CASE STUDY

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PRESTON'S COLLEGE

Preston's College is one of the largest further education colleges in the North West. It offers a wide range of technical-vocational subjects for 14-19 learners, together with adult learning, higher education programmes and a growing number of apprenticeships.

Preston's College were looking to find an accessible, easy to use reporting tool to view all of their data and deliver real-time reporting.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

RETENTION & SUCCESS

Their "first 42 days of study" dashboard highlights potential crisis areas before learners withdraw, improving retention and success rates.

The College has introduced more granular data that is relevant to individual courses and classes, available in just a few clicks.

DATA-DRIVEN CULTURE

INCREASED REVENUE

A live recruitment dashboard for apprentices has supported Preston's College to increase delivery numbers, bringing in more revenue in this area.

The clear visual alternative to pages and pages of data has resulted in greater impact and greater adoption across the College.

VISUALS: GREATER IMPACT

GROWTH PLANS

They intend to grow their dashboards, with marketing and recruitment tracking and mapping, in addition to financial dashboards.

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INCREASING APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING AND LEARNER SUCCESS THROUGH DATA ANALYTICS

THE CHALLENGE

With Further Education (FE) monitoring now divided between the Educational Funding Authority and the statutory regulator Ofsted, performance management is now a critical focus and the college realised that their reporting system needed improvement.

James Robinson, Information Systems Senior Officer at Preston's College said: "Our previous reporting system wasn't the most intuitive, so we needed an easier way to view all our information.

"Unsurprisingly, most people who work in FE have a teaching background, not a data background, so it was a case of finding something that would work for us as a college.

"We were therefore looking to find an accessible, easy to use reporting tool to view all of our data and deliver real-time reporting that could provide accurate information to every level of user; from the highest executive level down to the College management team and heads of department.

> " We liked the way the dashboard could integrate any data source "

"Due to the vast amount of data that the College produces, we were also looking to have this presented in a more meaningful way to allow us to make quicker and more informed decisions.

"Dynistics' Active Dashboards offered a very visual and more effective alternative, with the functionality to drill down to specific details."

IMPLEMENTATION

Preston's College installed Dynistics' Active Dashboards in 2012. This was driven by the MIS team who were looking for a way to feed information to governors and managers in an easy to use format.

James added: "We liked the look of the dashboard, the way it could integrate any data source and the flexibility it offered. It was also easy to set up and we could get going straight out of the box with some of the

pre-packaged dashboards, like ProAchieve."

"We then realised pretty quickly that there was a lot more we could do quite early on, but time and not having a dedicated person on board to focus on the project were limiting factors. Then, three years ago, we got one of the Dynistics' consultants to come in and deliver a day's training and things just took off!"

OUTCOME

Preston's College currently uses dashboards to track general attendance; attendance for learner support students; 16-18 learners; adult learners by school; apprenticeships by framework and standard type, and college achievement and pass rates over the last three years.

Two more; a self-serving portal for tutors, and geo-mapping, are currently in development.

The implementation of Active Dashboards has made quality real-time data readily available organisation-wide and has helped improve individual, departmental and overall college performance.

BENEFITS

One of the main drivers for using Active Dashboards was to ensure that Preston's College has a clear, single view of learner application and attendance rates. This enables the college to support enrolment targets and ensure that students are happy with their learning to secure student retention and boost achievement.

"If a student withdraws during the first 6 weeks of enrolment we don't receive any funding, which can have a huge impact on our revenue. It's therefore essential we look to improve our attrition rate and withdrawal rate over this time," explained James.

> "Already our attainment, retension and success rates have improved "

"As a result, we created a dedicated dashboard focusing on the first 42 days of study programme where we look at punctuality, attendance and registers that have gone unmarked, as well as non-starters and less-engaged students.

"Active Dashboards highlight potential crisis areas in real-time meaning we can act on these at the precise point of failure instead of afterwards when it's too late.

"It's still early days but already our attainment, retention and success rates have improved and we're looking to further build upon throughout this academic year."

