

UNIT-e

Driving innovation and delivering successful marketing campaigns

Kent Adult Education



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With an average of 500,000 visits to their website each year, there is plenty of interest in the many courses that Community Learning and Skills' Kent Adult Education (KAE) team offers. To encourage people to sign up for courses, they wanted to make their enrolment process as straightforward as possible.

And to keep their students coming back for more, KAE needed an innovative way to encourage them to take up a further new course once they'd completed their last. Looking to Capita for a solution was the first step in a rewarding journey.

Community Learning and Skills delivers learning and training to 38,000 adults and young people in Kent under various brands including Kent Adult Education, Kent Training and Apprenticeships and Skills Plus. It is the largest provider of its kind in the UK and is subject to the same policy, funding and regulation regimes as a further education (FE) college.

KAE had two separate student record systems, each containing a wealth of information from across the region. They selected UNIT-e to record and hold all their data centrally so that this information could be used to refine and expand KAE's marketing activity.

Michael Osborn, Information Technology Manager, explains why Capita's UNIT-e management information system (MIS) was the first choice system. "We wanted something that would allow us to store data from all our centres in a standardised way, yet still give us the flexibility we require as a business. UNIT-e ticked the boxes."

Key benefits at KAE

- ✓ Much simpler to search for courses, enrol and pay online
- ✓ Greater customisation of webpages to the specific audience
- ✓ Increased personalisation and detail within automated emails
- ✓ Allows staff to analyse the success of specific marketing campaigns
- ✓ Monitors take up of offers and individual promotional codes
- ✓ Improves data accuracy
- ✓ Enables greater efficiency; saves time and money; mitigates risk of running unpopular courses

Easy online enrolment

KAE offers a plethora of study options for students aged 16 upwards, including full time, termly or shorter courses. There is, therefore, a constant flow of students visiting its website and signing up to study throughout the academic year.

"A large chunk of our enrolment activity takes place via the web," explains Karen Travers, Management Information Manager at Community Learning and Skills. "UNIT-e gave us the tools we needed to make it easier for people to find the course they want, enrol and pay for it all online."

Now, prospective students can simply search, select a course and add it to their online basket. They can then pay quickly and easily by card, and they will receive an automatic but personalised email promptly to confirm their enrolment.

"UNIT-e is extremely tailorable so we can design our enrolment webpages the way we want them and customise the confirmation email that goes out to students," says Michael, "But the benefits go far beyond that."

Store-style vouchers

KAE offers a range of study deals and discounts on courses or exam fees, often in the form of store-style vouchers or promotional codes which students enter to get money off their next course.

"Although not a standard feature of UNIT-e at the time, we wanted the flexibility to offer individual discounts such as a percentage off course fees or the cost of an exam," says Michael. "We worked with Capita to get what we wanted and this has now become part of the system."

KAE issues a unique code for each student so staff can keep a check on how offers are being used and by whom. The data resulting from this helps staff to measure the success of email campaigns and see which category of students use what codes the most. This, in turn, informs decisions around which marketing activity has the greatest impact on student numbers.

To illustrate this, Mark Starns, Sales and Marketing Manager, talks about one successful campaign KAE ran in 2014. "We sent our existing students an email with a discount code for early booking of additional courses. We knew from the data we had what they had studied previously and what would be of interest to them."

"We then used UNIT-e along with our other analysis tools to look at how many students redeemed their discount code on courses that they would not otherwise have signed up for. This campaign increased year-on-year enrolments by more than 100% and generated an increase in income by over 200% versus the same period in the previous year."



Opening new doors

Having student data stored in one place helps staff at KAE to identify new opportunities too.

By feeding UNIT-e data into their customer research, KAE could segment their entire student body and this has changed the way their marketing team works. There is now more focus placed on county-wide initiatives to promote different categories of courses to specific groups of people across the region.

As Mark explains, "The research has helped us tailor courses more successfully, such as our 'taster menu' of art activities for the Club60 retired learners, and weekend courses for working students we call the Nine-to-Fivers."

"It is also having a positive impact on the communities we serve. We have designed warm-up courses for people who need to gain additional qualifications but may lack confidence in their abilities or might not have studied for a while. This gets them ready to organise their time and complete assignments, helping them back into learning."

"Our revenue in March 2015 was 15% up on the same period in 2014 and that is, in part at least, due to our ability to better understand our customers and respond to their needs at a local and county level."





With UNIT-e we have a student record system that does what we need, rather than one that we have to compromise on.

Michael Osborn, Information Technology Manager

Saving time and money

Community Learning and Skills has reaped some major rewards in efficiencies since moving to UNIT-e. Its previous system had no validation process in place for incoming information. "This meant we had hundreds of data errors coming in per hour that our staff had to manually rectify before we could produce an Individual Learner Record (ILR) report." says Karen.

"With UNIT-e, the data we receive is much more accurate and we are now able to generate the ILR for our adult learners every month. This would simply have been impossible before due to the size of the data cleaning task."

The reduced workload has freed one fulltime member of staff to focus on other responsibilities. It has also allowed staff to focus on measuring the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns, as well as more general activities and performance, with a KPI dashboard to monitor performance.

There are exciting opportunities for future development too. KAE are exploring ways that UNIT-e could help them with staff management and curriculum planning, and there is plenty of scope to expand the system even further.

According to Michael, "When we started working with Capita, we had no experience of UNIT-e. They have been incredibly proactive in helping us develop the system in exciting new ways to better meet the needs of both prospective and existing students."

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