Transforming Higher Education – The Digital University

Whether you aspire to be a pioneering higher education digital leader or want to improve students’ experience, the time to act is now

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The time to act is now

The UK’s higher education sector is rapidly entering a new age – an age in which the effective implementation and use of digital technologies across universities is essential to attracting the right students and staff, promoting growth, delivering remotely, and, ultimately, surviving.

The impact of COVID-19, Brexit, changes to funding models, new technologies and evolving student demands are challenging universities to think differently. In order to succeed, they will need to reimagine the very nature of higher education. They’ll need to transform, become more flexible and more responsive to external demands. Perhaps most importantly, they’ll need to deliver services that are student-centric and adopt a digital approach across the whole organisation.

COVID-19 has presented universities with immediate, time critical, challenges and opportunities. Across the sector, campuses have shut down and students, academics and support staff are all learning, teaching and working remotely. In particular, distance learning has rapidly become the default engagement model with universities shifting course delivery online. But universities are also urgently looking at how digital can deliver day-to-day activities in the future – from enrolment and induction, to student support, exams and graduations.

In recent years, universities have invested heavily in physical infrastructure; new buildings provide exciting campus facilities for both teaching and learning. But investment in digital infrastructure has lagged and for many universities, COVID-19 is providing the opportunity to reassess their future investment in technology and how they provide the digital experience that their students and staff expect. In other areas of their lives, such as finance and retail, students are accustomed to seamless mobile banking and online shopping experiences. Academics and support staff within the higher education system should also be able to harness the power of technology in order to provide the best possible service. Too often students and staff find their digital experiences at university to be fragmented and way behind what they have become accustomed to.

Universities are also increasingly focussed on the need to attract students that they will retain throughout a course, expand their reach beyond the physical boundaries of the university and improve their commercial effectiveness by building stronger and deeper relationships with industry. Digital has a significant role to play in each of these areas and is fast becoming the key differentiator for businesses, academics and students.

This divide is becoming increasingly apparent as universities rapidly shift to online learning during COVID-19 and look at how they can continue to expand distance learning opportunities in the future – both in the UK and overseas. The number of students studying remotely has been increasing over the last decade, and will continue to increase, fuelled by individuals now being increasingly aware that they can attend the institution of their choice without having to shoulder the cost or endure the inconvenience of relocating.

Many universities are trying to develop digital strategies in reaction to demands for new technologies, but a considerable number lack the capability, long-term commitment and resources to implement them effectively.

Some institutions invest heavily in IT systems without actually knowing how those systems will deliver the benefits they’re anticipating. These universities fail to appreciate that they don’t need a digital strategy, they need a resilient business strategy that’s fit for the digital age. That is a strategy that breaks down the barriers between IT and the rest of the organisation.

Whilst many universities are understandably focussed on the immediate, short-term challenges they face, those universities not equipping themselves to adapt to the long-term challenges ahead will struggle to compete. Whether you aspire to be a pioneering digital leader or just hope to stay relevant, the time to act is now.
COVID-19 has forced universities to think and act differently – university leaders are turning to digital technologies to find sustainable, long-term solutions for students, academics and staff.

Digital disruption is impacting every sector. Our annual Global CEO Survey revealed that 81% of respondents agree that digital technology will fundamentally change their organisation and that the pressure to keep moving is relentless. Universities are no exception and the pace of digital disruption is only going to accelerate.

The greatest challenges facing higher education include:

- **The digital threat to traditional methods** – The model of higher education that’s existed for over 500 years is being challenged by new approaches to teaching and learning, not to mention enhanced access to online courses.

- **Evolving student expectations** – Students are customers who bring their own expectations to a university. They are digitally savvier, better connected and more vocal than ever before, and many have preconceived ideas of how universities will engage directly with them, and what outcomes they can expect in return for their investments. Universities need to ensure that they can deliver against these expectations.

- **Demands for personalised and flexible learning** – As a digitally sophisticated generation, students expect to be taught and to learn using methods that suit their preferences and at a pace that works for them, not one that is mandated. Approaches to learning and course content must become increasingly personalised and tailored to individual needs. The expectation that a ‘one size fits all degree’ will keep universities relevant is obsolete.

- **A greater focus on graduate prospects** – Students increasingly consider a university course to be a means of securing future employment and not just an opportunity to learn and develop. The value proposition for universities is therefore changing. The role digital will play in supporting employability and the student experience is more critical than it has ever been.

