



An Excellence Gateway case study

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Barton Peveril Sixth Form College: Location, Location, Location

Summary

When given the task of coming up with a computer workstation reservation system for the college by ILT Manager Chris Cheetham, IT Team Leader Peter Horner and his team, have gone one better. They have designed a system that shows the availability and location of all workstations both Mac and PC in the college, and it is also providing vital usage data helping them to drive down procurement costs and energy consumption, extending the colleges green credentials.



Barton Peveril
Sixth Form College

Provider managers and students should find this system of great interest, but this case study has also been targeted at the technical staff, backed with a recorded webinar by Barton Peveril showing exactly how it was done.

About Barton Peveril Sixth Form College



Image 1: History usage

With over 2,600 students, Barton Peveril is a large successful Sixth Form college in Eastleigh, Hampshire. The College offers a wide range of A-level courses along with a selection of National Diplomas and Level 2 subjects. Originally a grammar school, Barton Peveril became a Sixth Form college in the mid-1970s and, since then, has seen major expansion with the £7 million Rose Building completed in 2006 providing extensive and modern facilities for English, Media, Sport and Performing Arts. Notable alumni include actor Colin Firth, writer David Nicholls and Olympic Team GB cyclist Dani King.

The challenge

Following feedback from students, who were searching the campus for an available workstation, often having to go to several buildings to find one; college management decided that a workstation reservation system might help. They set the IT department the task of investigating available systems on the market.

The activity

Initially IT Team Leader Peter Horner and his team, researched systems that seemed to offer solutions such as MYPCC but they soon came to two key conclusions.

Firstly, that if they purchased an off the shelf solution this would tie them into to the limitations of the package and require a dedicated server, and secondly they were not convinced that a reservation system was the best solution. Peter commented “A reservation system is fine, but if the student does not then use the workstation at their allocated time, the PC is then booked out preventing any other student from using it.”

He further commented, “We concluded that what students really wanted to know was where free workstations are located.”

Ben Harker Barton Peveril’s Linux specialist continued;

“We created a system whereby students can easily see the availability of computers in all the IT suites from digital signage situated at various points across the college. The system uses existing software available to most institutions, and is linking up to Lightspeed with an easy to read user interface. Lightspeed is proprietary software that among other things monitors users when they log onto a computer. Peter used this information combined with the IT inventory, which details where every computer located, to create the monitoring system.”

