



The Leigh Centurions Learning Zone

Background

Leigh Centurions RLFC is a National League One side who has built links with the local community over a number of years. Players act as positive role models for young people in the town and surrounding areas. Off the pitch, the Community Department teaches primary school children a non-contact form of rugby and literacy and numeracy programmes. They offer help to special school children to improve their sensory and co-ordination skills and socially excluded young adults to improve self control and self awareness. High school young adults are given the opportunity to experience the game of Rugby League.

A partnership between Leigh Centurions and the Wigan Education Business Partnership has brought the **Playing for Success** initiative to the town. This initiative provides an opportunity for year 5 and 8 pupils to improve their ICT and key skills in a unique programme which aims to help each child reach their potential through a range of stimulating, fun activities which centre around the game of Rugby League.

Idea

The Community Department at Leigh Centurions wanted to create a 'state of the art' facility to offer the Playing for Success initiative. As the programme would be undertaken out of school hours, they felt that a modern, vibrant and technically advanced centre would offer a greater incentive for pupils to attend after being at school all day. It also had to include a fun element so that the programme would feel more like a leisure activity, especially as it was to be closely linked to the game of Rugby League.

Solution

Following funding guidelines, the Community Department contacted various IT providers to gain quotations for a standard range of IT equipment that they felt would furnish the centre.

Benchmark North was one of the organisations who were contacted by the Centre Manager, Linda Donohue and invited to submit a quotation. As part of Benchmark's customer service policy, a site visit was arranged to ensure that the most cost effective quotation would be given and that the client's equipment, cabling and installation requirements would be fully met.

After discussing the use of the Centre and the purpose of the equipment in more detail with Benchmark's IT Manger, Andy Corrin, it was decided that because of a limited amount of space and the 'Wow factor' needed for a state of the art centre, more specific equipment should be

sourced. Ideas relating to the positioning and installation of the IT suite, interactive whiteboard and flat screen TV were also discussed at this stage.

The Community Team decided to go ahead with Benchmark's quotation mainly as a result of their quick response time, friendly and open attitude and the fact that they had taken the time to undertake a site visit to enable them to produce a bespoke quotation. The Team also felt that Andy's ideas and expertise helped them to make a more informed decision regarding the equipment they wanted which helped in making a saving on their original specification. Another great incentive was Benchmark's free installation and project management service.

Installation

Each step of the installation process was project managed by Andy Corrin, Benchmark's IT Manger, providing a single point of continuous contact. The installation included:

- 12 Desktop PCs
- 12 Wall Mounted Monitors (via a dado rail)
- 12 Desk Integrated Keyboards with an in-built Mouse
- 8 Tablet PCs
- 42" Wall Mounted Flat Screen TV
- File Server
- Networking (Wireless Router)
- Laser Printer
- Security Cabinet

Benchmark's installation service includes a provision for any joinery or cabling work that is needed. This meant that the Leigh Centurions Community Department had all their requirements met by one organisation.

A date was then agreed for the installation to be carried out and the equipment was ordered. Firstly the cabling and joinery work was completed and then a team of technicians worked together to install the IT suite and then to demonstrate the equipment. During this time, Benchmark's IT Manager and Lynn Halliwell, Chief Executive, were on hand to provide support during the installation process and to co-ordinate the work. The Community Department felt that this support proved to be invaluable and ensured that the installation went smoothly and was carried out within the agreed timescale.



Aftercare

Benchmark provides an aftercare service as standard with all their equipment and installations, but the Community Department decided to take out a Benchmark service contract for their equipment as they had been impressed by the quality of the service they had received. They also felt that a quick response was needed in case of any equipment, network or internet failure and to ensure that the equipment was ready for pupils to use when they visited the centre.

A service contract is often a more cost effective option for organisations with a large amount or range of equipment, especially where continuity is paramount when providing a service. Free emergency cover is included in this cost and a visit is usually organised for the same day.

Testimonial

“When Leigh Centurions received funding to start up a Playing for Success Centre at the club, it was imperative that we quickly source a supplier for one of the main aspects of our centre – the ICT equipment. During the application process for the funding bid, there was a clear vision of the kind of learning environment we wanted to create: up-to-the minute, cool and funky, and we needed a supplier who could share our vision and help us realise it. We contacted a number of local companies by looking through the Yellow Pages, and Benchmark’s prompt response immediately interested us.”

From the very first contact, we have had a prompt, personal and friendly service. Lynn and Andy came to the club and were shown the shell of the room, which was still under refurbishment, and from that moment we felt supported all through the process from sourcing the equipment to installation. Andy understood the effect we were trying to create and sourced the keyboards for us and came up with the idea of wall mounting the monitors to make the most of the space available.

The quotations we received were within budget and we were keen to use a local company. Co-ordination of the installation was potentially a tricky area, but managed well, and the aftercare and support has always been prompt. We have been really pleased with our association with Benchmark, and look forward to another exciting project when we move to the new centre in Leigh Sports Village.

Linda Donahue, Centre Manager

Learning Zone Update

Usage of suite: This has now increased from 4 to 8 schools per week (2 per day).

Official Launch: To be arranged for September 2007. Watch out for the official launch date in Benchmark's news section.

Feedback: All pupils who visited the Learning Zone before Easter 2007 have been asked for their feedback regarding the course and the equipment. A very positive response received. Pupils were asked to say what their favourite thing was during their time at the Learning Zone and the most popular answer was the computer equipment and keyboards!

If you would like further information regarding any programme offered by the Leigh Centurions Community Department or any of Benchmark's services, please use the contact information below:

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