- **Online alternatives** – The rapid shift to online learning during spring 2020, the continued popularity of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, and universities offering students the opportunity to study remotely, means that all higher education institutions are being forced to deliver learning in new ways and operate in a global marketplace. Lower cost alternatives to a traditional university education are also challenging institutions to rethink how they provide access to their courses anywhere and at any time.

- **Addressing digital poverty** – The growing use of digital across universities will place new demands and expectations on students, academics and staff. Universities need to fully understand the impact of digital poverty within their organisation and consider what interventions are required. Some students, academics and staff are well placed and have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to keep pace with the increasing use of digital, others risk being left behind.
Addressing the challenges

When it comes to becoming a successful digital university, there’s not a ‘one size fits all’ solution. There are however, a number of key approaches that are dictating the digital agenda and yielding results.

The digital university – Designed with students and staff

The modern university must have a well-defined focus that sets it apart from the competition. One way to achieve that is to offer a connected and immersive digital experience across the whole university, designed specifically with students and staff in mind.

• Anticipate what your students want and expect – Student expectations have changed dramatically. They are now paying customers and bring with them a set of demands and expectations that modern higher education providers must meet, if not exceed. They are increasingly expecting ‘intelligent’ solutions that offer the same level of digital experience from their university that they have grown to expect in their day-to-day life.

  ‘Intelligent Digital’ is the new normal and universities must balance business understanding with technology innovation and student insight to truly meet staff and student’s needs.

• Reimagine and simplify services – Students and staff need to be able to get the information and services they need, when they need it. Too often, they are expected to navigate complex, overlapping and unconnected processes and technologies. Many universities are now considering how best to transform their student-facing services, so that they cater to student needs, regardless of organisational structures.

• Enable richer, deeper conversations – Staff often find that they are spending significant amounts of time on day-to-day manual tasks. They have processes and technologies that are built around systems and not the essential tasks they need to complete to provide an excellent experience for students. Redefining process and the effective use of digital will help release staff from manual tasks and create time for richer, deeper conversations with students.

• Identify emerging needs quickly – Technology is evolving at a break-neck pace; what was considered modern just five or ten years ago is now old and outdated. Artificial intelligence, automation, blockchain and advanced analytics all have the potential to change the way in which services are delivered. It’s incumbent upon universities to recognise that potential and leverage the power of those technologies in the most relevant ways.

‘Intelligent Digital’ is the new normal and universities must balance business understanding with technology innovation and student insight to truly meet staff and student’s needs.
Delivering across the full student journey and beyond

What to study?
Prospective students can easily find information about courses and drill down into richer course content and communities.

Where to go?
Students have a range of options about where to learn and how to consume learning materials.

Simplified enrolment
The enrolment process is clear, and progress can be easily tracked – ensuring there is ongoing communications between offer acceptance and a course commencing.

Quality induction and academic orientation
Maximise the impact in the first semester. Make queries easy to resolve, provide reassuring support, share clear academic expectations and reduce uncertainty for new students.

Academic support
Support students with ongoing academic attainment and achievement.

Insight & analytics student support
Students understand their performance and where they can improve based on data collated about them.

Postgraduate research support
PGR students track their progress and collaborate with other PGR students.

Engagement with student life
Highlight student communities, extra-curricular activities and discounts in the local area.

Employability and further academic options
Students are prepared for life after their undergraduate degree.

Student welfare and guidance
Support students with all aspects of university life.

Academic support
Support the professor/tutor with teaching activities.

Professional services support
Enable staff to manage the ‘business’ of the university effectively.

Supporting research
Support academics with publications and research activities.

Professional Staff & Academics

Funding & collaboration support
Encourage collaboration across disciplines for research opportunities and publication production.

Community engagement
Support links with the wider community and local businesses.

‘My portal’ self service
Provides all staff with a digital dashboard for managing their key admin, support and teaching tasks.

Insight & analytics
Academics have greater understanding of their students’ performance and potential from collated data.
Driving innovation and cultural change

An organisation-wide approach is the only way that the levels of innovation and cultural change required to become a digital university can be achieved.

- **Everything, everywhere** – Students and staff want consistency of service right across all aspects of university life. The digital experience needs to break down silos and deliver the end-to-end journey – regardless of the structure or size of the university.

