

CASE STUDY

From 220 tickets a month to 2,000+: How CIHS's Cherwell implementation and ITSM hosting transformed the service desk at South Devon College

BACKGROUND

South Devon College (SDC) has more than 1,200 members of staff and 10,000 students. It is based in Paignton but operates across 14 different campus locations and offers a wide variety of post-16 courses, at various academic levels, as well as a range of online-only programmes.

It's no surprise, therefore, that the IT Service Desk – which comprises three first-line, four second-line and four third-line team members – is extremely busy.

THE CHALLENGE

When Simon Haslett took over as IT Service Desk Manager in early 2021, **he decided it was time to upgrade the ITSM platform in order to create a faster, more cost-effective and more transparent way of managing the team's activities, while delivering an improved service to the college's end users.**

He opted for Cherwell as the best solution as the functionality it offered closely aligned with the college's requirements. This meant they could use most of the software straight out of the box, with very little adaptation required.

In order to implement the system effectively and in time for the start of the new academic year in September, he needed an expert partner and opted for CIHS. However, before CIHS were able to get to work, there were some delays caused by the budget approval process.

THE SOLUTION

"In the first place," says Simon, *"when things stalled on our side while we were trying to get approval for budgets, CIHS were very understanding. They worked with us to see what modules we really needed – as Cherwell is a very big product – and what costs we could actually afford."*

Once the budget was approved, the team at CIHS, led by Chris and Mike, were able to move rapidly and, during the month of August, took SDC through their Flying Start 20-day implementation package.

"As soon as we got the purchase order, they were right in there, getting everything scheduled and planned together with us," says Simon.

But it wasn't only the pace at which CIHS were able to work that impressed him: it was also the excellent levels of communication and customer-first approach. *"We were always kept informed of the timelines, which were always great,"* says Simon. *"They were always checking with us what our timescales needed to be and asking us when we wanted to do things, rather than telling us when they would do them."*

This worked particularly well for SDC as they had decided not to go for a 'big bang' launch with all the Cherwell modules going live at the same time, but instead had opted for a gradual roll-out. *"We wanted to go step by step so we could get our people used to the new system,"* says Simon. *"And CIHS were fantastic with that. They pretty much built the whole system as one, then helped us to release it in stages and were there at every step."*



"CIHS's philosophy is to give the power to us – for us to build the system with their support. Every time they do something, they'll show me how they do it, so I can do it next time. That's really empowering."

Simon Haslett
ITSM Service Desk Manager at
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"Initially, I had some reservations about implementing a hosted system, especially as once you're on board the support often peters out. But with Chris and his team, the connection is always there. If you let them know there's a problem, they're on it straight away. There is no lag."

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Another key requirement of the solution for SDC was to host it off-premise for the first time, aligning with the organisation's digital strategy to move all their systems to cloud-based environments.

SDC therefore opted for CIHS's ITSM hosting solution, which has brought several important benefits to the college. *"We no longer have the headache, or the overheads, of having to manage any systems or servers on premise,"* says Simon. *"And, so far, it's been going well."*

SOME MINOR BUMPS

As with every major system implementation, there were one or two small bumps along the way – but they were all minor, says Simon. *"They were mainly usage issues, which were down to moving from one system to another,"* he says. *"You have that hangover of doing things one way and having to learn to do them a different way. But the CIHS team were very supportive, making sure they were around to help."*

Once the system went live, Simon also realised that one or two minor elements weren't working correctly at first, such as workflows and drop-down menus. *"But these were just teething issues,"* he adds. *"It's almost inevitable that will happen as there's only a certain amount of testing you can do prior to a launch. And every time we logged a fault with CIHS, they were straight onto it, fixing it. Then they'd be sure to get confirmation that we were happy before they'd close anything down."*

THE OUTCOME

The key benefit of having moved to the Cherwell system is the streamlining of the IT Service Desk, says Simon. *"It had some very manual and archaic processes before,"* he says. *"We wanted to bring in ITIL processes and standardise what we do, and the previous system couldn't support that. But Cherwell gets people working in one way."*

One upshot was a huge uplift in the number of tickets the desk was able to process. In October 2021, the figure stood at more than 2,000 – compared with only 220 for the same month the previous year – as well as an accompanying decrease in turnaround times. The other upside is greater levels of transparency, which Simon hopes will help him to secure more investment for the service desk in the future. *"Now we're capturing everything that comes into us, and we can show the college the large volume of work we have, as well as agreeing some proper SLA times,"* he says.

What's more, Simon has been able to get to this situation far quicker than he expected, thanks to the collaborative approach and great levels of engagement from the CIHS team. *"My original plan was always to start that kind of reporting and transparency a bit further down the line,"* he says. *"But Cherwell is giving us the ability to do it right now."*