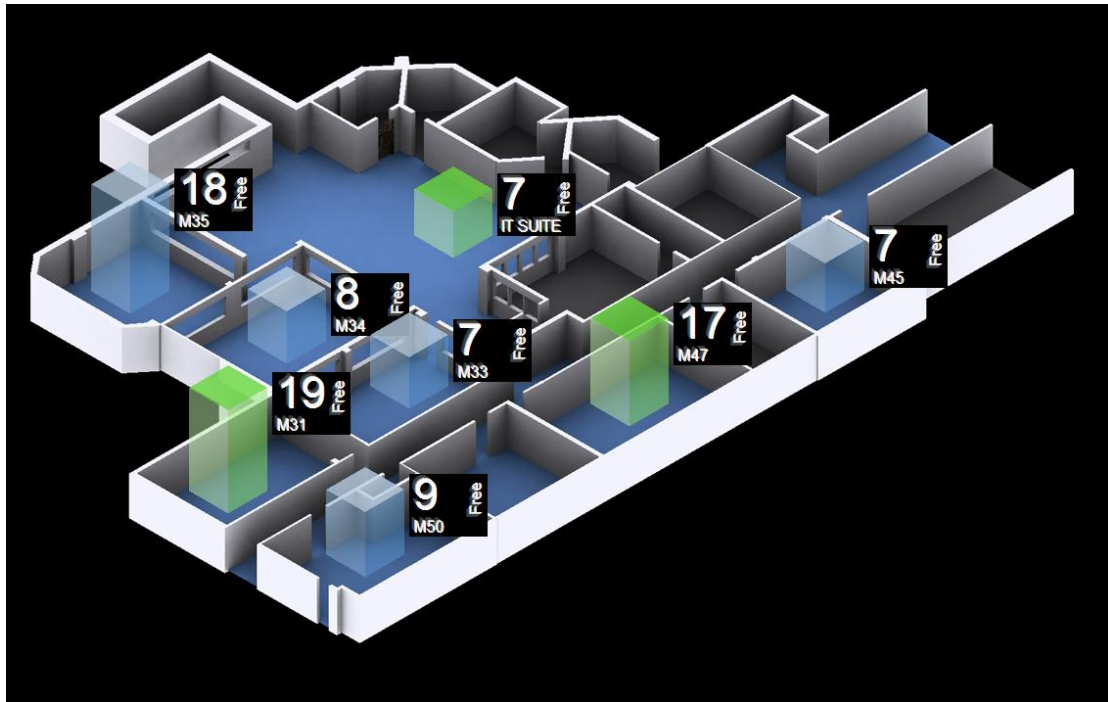


Image 2: Suite map

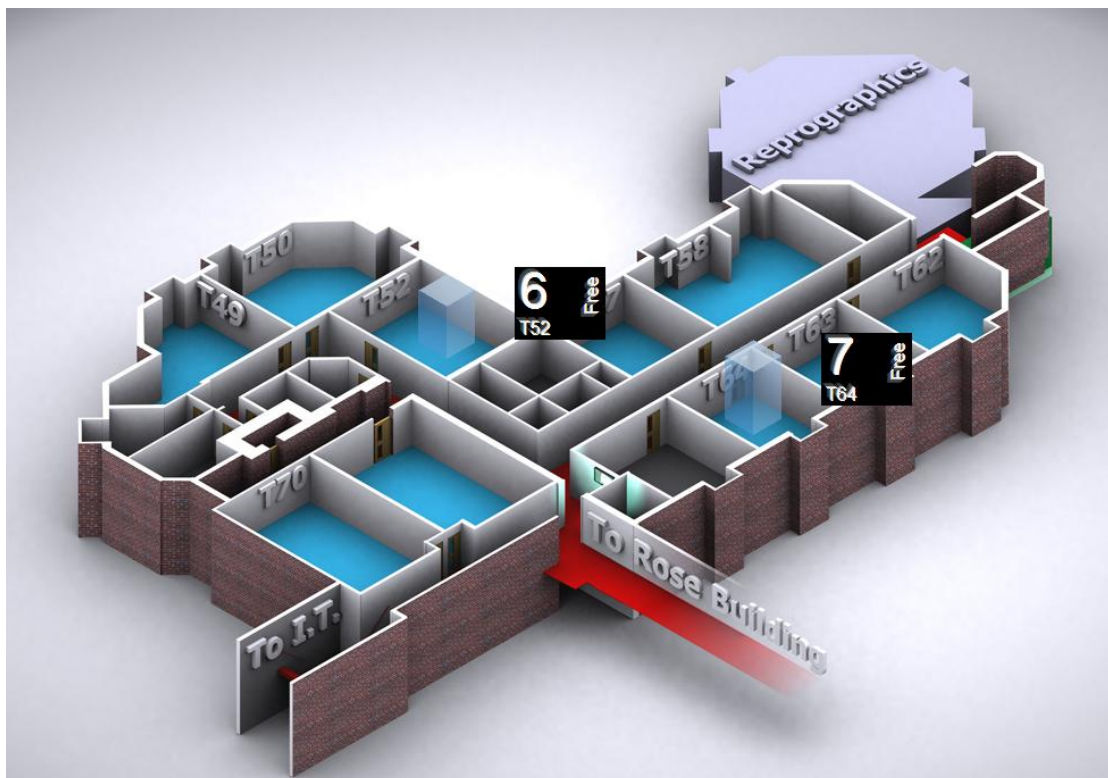


Image 3: Media map

Showing the screen. (see images 1 and 2 above), Ben outlined; “The display viewed by the students is clear and easy to read showing pictorially the information the student needs. Moreover the system operates in real time with the screen refreshing every few seconds so showing accurately the number of machines available. The first thing the student looks at is if the actual room is free, as a machine may be free but if a lecture is

taking place in the room, it is not available. So firstly, they see if the room is 'Green' and then see which workstations are free.”



Image 4: Library map

The outcomes

The monitoring system has greatly helped students by enabling them to quickly and easily find a free computer workstation reducing the amount of time walking around college. With ever greater reliance on the college VLE and online research this can only be helpful in maximizing the time students spend working at the computers. So while learning is directly aided, there is also an indirect positive impact on teaching as staff can be confident that student access to the VLE is optimised.

The impact

The first key impact measure is the question of cost. Development of the system using existing software and systems has not incurred any financial outlay, but of course there is an opportunity cost relating to Peter and Ben's time.

They estimate development time has been 4 weeks, which has allowed 'tweaking' time. However they expect with guidance other institutions may cut this substantially.

The second key impact is the saving in procurement costs. Now requests for new workstations from lecturers can be supported/countered with advice on underused workstations and if required the moving of workstations from low usage areas to high ones.

ILT Manger Chris Cheetham said “Our workstations are now being deployed in a very cost effective manner, based on hard evidence. We have had to buy less workstations since this system came online.”

The system is also able to measure actual wattage used for individual workstations enabling the college to target older higher usage machines for replacement. A real green approach to procurement.