- **Services redefined and optimised** – Using digital technologies to reduce administration and manual tasks will allow staff to shift their focus away from low value activities and spend more time delivering richer, deeper engagement with students.

- **New insights and understanding** – Students and staff expect to have access to their key data through a single point of contact; they want to be able to inform once and for that data to be used repeatedly. The opportunity to improve data quality and draw powerful insights from across the end-to-end journey will help a university to respond to fluctuations in demand and meet evolving expectations.

- **Strong governance** – The digital agenda needs to be driven by senior management and management needs to be able to rely on the support of individual departments which in turn must take ownership for their contributions.
A blueprint for the future

Our digital blueprint considers how different departments across the university can contribute to the delivery of a digital university.

**Estates & Facilities**
- Create flexible digital collaboration spaces and provide excellent wireless connectivity on campus and in the community
- Develop the digital estate and the virtual campus to support anywhere, anytime, anyhow learning

**HR**
- Develop employment contracts and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes to support the ongoing development of digital literacy skills
- Support teaching as a valuable role on a par with research to help drive innovation in new teaching methods and techniques that leverage digital capabilities

**Library**
- Help the creation of digital literacy support networks for students by providing input and a space for students to collaborate

**Finance**
- Help to develop budgets that support an Operational Expenditure budget model that is required to strategically leverage new technologies and new ways of working

**Admission**
- Use digital to engage with and inform applicants on progress of applications and maintain contact with applicants after they accept and before they enrol, to give them a sense of what to expect at the university and how they should prepare
- Use insight and analytics to identify and increase conversion rates of the most desirable applicants, particularly when it is anticipated that they will accept an offer and succeed in their studies

**Faculties & Schools**
- Develop opportunities within courses that promote digital literacy to students
- Support those academics that are leading the way in the development of digital skills and developing new innovative teaching techniques, to become advocates that support the promotion of digital literacy within the wider academic community
- Encourage the advanced use of learning platforms by academics to deliver better outcomes for students and the university and to capture valuable learning data for use in analytics
- Help you build support networks for academics who are less confident with digital technologies

**International Office**
- Use digital channels to help overseas students build a better sense of the university environment
- Engage with overseas students and international agents through social media and other digital channels such as dedicated apps
- Develop insight and analytics that can help to identify struggling or disengaged students so that targeted interventions can be made and in turn improve retention rates. Develop services and opportunities that address key issues impacting students during their studies such as promoting mental health support.
- Support a range of contracting models and frameworks that give media agencies scope to work using new flexible delivery and implementation techniques
- Engage with staff, academics, students, prospects and alumni across a range of social channels, websites and apps to deliver a personalised service that represents the university’s culture
- Determine how the university’s brand is perceived in its target markets through surveys and monitoring social channels and react accordingly to reflect the preferred perception of the institution
- Relinquish some control on social media channels to encourage innovation and the creation of digital communities. Support the creation of digital communities between individuals at different stages of their academic journey (such as applicants and alumni) to help provide insight of life at the university or on specific courses
- Use data and analytics to identify target customer segments and develop personalised marketing messages for each student
A blueprint for the future

Governance
- Develop greater understanding of the impact of strategy and key decision making through the effective use of data and analytics

Technology
- Become a forward-looking department that tracks new technology trends and advises on how these can be used to deliver new capabilities and outcomes for the university
- Revise policies and procedures so that the innovative use of digital technology by staff, students and academics can be encouraged
- Make access to information and systems as open and accessible as possible so that the data can be consumed in new and innovative ways
- Leverage cloud technologies to drive innovation and the fast turnaround of the new digital capabilities, products and systems

Procurement
- Support a range of contracting models and frameworks that give media agencies scope to work using new flexible delivery and implementation techniques

Student Services
- Develop insight and analytics that can help to identify struggling or disengaged students so that targeted interventions can be made and in turn improve retention rates. Develop services and opportunities that address key issues impacting students during their studies such as promoting mental health support.