DATA MADE SIMPLE

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"And best of all, it's all live data"

DATA-DRIVEN CULTURE

In the last three years, the College has developed new dashboards which they are constantly updating and adding to.

"It's definitely a work in progress that has been driven by the top down; our Principal and Chief Executive is a firm advocate of dashboards and one of our bigger users," continued James.

"Last year saw us develop a lot of things for our senior managers who wanted to see things in one place, while this year's progress has been directed from feedback from our academic managers, Heads of School who said that 'while they found the information for senior managers really useful, they couldn't drill down and analyse the information they needed for the students on their courses'.

"This has resulted in us adding a lot more drill-down options to our dashboards, so while senior managers still have a broad overview of information, within just a few clicks you can be down to a more granular level.

"This means we can tailor dashboards for a range of specific uses; not only do they enable Heads of School to see overall student attendance, but individual tutors can mark their class registers from them."

FUNDING-FOCUSED

Active Dashboards also make it far easier to generate much of the data that Ofsted requires.

"Aside from teaching, one of the primary areas on which Ofsted assesses us on, is how we are performing financially."

"The number of enrolments we receive affects funding; the longer students stay and the more they achieve, the more funding we receive.

This would not only have a positive effect in terms of funding, but also the college's reputation.

> " From 2014-17, the number of apprentices aged 16-18 has increased by 82.5%"

"At our last Ofsted report some 18 months prior, we were criticised for not making proper use of the data we held, and for working in siloes and not being transparent.

"For example, while we knew roughly how many apprentices we needed to attract each year to get funding, and when we needed to recruit them, correlating this information with precisely when an individual apprenticeship actually started was extremely difficult.

This information used to be kept on a separate Excel spreadsheet which never tallied up with the student system and so it took time to unpick the data. This was a major issue as the outcome affected College funding and therefore our bottom line.

"We now have a live dashboard for our recruitment team with a live running total. This has supported us in growing our apprenticeship delivery numbers, enabling us to bring in more revenue in this area. From 2014-17, the number of apprentices aged 16-18 has increased by 82.5% and adult apprentices by 53.87%; meaning overall apprenticeship starts have gone from 433 to 709, a 63.74% increase.

TIME SAVING

With data available at the click of a mouse, using Active Dashboards has enabled Preston's College to reduce the amount of time spent creating reports. In addition,

── DATA MADE SIMPLE

while college achievement and success rates have always been accessible through Pro Achieve, most staff didn't like using it.

James added: "Giving people a visual representation in a format they can really grasp has resulted in more people using it and the data has had more impact. Not everyone likes seeing pages and pages of data and dashboards remove this while still delivering a neat summary of the necessary information."

It has also enabled the College to streamline processes and use time more effectively.

"We're now far more conscious of the kind of data that people request constantly and a lot of our reports are linked to a dashboard which has helped us to standardise our reporting and deliver better data representation," explained James. "Three years ago, we had to create documents and bespoke reports on an ad-hoc basis which was both frustrating and time consuming.

" Now anyone can access a dashboard and find exactly which data they need at the click of a mouse "

"If someone wanted an attendance report, they had to request it, we would run it and by the time they received it the data would be out of date and perhaps not all that relevant. You would undoubtedly also need to twin it with an Excel spreadsheet or two. Now, anyone can access a dashboard and find exactly which data they need at the click of a mouse. And best of all, it's all live data."

THE FUTURE

In the future, Preston's College plan to grow both the nature and shape of their Active Dashboards to track and monitor performance across all areas of the College.

James concluded: "We are currently developing a self-serving portal where tutors can log in and immediately be directed to the information they need for their own classes. We would also like to create a series of marketing and recruitment dashboards to show regionally, on a map, exactly where our students are coming from, the level of those learners, and other useful demographics. Similarly, we currently don't have any financial dashboards, but this is something we may well develop over the coming months.

ActiveDashboards

Preston's College are one of over 75 colleges across the UK that have used Active Dashboards to make their data more accessible then use that intelligence to improve their college's performance.

If you would like to see how Active Dashboards could help increase your college's success, get in touch today.

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