

CASE STUDY

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER



University of Westminster chose THUS to upgrade and extend its multi-campus network with a high-speed – and award-winning – WAN project...

NATURAL FORCES

A pair of peregrine falcons can claim some of the credit for the success of the University of Westminster's highspeed network revolution. If it hadn't been for these rare birds choosing to build a nest on top of one of the University's buildings, the system upgrade could have taken a much less exciting route.

Founded in 1838 as Britain's first polytechnic, the University is scattered across four campus sites in the West End of London – Regent,

By 2005, they had all reached the end of their life cycle, and it was time to upgrade. The University's Network Manager, Lee Rose, takes up the story: "I was about to commit money to upgrading the microwave provision when falcons were discovered to be nesting on top of the 22-storey Marylebone building. Unfortunately, this was where our microwave head units were situated.

"Bill Oddie and a BBC TV crew got involved. Nobody was allowed to go up

"The THUS solution is scalable to our needs and allows us to explore new technologies."

Lee Rose, Network Manager, University of Westminster

Marylebone, Titchfield and Cavendish – plus another situated north-west of London, in Harrow. For many years, the sites had been connected by a combination of different types of data communication systems, including leased lines, infrared links and microwave.

to the roof, and the upgrade project had to be put on hold for six months.

"I started looking at alternative solutions, and was very surprised to find that other technologies had become a viable option.

IN SUMMARY

THE PROJECT

Client: University of Westminster
Project: Upgrading the University's wide area network.

THE CHALLENGE

To replace legacy WAN links across multi-campus sites and to extend the reach to Harrow.

THE SOLUTION

THUS data services.

WHY THUS?

THUS proposed and delivered a dedicated, carrier-class fibre network at an unexpectedly affordable price.



AWARD-WINNING PROJECT

The University of Westminster's project to upgrade its multi-site network provision has attracted considerable interest in the industry, with the University winning the Best WAN Project (Public Sector) category in the Communications in Business Awards 2006.

This award was established to recognise excellence in wide area networking installations. The University was selected for its carrier-class WAN backbone, supplied and managed by THUS. The chairman of the judging panel described the project as "well-planned and well-designed, completed within deadline and budget", adding that the capacity and resilience of the network "should bode the University well for many years to come".

They would give us more capacity and more speed, while being just as economically viable as microwave."

The University had already been working with THUS for several years, along with a number of other network suppliers, so it was only natural to include THUS among the invitations to tender in October 2005.

"THUS won the tender based on providing the best all-round solution," notes Rose. "It was the most economical too, in terms of both capital outlay and running costs. It also provided us with the opportunity to consolidate all our networking requirements under a single supplier." The contract was signed in February 2006 and the upgrade was rolled out – on time and on budget – beginning in June and completing by the end of August.

DISASTER RECOVERY

The THUS solution provides a dedicated, carrier-grade deep fibre trench that connects the University's four West End sites via a

high-speed Dark Fibre ring. This supports data transfer rates up to 10Gbps, while the more remote Harrow site is connected via a pair of 1Gbps THUS City Ethernet LAN extension circuits. Together, they make up an operational network that everyone in the University uses, from admin through to the teaching staff and students.

While the network upgrade and Harrow extension were being installed, the University rolled out a major storage and disaster recovery project with high volumes of data moving between the Cavendish and Harrow campuses – another reason for pressing ahead with the upgrade.

With this storage project completed, Rose has further plans to take advantage of the high speed and capacity of the new system. "We hadn't anticipated being at this point for another two to three years, so this already gives us lots of future options. The THUS solution is scalable to our needs and allows us to explore new technologies, such as IP telephony and video transmission, in addition

to everything we wanted to do right away. We've covered ourselves for the next five years, at least."

EXPERIENCE COUNTS

Rose feels that the project has benefited a great deal from THUS's previous long-standing relationship with the University, as well as from the company's extensive experience in the education sector generally.

"We have a strong working relationship with THUS", comments Rose. THUS's dedicated Education Account team has close links with the LMN (London Metropolitan Network), which connects all of the London-based universities to Super JANET, in addition to more than 600 other educational institutions across the UK.

Looking to the future plans of the University, Lee reflects: "Certainly, if we do anything along similar lines, without a shadow of a doubt we'll go back and talk to THUS."

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Lee Rose, Network Manager, University of Westminster