International Office
- Use digital channels to help overseas students build a better sense of the university environment
- Engage with overseas students and international agents through social media and other digital channels such as dedicated apps

Marketing
- Engage with staff, academics, students, prospects and alumni across a range of social channels, web sites and apps to deliver a personalised service that represents the university’s culture
- Determine how the university’s brand is perceived in its target markets through surveys and monitoring social channels and react accordingly to reflect the preferred perception of the institution
- Relinquish some control on social media channels to encourage innovation and the creation of digital communities. Support the creation of digital communities between individuals at different stages of their academic journey (such as applicants and alumni) to help provide insight of life at the university or on specific courses
- Use data and analytics to identify target customer segments and develop personalised marketing messages for each student
Building for the future

New technologies, such as smart mobile and wearable devices and sensors, blockchain, artificial intelligence, drones and advanced analytics, are changing businesses across all sectors. Higher education is no exception.

These technologies present new opportunities to improve or redefine the digital experience, through teaching, learning, research and working on complex projects with other universities and partner organisations.

Imagine a ‘Digital Campus’ that senses when students, academics and other staff are available, and then provides them with interactive information on their individual device to help them do their jobs more effectively. Where students can explore the wealth of learning opportunities available across universities and where their academic studies are personalised, flexible and tailored to individual needs.

Alternatively, imagine a scenario where virtual and augmented reality is used to connect teams that are working remotely, to make different campus environments digitally explorable for students in their everyday lives or bring learning to life for students across their studies.

Consider a university in which a digital assistant is provided for every student, virtually offering them personalised support, helping them with their learning and assisting them with their non-academic day-to-day life at university. And solutions that enable students to keep an online record of their qualifications and allow credentials to be issued, carried and shared globally in real time.

Finally, advanced analytics has transformed what universities can do for educators, as well as those being educated. A wealth of data is collected from a range of internal and external sources, such as mobile and wearable devices, that can be analysed and presented back in an interactive and highly visual fashion. Universities are able to analyse data intelligently and use that information to improve academic performance, employability rates and student retention.

Over time, students will be attracted to those universities that are embracing the digital age on their terms and anticipating evolution. Being aware of and prepared for new trends in emerging technologies, and having the ability to rapidly harness their potential, will differentiate the leaders from the laggards in higher education.
Exploiting digital technologies

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide personalised support to students throughout their university journey – AI and Machine Learning automate complex, decision making tasks that mimic human thought processes. With more data available than ever, the potential benefits arising from applying this technology are impressive, from supporting real-time student feedback to the early identification of wellbeing concerns based on attendance for example.

Using virtual reality to create a distinctive learning experience – Allowing students to adopt a new way of working, Virtual Reality supports an immersive learning environment. With 15% of companies making significant investments in VR over the next three years (PwC Global Digital IQ Survey), students will expect boundaries around learning to reduce or disappear, with the ability for lessons to be brought to life.

Providing a distinctive view of campus through the application of drone technology – Drone technology provides an opportunity to bring the university campus to life for prospective students, allowing them to find their way even before they arrive. In addition to supporting marketing, drones can provide an additional perspective to campus safety, supporting student welfare.

Using location technology to deliver personalised experiences for staff and students across the physical campus – Imagine your arrival at a lecture prompting a notification for the lecturer, or walking past the campus cafe giving you notifications about their offers. Location technology has the potential to bring the campus to life for students and staff, helping them to stay connected to the physical environment.

Develop a better understanding of your data – Data allows organisations to make informed decisions, tackle complex challenges and drive business value, but it doesn’t always lead to insight, intelligence and confidence. Four out of five organisations lack the right analytics capabilities to drive business insight. Many universities understand the value of data and analytics, but struggle when it comes to applying the insights gained from it. Others build technical data and analytics, but then struggle to get the wider organisation to adopt and achieve long-term value based on this. Even though universities are accumulating data at an exponential rate, they’re often not fully harnessing the value of it.

Use blockchain to authenticate and manage qualifications – Blockchain offers new ways in which to manage information securely. Allowing individuals to take control over their qualifications and share them with those they trust – adding credibility and reducing misrepresentation. At PwC, we have developed Smart Credentials – a tool that provides digital certification for a digital world.

Transforming Higher Education – The digital imperative
How to successfully harness digital

Link all digital activity to the university’s overall vision and strategy
All successful change programmes need to be underpinned by a clear vision and strategy defined by senior management. Digital is no different: clarity on the anticipated benefits and how these relate back to the overall strategy is crucial for success.

