got it just right.”

“We were looking for someone to come in and find our gaps, someone who didn’t mind being challenged,” he continued. “We got that, but what really impressed me was that the consultant also created an element of enthusiasm among the group that I hadn’t expected.”

“We’re taking people on a journey, and you need the peoples’ buy-in to achieve the end result. Everybody came out of the briefing with a level of enthusiasm. They understood why they were doing this, and they were enthused to actually do it. That’s an important part of this gap analysis, and one that I thought would fall to me.”

After the initial briefing came a 5-day intensive assessment, during which each process owner was interviewed in turn, and their supporting evidence reviewed. The CIHS consultant used these interviews to identify Plymouth University’s current position against the ISO20000 framework, as well as identifying gaps that would need to be filled.

Bayliss and his colleagues were deeply impressed by the simplicity of CIHS’ working methods. The dashboard produced by CIHS enabled them to see at a glance which areas were compliant, and to quickly identify the root causes.

In some cases non-compliant services could quickly be made compliant with relatively minimal resource expenditure. In others, there is still plenty of work to be done.

Based on the assessment, Bayliss estimates that the work completed over the past two years has brought them 70% of the way to ISO20000 compliance. But, of course, it’s not just about the certification.

“From that remaining 30% we expect to become more predicable as a service. We want maintain higher levels of uptime, better levels of productivity, and have more people looking proactively at what we can do to improve. Reactive effort is very time consuming and resource intensive, so we’re definitely looking to be as proactive as we possibly can be,” said Bayliss.

“Going down ISO20000 road has really enabled us to do more with less,” he concluded.

John Wright, CIO at Plymouth University, commented: “As a result of the work we’ve done and continue to do, we’re able to develop new services for students and staff. In the coming months, as we tackle the gaps identified by CIHS, we’ll be able to keep adding more value to the student experience.”

