

Business and public sector partnership set to deliver higher education transformation at Coventry University



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CUSTOMER NAME • Coventry University
LOCATION • Coventry, UK West Midlands
INDUSTRY • Education
COMPANY SIZE • 19,400 students and employees
BUSINESS CHALLENGE • Realise the vision of becoming one of the UK's leading Universities • Become more business and vocationally focused • Establish innovative and transformative business partnerships
SOLUTION • Cisco partnership • Cisco Connected Learning • Cisco Unified Wireless Network • Cisco Unified Communications
BUSINESS VALUE • Enables transformation of traditional higher education management and delivery • Breaks down Campus 'walls' and extends education and resources into the work place • Enables innovative and leading edge learning tools and techniques to be developed and deployed • Streamlines Campus estate and environment management and control • The partnership between Coventry and Cisco is delivering education, organisational and management transformation at the University

Coventry University and Cisco have developed a unique partnership that is driving a transformation in how the University is changing the structure and delivery of traditional education, how it manages and runs the organisation and how it is breaking down Campus walls and reaching out to the wider business and public sector community.

Business Challenge

Higher education institutions face huge change. Competition to win students, especially internationally, has increased and those students expect a lot more from technology for learning and socialising. Campus buildings demand more efficient control and management. Many Universities face energy bills well over £1 million a year. Both government regulation and commercial needs are forcing Universities to rethink physical barriers and turn towards a virtual Campus concept to extend University resources into the workplace, home and internationally.

Coventry University is one University that is meeting these challenges head on and is set to become one of the most innovative and most advanced Universities in the UK and across Europe. Having started as a design college in 1843, Coventry is now focused on transforming the way higher education meets commercial and public sector needs more effectively. John Latham, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Business Development at Coventry, says, "Our vision is to ensure that everything we do as a University is related to the business and outside world. So our education is now much more vocationally based and everything we do supports enterprise, entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer."

The 2010 Test, is Coventry University's vision to become a leading UK University; increase student numbers and their employment opportunities; increase employee flexibility; and increase revenue earning potential by 2010.

One of Coventry's most innovative moves has been its partnership approach with businesses like Cisco and its investment in technology as a key enabler to delivering the 2010 vision.

Partnership

One of the critical elements of transforming the way Coventry operates is its partnerships with leading organisations. Latham says, "We want partners who share our vision, where we have intimacy between people on both sides, who are able to talk to each other about what they are doing so there is mutual benefit."

Joanne Dobson, Coventry University's Programmes Director for the Corporate Partnership Unit, says, "One of our shining star relationships is the one that we have with Cisco. We can bounce ideas off each other, helping Coventry apply technology in innovative ways, and helping Cisco improve its engagement in the higher education sector."

Dobson adds, "Early on Cisco committed to a number of activities that were not income generating. For instance, we have an open door to Cisco and can go to Cisco and learn from its highly skilled and knowledgeable people. But Cisco also introduces us to other Universities where Cisco technology and emerging business practices are helping to drive change. There is no guarantee of money or an instant order, but Cisco is still willing to step up and invest time and effort in our vision. That's why we value a partner like Cisco."

Both organisations communicate at all levels, including senior management, and are jointly involved in outward-facing projects. For example, both Coventry and Cisco are involved in a regional development agency funded initiative to raise awareness about wireless technology within small businesses. Cisco has helped build a Unified Communications centre – using a Cisco Unified Communications system – on the Coventry Campus as a showcase for communication innovation. Coventry and Cisco have cooperated on other projects as well that have resulted in winning new business for both organisations.



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Joanne Dobson, Programmes Director, Corporate Partnership Unit, Coventry University

Network Solution

One of the fruits of the Coventry-Cisco partnership has been the adoption of Cisco's Connected Learning solution by the University. Encapsulated in the University's SMART-Campus@CU strategy, this aims to improve the student experience, ensure quality education, expand applied research, and increase business efficiency and sustainable growth. The foundation for this is a Cisco IP network infrastructure connecting – wired and wirelessly – Coventry University Campus sites and buildings. One of the key features of the Cisco infrastructure is the high-performance, corporate-class network it provides, delivering the same performance and security capabilities typically found only in commercial organisations.

The University has already started to realise some elements of SMART-Campus@CU by using the Cisco network to give students, staff and clients global 24 hour access to a host of resources such as virtual learning environments, libraries and ubiquitous Internet access. But it is Coventry's vision for, and investment in, the Cisco infrastructure as the foundation for change that is set to transform Coventry as a University.



