



Challenge

A progressive organisation wants to match its communications with its principles: "work is something you do, not somewhere you go."

The Solution

Streamlined service provides means for mobile working for everyone who needs it with a manageable budget and minimal administration.

Results

- More efficient use of time
- Raised morale

Introduction

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts. It supports a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art, carnival to crafts. Between 2008 and 2011 it will invest in excess of £1.6 billion of public money from the government and the National Lottery to create experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

Arts Council England was formed in 1994 when the Arts Council of Great Britain was divided into three separate bodies for England, Scotland and Wales. It is a non-departmental public body of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

In 2009 the Arts Council was asked by Government to reduce its grant-in-aid administration costs by 15% by 2010-11. Alongside this, the Arts Council also decided that 15% savings should be made on their National Lottery costs, so that a total of £6.5 million could be saved to be directly invested in the arts. This will mean a smaller head office focused on strategy and support to frontline staff, and nine smaller regional offices focused on frontline delivery, working with the organisations it funds, artists and other key partners.

- Better use of time
- Flexible working arrangements
- Better work/life balance.

Products and Services

- Over 300 BlackBerry smartphones
- BlackBerry Enterprise Server
- O₂ to O₂ calls.

The Challenge

With its new focus on streamlined working, the Arts Council established a mobile working project to review working practices and identify better ways of working to help reduce costs. Having gone through an organisational review where staff numbers were reduced, it was crucial for the Arts Council to identify ways to work more efficiently. Key to this was a new philosophy: 'Work is an activity not a location.'

In day-to-day terms, this meant that the Arts Council wanted to:

- Remain connected through technology
- Reduce dependence on face to face interaction
- Reduce reliance on paper
- Move away from one desk per person
- Measure performance by output rather than attendance.

Alison Littler, IT Delivery Manager at Arts Council England, says "the biggest change for our business is the move towards a mobile way of working. We have embraced the idea that work is something that you do, not somewhere you go. So now we're giving people the best tools for the job wherever they are."

In practical terms, the Arts Council wanted to centralise the management of its mobile services, with simple, transparent criteria for people to be able to order a BlackBerry or laptop. Existing BlackBerry and mobile users were not necessarily using them optimally, and the IT support for the devices differed according to region or status.

The Solution

O₂ provided the Arts Council with all the advice and support it needed to be able to choose an effective solution, with technical help or the opportunity to speak to other customers who were using the BlackBerry Enterprise Server. O₂ answered all their questions about how the new set up would work and how it would interact with existing equipment. Test units were available for Arts Council staff to try out, and Littler attended a BlackBerry Forum to discuss apps and back-end technology. "O₂ were very helpful" she recalls.

Having thoroughly reviewed the options, the Arts Council chose BlackBerry, particularly because they were already used to supporting it, and because they decided starting from scratch with a different device would be too expensive.

The O₂ account manager recommended a contract which saved the Arts Council £14,000 on their overall mobile bill. In addition, they now have free O₂-to-O₂ calls and free voicemail retrieval.

To date, the new system has been very successful. "People being able to pick up emails on the move and reply quickly is a huge benefit that people have seen already. Particularly

for us, with relationships with organisations and theatres all over the country, keeping in touch is really important."

Arts Council England had already been an O₂ customer for two years, which gave it the confidence to let O₂ manage everything for them. "O₂ is great," says Littler. "Our O₂ account manager has always been really proactive. We get lots of information and I don't have to chase for things. We have regular meetings and I've been to Leeds to meet everyone I deal with, and the account manager's been here. It's clear that O₂ are interested in my business."

She continues "When we have had a problem I email the OGC team which deals with our contract on a regular basis. There is a dedicated team so I get to the people I need directly. They are really quick to respond if I need something urgently."

The Arts Council has recently undergone considerable changes to its structure and scope. Littler believes that the new way of working, with BlackBerry devices for all who need the, has helped maintain morale. She says "People who have stayed on have something that's useful to them in their work. It says a lot about trusting people to get on with their job and that's good for everyone."

Alison Littler, IT Delivery Manager at Arts Council England, says

"We're giving people the best tools for the job wherever they are."