GAIA TECHNOLOGIES

FELTHAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Meeting the Initial Challenges

Feltham Community College is a specialist sports and ICT college for students aged 11 to 18, located in the London Borough of Hounslow. The College currently has 1,200 pupils and 150 members of staff. The College has had specialist status since September 2006.

During 2007 it became clear that the existing ICT equipment and Support team were no longer able to provide the quality of ICT service required to match the College's new specialist status and aspirations. Acting swiftly, the SMT looked to the College's future and the Hounslow BSF programme (due in 2012), and took the bold decision to procure a Managed Service Partner in advance of BSF. In April 2008, the College requested proposals from all companies approved by the BECTA ICT Services Framework, to provide a fully managed service contract to support all of its ICT needs over three years.

The College was looking for a long term partner who would:

1. Help build staff, student and parental confidence, in order to:

- allow the College to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- allow teachers more time to focus on teaching
- assist the college in adopting the principles of Becta's E Strategy, namely:

  - transforming teaching and learning
  - engage hard-to-reach learners
  - build an open accessible system
  - achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness

2. Help the College align its ICT services with BECTA's FITS (Framework for ICT Technical Support) and provide a professional service that:

- keeps costs to a minimum
- protects teachers from getting too involved in technical support issues
- enables on-site support staff to provide real value and services
- measure effectiveness by using transparent performance indicators and Criteria

It was important to Feltham College that the new service enabled students and teachers to have access to new facilities that would have an immediate impact on learning and teaching and help raise achievement. The College was clear in its wishes to select an ICT partner that would work closely with senior

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management and demonstrate that they would provide a local, friendly and approachable personal service, not just a voice at the end of a telephone line.

After a thorough tender exercise, Gaia Technologies Plc were selected as the College's preferred partner in June 2008.

Deliverables and Outcomes

On selection Gaia immediately set-up a Project Team with a dedicated PRINCE2 Accredited Project to oversee the programme of works, liaise with all parties and become the key link between Gaia and the College.

The initial service included:

- Networking
- Active network equipment
- PC and Servers
- Peripherals
- Projectors and Whiteboards
- Cameras
- Wireless Connections
- Notebooks Trolleys
- VOIP Telephone System

As well as the full integration of the College legacy ICT systems and facilities, the service also included a refresh program, which provides renewal of all PC's, Notebooks and User Devices on a rolling 3 year cycle.

The initial challenges that had to be overcome, included addressing the dramatic loss of confidence in ICT that had been endured by staff and the extremely tight timescales imposed by the procurement process.

The early works therefore were all about stabilising the existing network, restoring confidence and carefully preparing the way for the new Managed Service. The objective was to ensure a smooth start to the new academic year in September 2008. Early works included:

- Commissioning new Servers
- Commissioning a new email system
- Build and distribute 400 new Laptops
- Establish and setup up a new Helpdesk

Joint Selection of Staff

Among these early priorities was the need to recruit the right on-site Technical Team to run the new Managed Service. Feltham College were very clear during the initial procurement exercise that they wanted to be part of the selection process, and Gaia accommodated this by making college representatives an integral part of the interview and selection process.

"I was part of the group that heard all the bids and made the choice, and one of the interesting features was that Gaia were very connected to the future landscape of where education was going, the idea of children accessing learning from home, the idea that learning didn't just happen in the classroom and could happen anywhere. Gaia seemed to have more of a handle on that than the other bidders, and it was important to me that this project should not be just for five years but viewed over ten years and Gaia not only seemed to know what was coming ahead, but also how to engage students and provide for the community as well."

John Hodge Deputy Head Teacher, Feltham College Senior Management team

www.gaia-tech.com

> "When entering into a partnership to provide managed services to a school it is necessary that everyone pulls together and works as true partners right from the start. At Feltham College there were a lot of early decisions to be made and Gaia were keen that important decisions were made jointly with the College. As an early example, the appointment of new technical staff, was carried out by a joint selection panel."

Anas Mawla Gaia Managing Director

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Project Methodology

Gaia Technologies understands the importance of winning over all the staff and students quickly, and this is a key element that is always given a great deal of attention for any establishment transitioning to a Managed Service.