A lack of overall vision can lead to disjointed programmes. Siloed thinking leads to siloed IT systems which can create an infrastructure that is complex, inflexible and not as nimble as it should be in a changing marketplace. Before staff and academics can buy into new strategic programmes to improve digital capabilities, they need to understand why the programme exists and what their role is in achieving the strategic outcomes.

Open and transparent communication is essential for building trust, as is the need for those involved to feel part of the change. It’s important that they don’t feel like the change is being forced upon them.

Adopt a design approach that focuses on student needs, not the university’s internal structure
Delivering a great customer experience means listening and being agile enough to react to criticism and feedback.

Designing the digital experience around the way the university has been structured and has operated until now, rather than the way in which it intends to operate in future, and the demands of its future stakeholders, can lead to outdated behaviours and unnecessary admin.

Seeking honest opinions through surveys and forums can provide valuable insight, as can information obtained from official and unofficial social media groups. Monitoring what people are saying about your competition can also be highly revealing and can help an institution identify new opportunities for differentiation.

Making sense of all this data will help an organisation to challenge the status quo. It can help to identify areas where customer service can be improved, where innovation is necessary and where new team structures might be needed.

Invest in communities built around willing and capable digital innovators
To make digital a success, universities need to invest in giving staff, academics and students the right training in the relevant digital technologies. They need to combine this with effective support networks throughout the academic year.

For example, institutions that provide students with an introduction to a series of software applications during Fresher’s Week and then don’t follow up, cannot expect all students to enthusiastically integrate those applications into their studies and lives throughout the year.

Staff and academics need to be given the freedom and flexibility to try innovative ways of working, using digital technology without fear of criticism or retribution.

Peer groups that provide support on digital technologies and techniques are necessary to embed digital literacy for academics, staff and students.

Innovative thinkers who are pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved through digital technology should be encouraged to act as ambassadors for these support groups, so they can be a catalyst for change.

Understand that digital transformation affects every part of the university, not just IT
The idea that digital is all about technology is a misconception. Of course, technology plays an important role, but it is simply the canvas upon which the digital experience is created – the tool that facilitates its implementation.

Many universities are looking for a digital quick fix. They procure new technology platforms via their IT departments without first understanding the wider role that digital can play across the institution. IT-led programmes rarely deliver the anticipated benefits and can disadvantage universities while they wait for outcomes that never materialise. IT departments need to be involved, but involved in the right way.

It’s therefore paramount that cross-department transformation programmes are driven primarily by those who will receive the benefit, supported by the IT department.
Overcoming the barriers to the Digital University

Change is possible. During March and April 2020, universities rapidly adopted new ways of working and new approaches to teaching and learning. COVID-19 and the reality of social distancing has meant that new digitally enabled solutions have rapidly been put in place.

Not all of these changes have been implemented perfectly, but they are an important step in the right direction and now form an important foundation on which to build.

Many universities, however, still don’t have a clear vision or basic understanding of how digital can disrupt higher education, which means they’re not set up to respond effectively over the long-term.

Common reasons for this still remain:

- They don’t understand that they – as institutions – have to deal with a new generation of customers with evolving needs and demands, and that their competitors are also developing in new and different ways
- They are sometimes incapable of updating and adapting existing ways of working while at the same time adopting and integrating new techniques and tools
- A culture that inhibits the rapid development and release of new technology is still prevalent across the sector
- A lack of trust in digital services and new technologies, or concerns about their reliability, security and resilience

Another common inhibitor of digital uptake is digital poverty – a lack of digital literacy and access to technology, or the knowledge, skills and confidence to use the technology and devices available.

Academics and staff may not be confident using tools they’re not familiar with, and they might be nervous about engaging with technologies if they feel like they’re at a disadvantage to students who are considered ‘digital natives’ and have grown up around technology.

Despite the perception of ‘digital natives’ always being connected, they don’t necessarily have the skills or access to use different types of technology effectively in a learning context. Because of this, universities have a responsibility, particularly when it comes to teaching, to ensure students are getting the most from the technology that’s available to them.

Universities have for many years explored using digital to help adopt a much more personalised, tailored approaches to learning. Few have managed it. Digital technology has facilitated many innovative teaching techniques, such as flipped classrooms (where the conventional approach of classroom-based learning is inverted), distance learning, and hybrid of online and face-to-face teaching models.