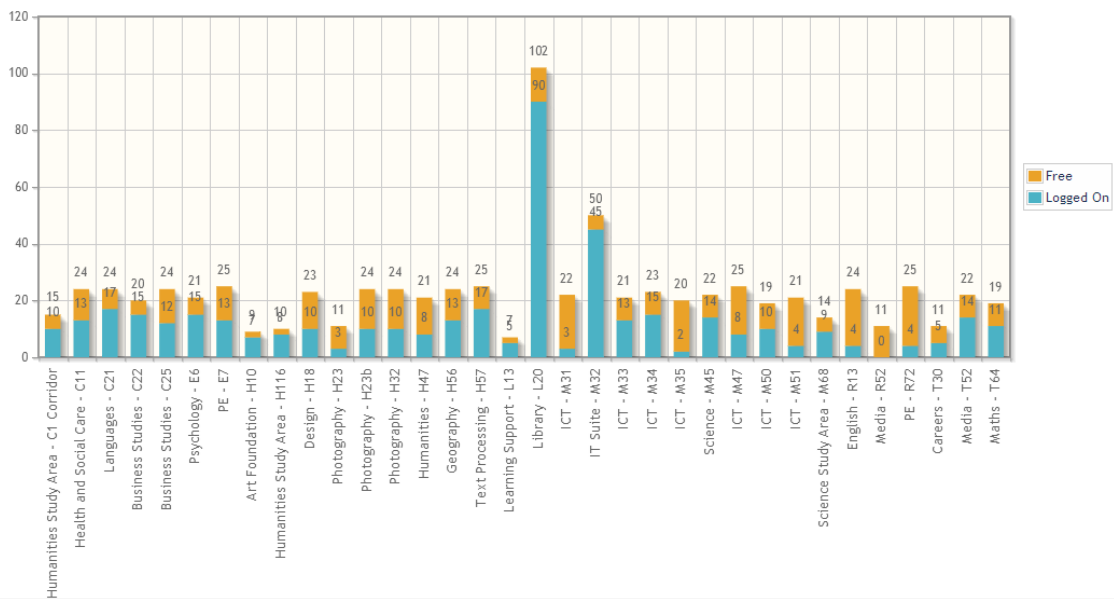
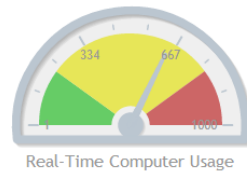


Image 5: Real-Time Computer Usage

Average Computer Usage

This graph shows the room usage and is generated from login data between 01/01/2012 - 21/11/2012.

To calculate the usage this page finds the total login time for all computers in a given room. This is then compared against the total time of all daytime periods in order to find the percentage of usage.

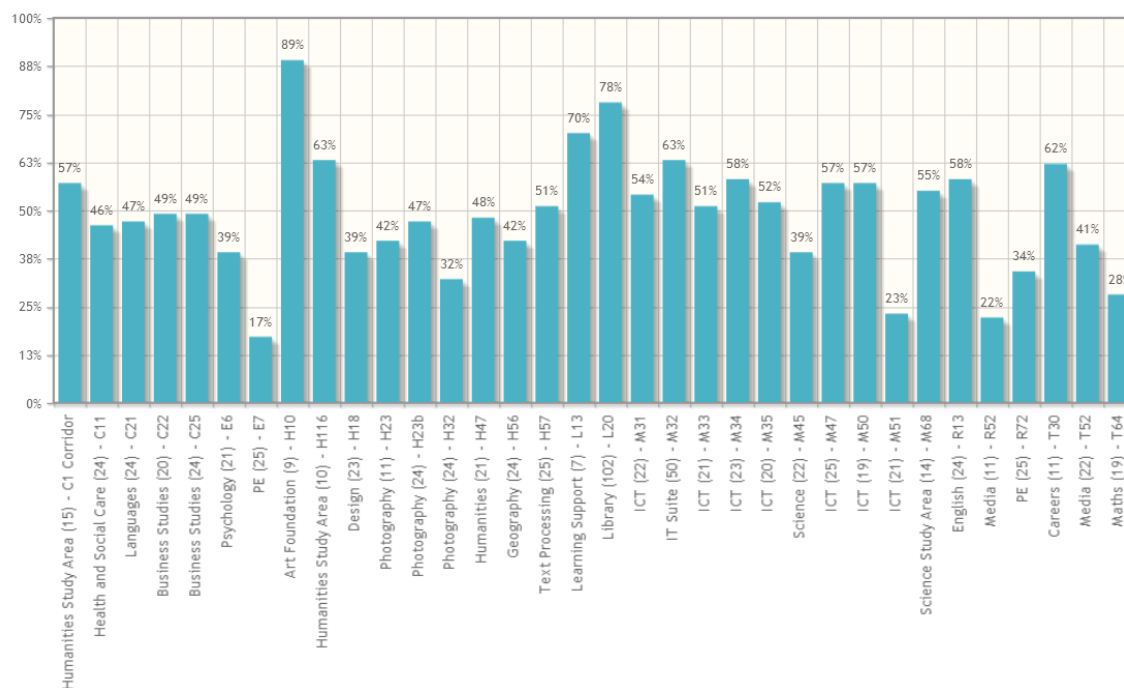


Image 6: Average Computer Usage

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the feedback from learners has been excellent.

The lessons learned

The key lessons learned are that if you can develop your own solution this can ensure it is tailored to your needs and provides a more flexible platform for continued development. It can also provide significant cost savings.

It is dependant of course on having the in-house expertise, and the access to the key software to achieve it.

Can this be replicated in other institutions? Peter Horner is confident it can, and hopes to run an on-line seminar to show other IT professionals just how it was done in the New Year.

(We will add a link to the recording in due course)

Useful links

- [MYPCC](#)
- [Barton Peveril](#)
- [Lightspeed](#)

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