processfix

Welcome

Processes tend to evolve over time as we add to them but rarely taking anything away. Left unchecked this can result in complex and bureaucratic processes that often fail to meet the customers' expectation.

But have you ever considered what drives this evolution of our processes? At Processfix, we have identified four external drivers of change: the level of demand, technology, regulation and customer expectation.

In this issue we talk to Mark Barlow from the University of Surrey where their own success has driven up the level of demand. Then read how Darren Wallis and his team at the new King's Business School are looking in depth at how to meet their customer's expectation. Finally our spotlight falls on Peter Derrick, Head of Service Delivery at UCAS, where improvements in technology, increased regulation and enhanced customer expectation have combined to drive considerable development of their service.

We hope these articles demonstrate that you are not alone in navigating changes to the external environment and inspire you to keep things simple rather than add to the complexity of your existing processes.

NEWSFLASH!

Hatfield, UK — July 2017
University of Hertfordshire choose Processfix to embed engagement driven change.

Success drives continuous improvement at the University of Surrey

Mark Barlow is the Director of Recruitment and Admissions at the University of Surrey where they have focused on improving the efficiency of their admissions process to cope with a 44% increase in applications over the past three years.

At the University of Surrey post graduate masters applications have increased by 50% and undergraduate applications by 30%. Overall this has resulted in a 44% increase in student applications since 2014. This increase in demand has been challenging to manage as staffing levels have not increased in line with application volumes.

Mark explained that the staff across the four faculty admissions teams were unable to keep pace and were slipping behind simply because of volume. "There are some admissions steps which have to exist. However what we were doing at each step was a bit painful, with some manual workarounds, and with some steps for example the assessment of non-standard qualifications, taking a lot of time."

"Our challenge was to find ways to make what we were doing at each step more efficient and where appropriate, to look for consistency across our admissions processes."

To facilitate this, Processfix were brought into to run a Rapid Improvement Workshop focused on undergraduate admissions. There were fifteen participants including the admissions advisers who process the individual applications, the admissions managers, admissions team leaders and Mark himself, who oversees the whole process.

"It was about getting clarity over where the pinch points and the bottlenecks in the process were. By getting ourselves in a room for three days the team could focus on analysing and challenging the process in detail, which is very hard to do whilst working. It was quite refreshing for myself personally to be able to see what was happening at each stage and to work together to establish whether elements of the process were still necessary. Following this we could then evaluate whether they could be done in a different way."

The staff were highly motivated and energised by participating in the workshop, to the extent that they went away and completed many of the action points very

quickly. Rather than delivering against a six-month plan, the team themselves decided there would be value in putting change in place before the next cycle of admissions.

Mark explained that the workshop was a catalyst for a much-needed change: "The workshop confirmed the need for the team to be able to follow a logical process flow each working day. We didn't come up with our web based interface at the workshop itself, but the enthusiasm generated over the three days advanced the timeline of the new interface by about a year."

We asked Mark how successful the changes had been during the last cycle. He was pleased to report that "the Processfix workshop was a significant factor in halving our turnaround times."

"Our challenge was to find ways to make what we were doing at each step more efficient"

Another benefit highlighted by Mark was the facilitative approach of the workshop. "The relationships in the team were already good, but the Processfix approach, engaging all levels in the room, was so useful. Having listened, discussed and worked together, we were able to manage expectations both ways. The team were really pleased to have been involved in coming up with the improvements rather than inheriting someone else's ideas of change."

If you're interested in speaking to Mark about any of the above, please contact him via email: m.barlow@surrey.ac.uk

King's College London embed process improvement across new Business School

Darren Wallis, Chief Operating Officer of the new Business School at King's College London has responsibility for designing and delivering professional services for students and staff that are commensurate with being a leading business school in a world-class university.

Darren joined King's in September 2016 from the University of Warwick, where he was previously Director of Strategic Programme Delivery and Chief Operating Officer at Warwick Business School. On taking up his new role, he was impressed by the ongoing excitement about process improvement that already existed in King's and how there was a strong group of enthused and talented facilitators in house.

