



The University of Sheffield selects campusM™ for Students

“Both students and staff come to the University with an expectation that the services we provide will respond to their needs, rather than meet the needs of the University”.

Dr Christine Sexton, Director of the University of Sheffield’s Corporate Information and Computing Services

The University of Sheffield, originally founded in 1879 and today home to 49 academic departments, is ranked as one of the UK’s top universities¹. With over 24,000 students from 131 countries, and almost 6,000 staff living and working across the city of Sheffield, university life is very much integrated with the day-to-day life of the city. With such a widespread and increasingly mobile population it was crucial for the University to respond to their needs and offer a solution that would benefit students by increasing their productivity and enhancing their university life, whilst maintaining the reputation of the University.

The campusM™ vision

In September 2009, the University of Sheffield became the first university in the UK to roll out campusM™ to its widespread students, helping to keep them connected to university resources using the sophisticated mobile devices that they were already familiar with. Dr Christine Sexton, Director of the University of Sheffield’s Corporate Information and Computing Services, the champion of campusM™ within the university, explained that, “Our students could be sat at a desk, walking across campus, or traveling across the city, but wherever they are, we wanted to make sure they were part of the University.” The vision for campusM™ was to align with the University strategy of delivering services in a way that students wanted, on the devices they already owned. A survey revealed that over 23% of students owned smartphones and with the trend rising, the University identified the student need to make university resources mobile.

Whilst scoping the requirements of the project, Dr Sexton recognized that a measure of success for campusM™ had to be established, based not only on the number of

Case Study

students downloading campusM™, but on the usage behavior. It was identified that students' adoption of the application was dependent on their ability to access key online university systems and resources. It was important that campusM™ had to provide useful and personal information for students to use: i.e. the same information that they were already accessing from desktop computers from around the campus, such as library information, timetabling, PC availability, contact directory and campus maps.

Why campusM™ was chosen

The University assessed different options to deliver real-time information and services to their student population and chose campusM™ for several reasons. Firstly, the University was looking to re-use functionality from existing IT systems and infrastructure to maximize their IT investments. With campusM™ this was possible, as it is based on Service Orientated Architecture and open standards. During the deployment, the University was able to re-use some of the development work in their student portal, which was originally built in 2003, as well as integrating functionality back into the student portal from the campusM™ application.

The option to build a series of in-house web-based applications was also considered, but ultimately rejected due to the lack of internal resource, as well as the requirement that students wanted to access everything about the university from the one menu, on one application. Importantly, campusM™ can pull in information from many different sources, so the result is a seamless user experience, where the user only needs to use the single application to get what they need. Having identified oMbiel as having the expertise in developing mobile applications and systems integration for the higher educational sector, they were chosen to develop campusM™ for the University.

The deployment

The deployment time for campusM™ was only a matter of weeks. Once oMbiel had access to the data and database views, they simply integrated with the University systems to plug-in data feeds to the application. The resource requirement was minimal, with the university supplying a project manager, who liaised with different data owners and handled testing and rollout issues, whilst oMbiel managed the rest of the implementation. "The extreme ease of implementation from oMbiel especially impressed us. Additionally, oMbiel was very flexible in accommodating our needs, and continuously made modifications and enhancements based on our requirements. We've been especially pleased with oMbiel's end-to-end project management during

Case Study

the implementation and with how quickly they could integrate and extract data from our university systems," remarked Dr. Sexton. Once the application was live students could go to the university website or easily download the application for free from the Apple iTunes store.

The benefits

The application enables users to utilize location-based services, using the built in GPS functionality of the devices and their integration with other applications on mobile devices such as Google maps. One of the key features of campusM™ that students have found useful is searching for PC availability. campusM™ shows students where PCs are free on a campus map or on Google maps, and they can locate the nearest free PC to where they happen to be. The popularity of this innovative feature has also been expanded to help students locate their nearest printer.

With just one click of a button, the application also provides students with access to comprehensive information about upcoming events, their own up-to-date timetable, a friend locator to help them find and meet up with other students, and a facility to help them browse their library records and look up faculty, staff members or student contacts from the University directory. Students will also be able to use the application to receive the latest news and important alerts to help them get the most out of their university life.

The future

With the success of campusM™ for students, oMbiel have recently developed a version of campusM™ for Staff that will help bring them everything they need on their mobile phone. For staff members that are constantly moving around campus and need convenient access to university information, it is a perfect way to stay connected and the next step for Sheffield in bringing the campus to the mobile phone for everyone.

Case Study

About campusM™

The campusM™ mobile platform brings together a suite of campus-based information services directly to the mobile devices of students, visitors, staff, alumni, prospective students and conference delegates. The application platform can uniquely be branded for any university, enabling a user to be better connected, and to enhance their university experience in a way that was never possible before.

Developed by UK based oMbiel, campusM™ is designed for some of the world's leading mobile platforms and devices including the iPhone®, and iPod touch® as well as on hundreds of other mobile devices from manufacturers such as: RIM, HTC, LG, Motorola, Nokia, Palm, Samsung, Sanyo and Sony Ericsson, making it easier than ever to access university specific information on the go. For more information, visit www.campusM.com.

About oMbiel

oMbiel develops innovative applications including the campusM™ mobile platform for the higher education sector as well as offering mobile integration services to enable university data to be incorporated into its applications. Founded in 2008, oMbiel is headquartered in the UK. For more information, visit www.ombiel.co.uk.

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