But even though some might not admit it, many universities and academics consider teaching to be secondary in importance to research. Getting the most out of digital learning platforms – such as Blackboard, Canvas or Moodle – requires a significant investment of a university’s time. That investment is only likely to be made if the true value of digital teaching and learning is recognised.

The rapid shift to online learning in response to COVID-19 has too often simply been the uploading of existing course materials online. As a result, many learning platforms have simply become repositories where lecture notes are stored for download, delivering limited benefit for the student or the provision of data for use in analytics. Across the education sector there is a wealth of expertise and knowledge on what works well and how to deliver truly effective online learning. The impact of COVID-19 and the disruption facing the sector means that the need for truly effective and engaging online learning is perhaps greater now than ever before.

Finally, university IT departments are critical to the success of digital initiatives but they’re not always equipped to deliver these in the most effective way. Inflexible policies, aging infrastructure and a lack of experience when it comes to working with digital agencies can delay or prevent new digital initiatives from taking shape. In the worst case, academics, staff and students trying and use digital technology in innovative ways might get ‘shut down’ by IT departments fearing a loss of control or on account of concerns around risk and compliance.
Using blockchain to manage qualifications

In today’s digital, app-driven world people want access to their data immediately at anytime or anywhere. At PwC we have invested our expertise to develop a solution to manage qualifications.

Educational institutions have come some distance in their pursuit of becoming more digital, but most would acknowledge there is some way to go. An example of this would be the issuing, verification and sharing of educational qualifications and professional certifications which is still largely centralised, manual and paper-based process. It’s time-consuming, inefficient and open to abuse and fraud.

Blockchain has the potential to transform this process for the education sector. That’s why PwC has developed Smart Credentials, a blockchain platform that allows a student’s qualifications and credentials to be securely issued, verified and shared digitally, instead of having to rely on paper-based versions. The platform also has the ability to include both formal and non-formal achievements so that an individual’s lifelong achievements are at hand in a trusted, secure and portable way.

Today, blockchain for credentials is predominantly about enabling educational institutions to issue them in permanence. This brings quality and trust into the process, particularly in the example of institutions with affiliates or accreditations overseas. Institutions can be confident they are issuing a genuine certificate, which is authenticated and instantly verifiable. And that also brings cost reductions through improved efficiency and it helps eliminate fraud.

Our award winning Smart Credentials reimagines the way in which qualifications are issued and verified.

https://www.pwc.co.uk/blockchain/smart-credentials.html
How we are helping universities

UK university – Transforming the student experience

The ask
The UK higher education sector is facing significant challenges with shifts in technology, a changing political landscape, increased competition, and demand for an improved student experience. In order to respond to the current environment, the university has commenced a multi million transformation programme, with PwC appointed as their ‘change partner’ across the areas of business, experience and technology.

The solution
PwC is providing the expertise to transform the student experience, source and implement new technology, and drive change across both people and culture. This work supports the organisation to achieve a range of benefits including increasing student numbers, retention and satisfaction, improve staff experience, enhance ways of working, and to drive efficiencies across the business.

As a part of the programme, PwC identified a number of key pain points for customers / students.. Business feedback indicated that they had been prevalent for a number of years impacting the university, with efforts made to resolve the issues but unable to achieve the desired results.

To solve these pain points, PwC introduced ‘Experience Accelerators’, a rapid discovery process delivered in either six or 12 week sprints depending on the complexity of the issue. The accelerators facilitate a process bringing together staff from across the organisation to drive change by identifying a long term transformational solution to resolve the pain point, and to develop a plan to deliver on the short (developing a minimal viable product for testing and enhancement), medium and long term.

The results
The accelerators drive a new way of working encouraging rapid ideas and solutions, collaboration, and change management, putting the student at the heart of all actions and decisions.

Australian university – Transforming social channels to deliver a sector-leading student experience

The ask
The university wanted to better engage with students throughout the full end to end student journey, with a particular focus on recruitment. It recognised it was delivering a poor student experience due to a slow response to prospective and current students’ questions and comments, across all internal and external facing communication channels. The university also struggled to access the opinions circulated on social channels about their brand and understand the sentiment of its target audiences.

Our solution
We worked with the client to understand their customers in greater detail.

