

Esker Implements New Procure-to-Pay Solution for The University of Leicester



The University of Leicester was founded in 1921 and received Royal Charter in 1957. Leicester is a member of the 1994 Group of internationally renowned universities engaged in leading-edge research and high quality teaching.

It is a leading UK University committed to international excellence through the creation of world changing research and high quality, inspirational teaching. Leicester is the most socially inclusive of Britain's top-15 leading universities.

It also won the prestigious "University of the Year" award with its commitment to high quality, a belief in the synergy of teaching and research, and a conviction that higher education is a power for good.

As one of the UK's top 15 universities, The University of Leicester boasts more than 23,000 students and employs more than 3,500 people, as well as indirectly supporting the employment of just under 3,000 others.

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The Challenge

With a turnover in excess £230m per annum, The University of Leicester's purchasing department was a complex operation, which involved communication with the various departments located at the university's main site and satellite buildings in the immediate area, plus staff at each of the three local hospitals.

The university's finance department had been working with document process automation specialists at Esker since 2003 after it installed a fax solution for use alongside the finance department's existing SAP® ERP system.

However, with its servers coming up to five years old and in need of replacement, the department had the option of making a significant investment in new servers, or considering a new option — in the form of an on demand fax solution, developed by Esker.

After holding discussions with the technical team at Esker, the decision was taken to adopt their latest cloud based technology for the procure-to-pay cycle.

The Solution

Sue Lee, manager of the Staff Information Services team in the University's IT Services department, gives us the background to the project:

"We had enjoyed a successful working relationship with Esker since 2003 when they installed a system connected to our own SAP ERP system. However, we used to run this on the university's own server and support it ourselves, which could be fairly problematic at times and wasn't really a cost effective option going forward."

"After considering all the possible options, it made sense to migrate the whole of our procure-to-pay fax system to Esker's innovative fax as a cloud service."

Stephen Wynne Jones, Technical Director at Esker Northern Europe, explains the increasing popularity of Esker's cloud based services:

"Esker's 'Fax as a Cloud' service offers a cost effective and reliable service to businesses of all sizes — with no significant hardware or software investment. It is increasing in popularity thanks to the fact that it integrates seamlessly and securely with ERP applications such as SAP and offers real-time fax status notification and round-the-clock fax service availability."

"There are two ways that documents can be processed. They can be transmitted to an Esker production facility using a secure SAP Remote Function Call (RFC) communication between SAP routers and received by a multi-tenant Esker server platform with SAP Certified Integration."

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Sue Lee ■ Manager of Staff Information Services team ■ University of Leicester

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“Or, a certified solution transports documents directly from an existing SAP application to an Esker production facility through an authenticated, encrypted and secured connection. Once the fax is delivered to its recipient, a fax status is fed into the SAP system, updated in real-time and is visible to users.”

The Benefits

The implementation process went extremely smoothly for Sue and her team at the University of Leicester:

“We encountered no problems whatsoever with switchover, which was imperative given the nature of our business.”

“Prior to installation, the team at Esker carried out extensive business user acceptance testing.”

This enabled us to road test the system prior to the implementation and identify any potential problems before the system went live.

“For instance, we were able to find out what would happen if the fax numbers that had been supplied to us were incorrect and could work to solve these issues in advance.”

“We have already noticed tangible benefits, both in terms of time and cost savings.”

“We have also eliminated the need to renew our servers, which would have been a significant expenditure.”

“As far as return on investment is concerned, it already looks like the Esker solution will save time and resources for the finance department, as well as improving the efficiency and accuracy of our activities.”

“At the moment, we are only utilizing the Esker solution for the delivery of faxes, but given the success of the new cloud-based solution, we are exploring plans to expand to a full procure-to-pay system at some stage in the future.”

“The finance department is likely to remain the main user of the system, but we are keeping the solution in mind for rollout to other departments at a later stage.”

“Esker has always been extremely responsive — the systems processes are straightforward and we rarely have to phone for support — in fact, I wouldn't even know the phone number of Esker's support help line!”

“We are delighted with the results and look forward to working with Esker going forward,” added Sue.

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