



Simpson Associates

## Sheffield Hallam University

### Case Study: Strategy

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#### Client Overview

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), traces its roots back to 1843, when the Sheffield School of Design was founded; today, SHU is a progressive, modern university with 30,000 students, 4,100 staff and a turnover of £150 million.

The institution has a vision to be renowned as a forward thinking, enterprising and business engaged university, known for providing a high quality and cutting edge learning experience, for research that has a real world impact and for being a catalyst in economic and social transformation.

#### Client Response

"Simpson Associates were most beneficial to our MI and Planning Improvement Project, their Programme Governance and Project Management approach is now emulated across other projects and relationships and is the 'benchmark' for successful project delivery at SHU."



## Key Benefits

- The vision produced allowed all staff to align with it, producing clarity of purpose.
- The comprehensive process gave the Sponsoring Authorities the confidence to approve expenditure.
- Duplicated processes were identified, leading to improved staff efficiency.
- Inter-project relationships were understood, leading to a clear understanding of both short- and long-term delivery.

## The Background

The University needed comprehensive and integrated Management Information in order to support the implementation of its Corporate Plan, the University Planning process and a number of Business Process Improvement programmes.

In order to contribute to the improvement of the University's operational effectiveness, the Corporate Plan specified a need to:

- Improve service delivery and reduce costs by standardising information management processes.
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the University's information systems.

It was recognised that a structured programme needed to be defined and put in place to advance the provision of Management Information University-wide, a major component of which would be the development of a structured data source, or Data Warehouse, this being fundamental to improving the quality and delivery of Management Information.

A Data Warehouse is a repository of electronic data primarily sourced from an organisation's transactional systems, which is specifically structured to facilitate queries, reporting and analysis using common terms.

At SHU these transactional systems comprise all corporate systems including: Student (e.g. SI and Blackboard), Finance (e.g. e5 and Costing) and Human Resources (e.g. ResourceLink and Academic Work Planning).

Management Information was defined as corporate reports including:

1. Single list reports produced at a detailed transactional level.
2. Business reports produced with the potential for complex amalgamation/aggregations.
3. Analytical reports and metrics produced by specialist technical reporting/data analysts, used for on-going planning, input into the SHU Corporate Plan and to aid decision making within the Faculties.

Simpson Associates were engaged in the summer of 2009, to 'paint a picture' of these future capabilities and provide a roadmap of how to get there. A crucial component of this engagement was the formation of a Business Case, to communicate the value of adopting a Management Information strategy and to justify the costs involved.

"The mandate was: To create improved processes and a delivery capability to support the improvement of Management Information and Planning across the University; the scope of this programme was to be the support of University processes and data that are owned and managed corporately."

## Aline Hayes

Director of Information & Systems Technology

## The Process

Simpson Associates followed the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) approach to programme definition; this approach, Managing Successful Programmes (MSP), is a proven method of defining a set of strategic deliverables.

In order to establish the current state of Management Information within the University, a series of interviews were conducted with personnel from within the University Executive Group, key central departments and all four of the faculties. Following a gap analysis, the vision statement for a Management Information and Planning Improvement Programme was identified.

This process was designed to establish ownership of an improved future state, thereby increasing personal investment in the initiatives and increasing the likelihood of success. The successful adoption of change by a business community is influenced by a clear association of outcomes to major benefits.

Major benefits identified here included: a reduction in the risk of attracting fines from funding bodies, a reduction in staff time spent on maintaining duplicate data sets and an increase in the time available for effective business analysis.

Working with Simpson Associates, a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), Programme Board and Change Team were appointed, the Programme was well defined and ultimately approved by a sponsoring authority.





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**Linda Mason**

Deputy University Secretary and Head of Governance and Planning Services





"The University is now well placed to realise the benefits of a Management Information strategy over the coming months and years."

### **Liz Winders**

Secretary and Registrar

## **The Deliverables**

### **1. Programme Brief**

In the Programme Brief, the Programme Mandate was developed into a working concept. A vision was produced that all staff could align with and an analysis of the options available was made in light of the costs, benefits, risks and issues anticipated.

### **2. Programme Plan**

The Programme Plan illustrated how the programme would work. It specified the project timescales, inter-dependencies and outputs, thus scheduling the tranches, with priorities and key milestones identified.

### **3. Project Dossier**

The Project Dossier contained a summary description of all the projects that could, through their combined outputs, deliver the required future state(s). The precedence of the projects was defined, together with the consequential benefits that each project would deliver.

### **4. Benefit Profile**

The Benefit Profile defined the attributes and dependencies of each expected benefit. A Benefit Profile provides the control tool with which to track progress on the delivery and realisation of benefits. This document clearly identifies the value in pursuing the outcomes defined in the vision and therefore, which projects to take to the next stage.

### **5. Business Case**

The Business Case aggregated specific information about the programme, including: the value of the benefits, the risks to achieving them and the costs and timescales involved. This information was used to judge whether the programme was desirable, viable and achievable, forming the basis for approval; it will now be actively maintained.



## **Support from Simpson Associates**

Simpson Associates are specialists in defining, building and implementing information management solutions, which provide better business understanding and improved business management performance.

Our considerable skills and experience enable long-standing relationships with our clients and we have principal partnerships with Microsoft, IBM Cognos and BOARD.

"Simpson Associates clearly have the knowledge and proven experience of the challenges in our sector. This gave us the confidence that they would deliver ...and they did."

### **Laurie Nicholls**

Acting Head of University Systems Group

## **Contact us**

Should you have any questions or require any further information, the team at Simpson Associates will be happy to help you with your request.

**t:** +44 (0) 1904 234 510

**e:** [highereducation@simpson-associates.co.uk](mailto:highereducation@simpson-associates.co.uk)

**w:** [www.simpson-associates.co.uk/higher-education](http://www.simpson-associates.co.uk/higher-education)