• Conducted a current state assessment using both university and third party owned social channels to demonstrate to the client how their brand was rated by current and prospective students. This allowed the client to realise that traditional year-on-year student recruitment no longer matched how students choose universities and courses

• Helped the university to understand that customers accessed opinions about them through a variety of channels, and at all points along their student journey

• We worked with them to establish a social media command centre to enable a consistent and robust approach.

The results
• The social media command centre was implemented across the student journey, increasing the digital reach the client had with their customers at all touchpoints

• This acted as a ‘change agent’ by providing a social centre of excellence, and training capabilities. Twitter brand awareness up 291%, 140,000 Facebook fans, up from 19,000 two years ago. Domestic enrolments increased 39%, International enrolments increased 9%.
How we are helping universities

Australian university – Supporting CRM implementation to create a single view of students across the university lifecycle

The ask
The university wanted to create a 360 degree view of its students throughout the student lifecycle. Salesforce.com was the chosen enterprise CRM platform and the university selected PwC as its strategic advisor and implementation partner to guide strategy and manage the Salesforce.com implementation.

Our solution
PwC designed engagement processes to improve customer satisfaction utilising automation, as appropriate, via Salesforce.com. We leveraged our extensive process, customer experience design, marketing and social media expertise, as well as technology delivery capabilities to enable the university to execute its customer relationship management strategy across the following areas:

- Multi-channel enquiry management for current and prospective students
- Relationship and contact management of contacts within secondary schools
- Online application portal for individual applicants and international agents
- Marketing automation, including developing an event hub marketing website targeted at school leavers
- The implementation roadmap.

The results
By deploying a multidisciplinary team, including Technical Specialists, Programme Management, Change Management and Process Improvement, PwC has delivered the following for the university:

- Strategic guidance in developing an Enterprise Wide CRM Future State Roadmap
- Stakeholder management across ten faculties and numerous organisational units throughout the design, development and delivery phases
- Centralised management of current and prospective student enquiries
- Developed a coordinated secondary schools engagement function
- Improved customer experience and reporting / analytics related to enquiry management
- Identified cost saving by enable new licensing models.

UK university – Creating a compelling digital vision and robust business case to enable IT transformation

The ask
The university had launched an ambitious business plan which had a number of strategic imperatives including the development of a digital first approach to systems and services, the enablement of smart and strategic data driven decision making and initiatives to support attracting and retaining students to the university. PwC supported the university in the development of the digital roadmap to support the student journey, development of the technology strategy, business cases and detailed delivery plans.

Our solution
- Digital Vision & Strategy: Research and collaboration across students and staff supported development of a digital vision and digital strategy
- Current IT Assessment: Current IT assessment was completed with staff and students for a high level overview of the current IT issues. An enterprise architecture framework was then applied to highlight areas for development
- Target State Analysis: Digital initiatives were developed and categorised across several factors including effort required, length of initiative, capital costs and resource cost. A business case was developed for initiatives, as well as a dashboard highlighting potential opportunities
- Digital Roadmap: Target state design roadmaps were developed with baseline, transitional and strategic options for the university.

The results
The university established a clear and compelling vision for change, which was developed through collaborative engagement and owned by its people. The current state IT assessment enabled clear identification of opportunities in the future state, and the roadmap built confidence that the programme would deliver. The detailed delivery plans were taken forward with the business case to implementation.
How will you take advantage of the digital age and stay relevant?

The time to act is now.

Although the transition into the digital age can be daunting, the rapid adoption of online learning by universities in response to COVID-19 has proved that significant change is possible within a short space of time. The challenge now is how best to harness the progress made in those few weeks and embed digital across all aspects of the university.

Universities that now develop the right business strategy which includes responsibility for digital technologies within every department, can open up a host of exciting new opportunities to engage with students, academics and staff. University leaders need to consider how best to:

- Develop a connected and immersive digital student and staff experience across the university
- Co-create and collaborate with students, academics, and partners
- Create richer learning environments to support different learning styles
- Empower students and staff to help shape and accelerate digital adoption across the university.

By familiarising individuals with new technologies, universities can empower their staff and students, but they must provide support and guidance throughout. With the right attitude and approach, a university can transform itself from a faceless organisation into a vibrant institution with a digital personality of its own.

At a time when there are significant changes and challenges ahead, and the voice of the customer is more prevalent than ever, providing a high-quality digital experience will help turn your customers into advocates for your university – which is one of the most powerful marketing tools available.
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