MinutePad

MINUTEPAD

AN EDUCATION SECTOR CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

One of the top Colleges of Further and Higher Education in the UK (in terms of size and turnover) has recently successfully adopted MinutePad and paperless board meetings. Their approach to reviewing, testing and selection makes for recommended reading for those considering this transition.

The full Governing Body of the College, comprising 18 governors, together with senior staff, meet regularly throughout the year and there is a supporting committee structure with sub committees attended by governors and officers. Corporate governance is, as you would expect, taken very seriously and to that end the Board of Governors, drawn from a variety of backgrounds, requires the right information, at the right time, in the right format, at the touch of a finger.

Central to the business of the Board is the timely provision of papers from senior management and other parties to facilitate good decision-making. For example these papers include minutes of meetings, regular performance reviews from all areas of the College, assurances that legal and statutory requirements are being met, as well as new strategies developed to assist them on their journey to being an excellent College.

THE OLD CHALLENGES

Like many organisations administering a paper-based system for the development, collation and distribution of their board and subcommittee meetings, the College was faced with issues that are extremely common.

These included at various times:

- the late receipt of board papers adversely affecting the preparation of board packs,

- these upstream delays hindering the timely distribution of board packs to members,

- downstream delays such as photocopier downtime,

- late working often necessary for secretariat staff in order to meet the physical distribution deadlines,

- additional incurred costs due to the use of courier services,

- managing the increased risk of confidential board packs going astray within a low security, physical distribution process that relied on external postal services,

- reduced preparation time available to governors due to late despatch of papers,

- constraints on meeting preparation and ad hoc research due to the manual searching of papers either by the board member or secretary on behalf of the board member, and

- an increased likelihood of mistakes being made in always working against the clock.

SOMETHING HAD TO CHANGE

As part of the College's ambition to realise the vision of being an "outstanding College", and in the spirit of continuous improvement, the processes supporting the effectiveness of the Board of Governors were reviewed. The aim of the review was to recommend changes that would improve the ways in which the Board transacted its business.

Some of the business drivers guiding this review, and dovetailing with the College's *Corporate Plan*, were:

- driving productivity by increasing effective and efficient governance,

- exploiting proven and available software and cloud connectivity,

- reducing costs,

- going greener, and

- displaying leadership in an environment of continuous improvement.

Among the various options trialled and reviewed by the governors were simple email based processes, processes based around in house document management system, and external specialist board portal technologies. The decision to research external technologies proved rewarding and each of the essential requirements insisted upon by fellow governors were met or exceeded.

THE SOLUTION

Following extensive research by the governor led project team, it's considered recommendations to and decision by the Board, supported by a rigorous procurement process, led to MinutePad being selected as the preferred solution provider.

THE OUTCOME

A structured and jointly developed on-boarding process followed, ensuring that all board members and support staff were comfortable using MinutePad, and the benefits of using MinutePad were immediately apparent to all users. Key benefits included intuitive user interface and ease of use, alongside functionality, security and VFM (value for money).

Since its introduction, MinutePad has been used for over 30 board and sub-committee meetings, saving in excess of an estimated 30,000 sheets of A4 paper. In addition to the cost savings in manpower, materials, photocopying and couriering, the College has also benefited from:

- the ability to instantly create a meeting, invite anybody (internal and external) and distribute documentation from anywhere, office, home, train, conference, etc.

- the facility to make changes or load documents instantly as and when they become available, and have them immediately accessible by all invited meeting attendees,

- the power to annotate and instantly recall annotations,

the capacity within the MinutePad portal to create meeting and documentation archives, which board members can rigorously search very quickly and simply,

the assurance provided by MinutePad's secure distribution of meeting papers,

- the specific customisation permitted, and

- being recognised for introducing and embracing successful technology with immediate financial and non-financial, tangible and non-tangible, benefits clearly visible for all to see and to follow.

The Secretary to the Board, when asked to recommend the technology gave MinutePad the thumbs up literally! He went on to enumerate the reasons on his fingers saying:

"The instant impact on the Board operational effectiveness, the simplicity and ease of use, the sheer cost savings, and the extra layer of professionalism that MinutePad engenders. Quite simply four very good reasons to give MinutePad the thumbs up".

The governor leading the project team added:

"The success of this paperless board initiative is beyond question. Governors found the interface with MinutePad very intuitive, allowing for a seamless realignment in the Board's work methodology. The improvement in the timely and efficient issue of Board papers was valued by Governors, making a positive impact on the effectiveness of the Board operation. It is also very rewarding to know that this investment delivers VFM cost savings on an on-going basis for the College budget, and that other organisations have now followed our lead."