

Lessons from Loughborough

The history of Loughborough College dates back to 1909 and since its establishment as a technical institute it has worked to gain a reputation for innovation and high quality provision, ideals which are also reflected in the College's IT Support Team.

Loughborough's PC community is vast and complex, with over 800 PCs and 20 servers. As with all educational establishments, the user community comprises of three very different groups; students, teaching and admin staff. Each of these groups varies widely in their support requirements, but all of them are channelled through Intuit Track-It! software. During term time, the team gets an average 300 requests per week into Track-It! varying from Audio Visual Loan equipment requests, to software or hardware fault logs, right through to major software or hardware installation requests.

Geographic dispersal also makes for added complications for Loughborough's IT Support team, as requests can come from any one of the outreach centres, a cyber cafe in Loughborough town centre, a mobile unit, or perhaps one of the two school centres, connected via various WAN connections to the college network.

Paul Taylor is the Computer Services Manager and head of the team. In 1998, he was responsible for making the strategic decision to change from in-house developed database to commercially available software in a bid to improve support for the Help Desk team.

"We needed to take a big step forward and put a system in place that would grow with us and keep pace with the increasing demands of our customers, the PC users of Loughborough College. It was imperative that the new software could offer two things; a solid yet sophisticated database, which promised scalability and a high degree of automated help. And it needed to do this at a sensible price; not too much to ask, I thought, until I started to research the market."

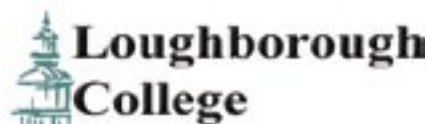


"I found lots of products that fitted my bill technically, but the prices were crazy. Then I came across Track-It! downloaded a demo and haven't looked back since. Track-It! does just what it says on the tin – no hype or impossible promises, just real delivery."

– Paul Taylor, Computer Services Manager

After several months, and countless enquiries Paul felt very discouraged. "I found lots of products that fitted my bill technically, but the prices were crazy. Then I came across Track-It! downloaded a demo and haven't looked back since. Track-It! does just what it says on the tin – no hype or impossible promises, just real delivery."

The software, once installed, was up and running straight away and doing its job, but the changes it provoked over the first six months were much bigger than anticipated. Paul explains: "Track-It! is far more than a job-logging, job-tracking database; it fundamentally changed work ethics and



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attitudes in the team. Each technician has a specific skill set, which could be used to better advantage as more of the more mundane tasks became automated. The team became increasingly self-motivated, and there was a move towards more accountability and independence.

Users email us with their requests and are automatically supplied with a job number, via the email system, so they can track the progress of their query easily. Any member of the team can perform Job Allocations, and workflow is vastly improved. According to Paul this function alone makes a huge impact on the team and its productivity. "We can almost run on 'admin auto-pilot', spending our time where it really counts; resolving user issues."

Track-It! has also enabled the team to improve quality of information on how jobs are executed and respond to user service issues. "Every three or four months a satisfaction survey is executed where 20% of jobs are picked at random and analysed. One survey recently found that users wanted more on-going communication; to know when a job was allocated, to whom, what had been done and when resolution has been achieved. Easy! We responded to this almost overnight by using automated functions in Track-It! to issue job status email to users as a standard procedure."

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Another function that Paul values highly is Purchasing, he uses the reporting functionality within Track-It! to produce an in-house report which enables him to re-charge customers appropriately for supplies used. "It's a simple admin/logistics job, but one that I'd rather someone else did if they could do it efficiently," says Paul. "That 'person' is Track-It!"

Hardware auditing and inventory logging within Track-It! is an automatic feature the team uses to the full, Paul uses the resulting data to make informed decisions when planning replacements.

Scalability is one of the things that Track-It! has got right according to Paul: "Help Desk software can represent a significant investment for a College with a modest IT budget and it's important to be able to start small and grow. There are many more improvements that we plan to implement, and it's great to know that Intuit IT Solutions software has the potential to support us and our work along the way."

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