Darren's team is inheriting several processes as the previous School of Management uncouples from its current parent faculty; they also have the opportunity to develop some completely new processes as they introduce additional functions and capability to the new Business School, whilst concurrently moving into the iconic Bush House in Central London.

However, he went on to recognise that "It won't all be possible on day one. What we can instil from the beginning though is that everyone understands the importance of thinking 'What does it look

to be given the opportunity to take this to their own areas."
"I would definitely see what we are doing as a programme of continuous improvement. We will need to fill in some of the gaps that taking over processes from another faculty creates, but we must also avoid the temptation simply to repeat what has always been done. We need to take existing processes and improve them as early as possible."

"What we are doing at King's is taking the long view. Institutions are realising how important process improvement is to the student experience, how important it is to get core administrative processes right. If we achieve that, the Business School will make a significant contribution to the global reputation of King's as a broad, multi-faculty university."

Darren was originally involved in one of the very first Processfix workshops about a decade ago at the University of Warwick. Based on his experience since then, he would offer the following advice to anyone on a journey of process improvement:

"I want every member of the team to have the knowledge and the insight and the tools necessary for continuous process improvement and then to be given the opportunity to take this to their own areas."

and feel like to be a user of this particular service'? In building the new faculty team, I decided to bring Processfix in to provide valuable external input. I want every member of the team to have the knowledge and the insight and the tools necessary for continuous process improvement and then

"Become customer centric – strengthen the focus on the customer or stakeholder. Establish what it looks and feels like to be a user of the process. It is very easy to adopt a producer perspective and work in our silos; we must keep the student centre stage"

"Secondly, use the evidence. By gathering data before and after you work on a process, you can really measure the improvements you achieve. When you get it right, you can be amazed by the scale of improvements and they can be really significant"

"Thirdly, I am a strong believer in team empowerment. Those closest to the point of delivery are often in the best position to know what needs to be improved and they are the ones that should identify, own and drive the improvement. Process review gives teams a real sense of ownership."

"We must keep the student centre stage."

"At the outset it seems like a lot of time and effort to take people out for a few days to attend a Processfix workshop, but in the end, it's absolutely worth it."

If you're interested in speaking to Darren about any of the above, please contact him via email darren.wallis@kcl.ac.uk.

In the spotlight: Peter Derrick, Head of Service Delivery at UCAS

Peter's first role in higher education was at the University of Southampton where he progressed to Head of Admissions. He then moved to Middlesex University where he was Head of Admissions and Visa Compliance, before holding his current role at UCAS.

How has the increased emphasis on the 'student as customer' impacted the service UCAS offers?

As Vice President of the Student's Union at Southampton I used to rile against the idea of student being a customer. The student is more than a customer. They are not buying a car, rather engaging with an experience to change themselves, becoming an independent learner. It is not a transaction, but a participatory process that you have to engage with to get the most out of it. However, I have softened my viewpoint over the past years. If we think of the next generation, the post-millennials, they are probably a lot savvier and understand what is just marketing-speak, versus what is really being offered to them.

How do you want UCAS to develop in the future?

We think of ourselves as trying to deliver an ecosystem. Learners to providers together with verifiers, the exam results. Bringing them together allows them to have a good shared experience.

Of course, we need to keep up with the next generation of learner, but equally to make sure that we don't forget about the very diverse nature of higher education. We have mature students, international students, students with disabilities, with special educational needs.

Poacher turned gamekeeper, or vice versa?

I think that would be a long and hard debate, and one which probably depends on your point of view. I bring to UCAS an important insight of what it is to work in university and how higher education is delivered to students. On the other side, I am able to see what UCAS brings to higher education as a shared service. If you think about UCAS's history, it started as a small office at UCL called UCCA. It was based on the concept that we could save some time and money by having a shared application form. UCAS came out of the merger of PCAS (for polytechnics) and UCCA. Not many of the big shared services have survived that long!