A key part of SMART-Campus@CU is enabling workforce mobility and enabling learning and teaching to take place anytime anywhere. Applications that Coventry is looking to run over the Cisco infrastructure include voice over IP and collaboration tools will help to increase lecturer and student communication and interaction. This kind of application will also help fulfill the University's ambition to improve work-life balance by increasing home and remote working.

The network will help create a highly secure Campus both electronically and physically. Cisco security technologies – including network access control for thousands of laptops and the ability to automatically predict and prevent threats and provide real-time monitoring of network activity - are being deployed to help Coventry achieve a business-class, self-defending network. This will also enable Coventry to make its education resources more open and available to those in and out side the Campus without compromising data integrity.

Another key element of the SMART-Campus@CU vision is transforming Campus and building management. The Cisco IP network provides the foundation for integrating a host of systems and applications for reducing carbon footprint, maximising energy use and making facility management much more efficient and cost effective. The University is planning to use the Cisco network to deploy a smart card door access system and IP-based CCTV monitoring. The University – which is investing £160 million in redevelopment – will be able to manage its buildings more efficiently by using the Cisco infrastructure to control heating, lighting and ventilation in buildings at any location remotely. Lighting, for example, in a single classroom or across the whole Campus spanning several locations can be centrally managed and automated helping the University to reduce electricity use significantly.

Because the Cisco infrastructure provides a single platform for all kinds of services and functions departments, such as facilities management and academic faculties that where traditionally separate, are starting to look at how they can work together to improve and streamline processes to deliver economies of scale and more efficient management.

The Cisco TelePresence Meeting solution is being used in a collaborative project between Coventry and a partner institution, with other associated higher education bodies looking at how they can leverage this technology to improve inter-University communication.

Business Results

Latham believes that through its vision and partnerships with organisations like Cisco, Coventry University will see a number of business benefits, including increasing value for money, increasing return on investment and reducing costs. But he sees even greater benefit from education, organisational and management transformation. Coventry is building an environment that supports students throughout the entire lifecycle of their education, from selecting a University, attending, graduating, and becoming an alumni.

"Cisco is enabling Coventry to take education provision beyond the Campus and into the workplace. We are looking at location independent working, where we enable people to work at any location at anytime," says Latham. "Technology from Cisco and others will provide a new way of doing education in the workplace. One aspect that will give Coventry a unique selling point is setting up remote workplace learning centres so that employees don't have to leave their place of work to get full access to the University's learning resources."

SMART-Campus@CU is enabling Coventry to change the way students experience learning. Already, the Cisco infrastructure allows students to work anywhere around the Campus, as well as off Campus, and still have full access to online University resources.

Another example of how Coventry is changing is online enrolment. Traditionally, new students arrive and queue several times to complete the registration and administration process. Two weeks later they would receive their grant cheque. "This is bureaucratic, slow and doesn't give students a warm feeling when they arrive," says Latham. "So we're putting all of this online and the Cisco infrastructure is enabling us to deliver a whole host of enabling processes which give power back to individuals to do it for themselves."

The Serious Games Institute (SGI) is an example of how Coventry, in partnership with Cisco and others, is using technology to transform learning. Cisco wireless networking and location services combined with gaming software enable information to be sent automatically to a student based upon their physical location on the Campus or virtual location. Cisco is also helping Coventry develop and bring to market a number of pathfinder projects which are innovative education applications at the leading edge of technology. Coventry University Repository Virtual Environment (CURVE), for example, brings together research, libraries, documentation and experience from individuals and organisations on subjects such as transport, automotive design, and health, turning information into practical and useful knowledge.

Coventry University Blogging Academic (CUBA) takes a range of online communication and collaboration products and combines them to form a tool to help academic researchers to work and communicate. Built on an open source blogging tool, it includes a series of tools such as web conferencing, wikis and an image gallery which users can customise and embellish to share, expand and deepen peoples' expertise.

"You can't deliver innovation - extending from Internet access, collaboration, e-learning and extending the Campus, to improving facility management and leading edge pathfinder projects - if you don't have the infrastructure that we have built with Cisco. Connectivity and interoperability are the key elements of the network. As the technology advances and the same backbone accommodates more and more services and facilities, the greater the opportunity for transformation," says Latham.



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
168 Robinson Road
#28-01 Capital Tower
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: +31 0 800 020 0791
Fax: +31 0 20 357 1100

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