This was accomplished in three ways. Firstly, the project had an executive level sponsor Project Manager Dr Ayad Mawla, who was personally involved through every stage.

Secondly, Gaia provided a very hands-on and proactive Account Management service by Anas Mawla, and thirdly, Gaia provided an additional onsite technician, at no extra cost for the first twelve months of the service specifically to help with the transition and to support staff in adjusting to a new service.

It is this level of focus and attention to detail, combined with Gaia's culture and passion for customer care that has enabled a successful partnership with the college to flourish. This is also echoed in Gaia's overall flexible and pragmatic approach, which provides a framework under which the Managed Service can constantly evolve and adapt to meet the college's requirements as they change from year to year.

Equipment, software and support services can be removed or added to the contract as required, in an agreed, simple and sustainable manner.

Gaia and Feltham Community College are currently in the process of reviewing the first 12 months' successes and challenges, with a view to agreeing how to adapt and configure the managed service to best meet the college's future strategic aims and objectives.

Partnership, Benefits and the First 12 Months

Gaia's commitment to customer satisfaction and service quality includes an annual service review carried out by an independent auditor. This review samples feedback from students, middle managers and the senior management team. Below are highlights from the first audit looking back over the initial 12 months of service:

"**Prior to the Gaia managed service starting everything seemed to be working but it wasn't, and so confidence faded. It is fair to say now that confidence has picked up again. My impression is that teachers are more confident that the system is worth preparing for and engaging with. Hardware is staying up for longer and response times are much quicker and a good indicator is that English and Maths don't complain anymore, whereas they used to do so all the time.**"

"**Email and communication through the use of IT has picked up an awful lot. Teachers are saving time by communicating through email, rather than leaving phone messages. It is the access to people through having a system that works that has made the real difference, organising visits and links with the junior schools, has just created a whole new world. It is brilliant.**"

A leading IT Solutions provider in the UK

"The Head Teacher did a Podcast this morning speaking to the children whilst actually at home working on a strategy for change paper, so it is fantastic to now see that sort of thing happening."

"We are now getting a professional service, where you are comfortable in raising a concern and know that it will get dealt with in a professional manner. They are nice guys who are very approachable and thorough."

"Generally the two guys are absolutely brilliant and they will drop anything to help you, I also love the way they can go on remotely as my office is probably the furthest away from them, it is absolutely great."

Summary

The first twelve months have been about creating a robust, reliable ICT infrastructure and an effective curriculum-focused support service. Gaia has successfully established this, clearly meeting all of the College's initial objectives.

By creating a firm foundation they have paved the way for the College to confidently move forward and build on these early successes. The second year of the service will focus more on the demanding objectives associated with embedding the use of ICT across the curriculum and meeting the objectives set in Becta's E-Strategy. These include:

- transforming teaching and learning
- engaging hard-to-reach learners
- building an open accessible system
- achieving even greater efficiency and effectiveness

Gaia are now working closely with the College on an ambitious summer upgrade programme that will address the students requirements, including;

- appointing a recent College Leaver as an Apprentice to work with the technical team and provide more support for the students
- completion of further major infrastructure upgrades
- a college wide implementation of the LGFL MLE (Frontier)
- implementation of a Schools 2000 Behaviour Management System
- assorted hardware refresh and upgrades including provision of a new Apple Music Suite

At a strategic level Gaia are working with the Senior Management Team to agree the scope of objectives for the next twelve months and ensure that the ICT and associated Managed Service fully support the College during 2010 and beyond.

Focus for the next 12 months

"The guys here have had a very tough job trying to react and sort the mess out and I think next year we should be looking to them to agree some strategic objectives with the SMT about how ICT can fit into the wider objectives, and that is starting to happen"

"If there is a challenge for us for next year, we need to move to an embedding stage where we go from 25% good use of IT to 50-75% good use across the curriculum"

" We need to share lesson plans and content, through the use of Frontier and the LGFL, so that children can access them especially if they have missed a lesson, or a teaching assistant can access them if they are trying to support an individual and everyone can see everyone else's work"