We are focused on delivering 'on time' information to students in a relevant way and huge effort is put into developing products and services to achieve this such as the new post-graduate and undergraduate search tools. Behind this we are managing and governing a data set of just under 70,000 courses. Information needs to be complete and accurate. It's not our information, it belongs to the providers, but at UCAS we help providers as well, ensuring integrity of their data through our new collection tool.

How do you balance systems development with customer needs?

We are not looking for IT to 'wag the tail'. To ensure that what we deliver is fit for purpose, we have a whole business change team embedded within IT development.

"We are focused on delivering 'on time' information to students in a relevant way"

We also need to remember that UCAS is a charity, funded by the application fee and the capitation fee paid by providers per successful applicant. To support both the learner and the provider, I want to make sure that we have got more than just an IT system. Our focus must be on adoption, use, and putting the processes in place to ensure continuous improvement as our learners continue to evolve.

If you're interested in speaking to Peter about any of the above, please contact him via his email p.derrick@ucas.ac.uk

About us

Organisations rely on processes to get things done. Often these simply evolve over time and become inefficient ways of working. Processfix bring powerful, proven and behaviour–changing techniques to bear in a professionally facilitated environment.

We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re–evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

Whether you require Rapid Improvement Workshop facilitation, training, project leadership or an organisational wide process improvement programme. Processfix specialise in facilitating your team, delivering immediate benefits and instilling continuous improvement across your organisation.
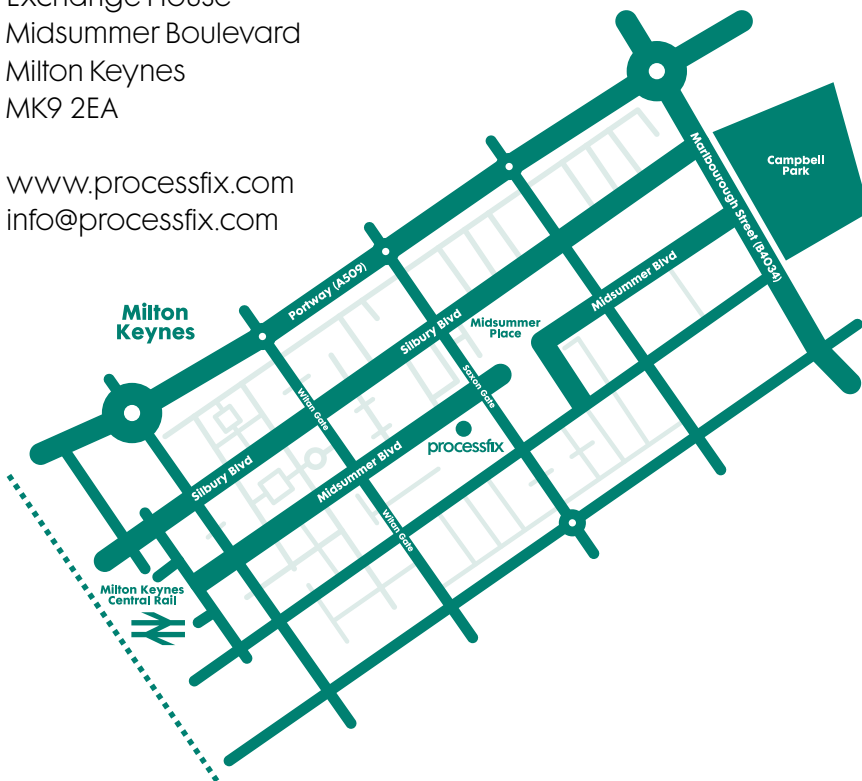
And Finally...

UCL embark on programme of Processfix workshops across professional services. Read all about it in the autumn newsletter.

If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

Processfix Limited
Exchange House
Midsummer Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 2EA

www.processfix.com
info@processfix.com

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T   +44 (0) 1908 255 993
F   +44 (0) 1908 255 700

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