



The importance of joined-up data - how integrated data can help education providers reach their goals

Having access to accurate, detailed and up-to-date data is critical for successful colleges and education providers. Too many are still being held back by clunky, non-intuitive and restrictive systems that are not capable of delivering the information needed in a timely or practical fashion. There are a number of ways that shifting to a digital solution suite can transform processes and results.

Management data

Securing funding and maintaining funding streams can dominate the management and administration of education provision. Many stakeholders have already adopted new digital technologies that support efficient and effective data management and reporting and expect the same of the education providers they partner with. Colleges can not afford to get left behind.

Using powerful data management solutions means the right information can be pulled together quickly and easily to create insightful reports to be shared with key stakeholders. They allow for more meaningful reporting that can focus on multiple datasets, which can be repeated as often as needed – where once it might have taken days to go through spreadsheets and pull out the necessary information, now it can be done with not much more than the click of a few keyboard buttons.

This is invaluable for things like Ofsted inspections. Being able to produce meaningful and appropriate evidence, virtually to order, will drastically reduce the stress on staff during these high-pressure visits. Immediate access to information is critical for providers seeking to monitor their own KPIs and trends, helping with strategic decision-making.

It can also help drive further funding from new and existing

stakeholders who are more likely to choose to work with the most professional and modern providers because they know they can get accurate and current reports that complement their own processes and decision-making, without having to change between the two solutions.

Course data

Having access to data about course delivery and learner successes is key for managers in supporting teaching staff, helping them to understand what is and is not working for their students and enhance the way they shape their sessions to deliver the best learner outcomes.

Creativity and fresh new ideas can quickly dissolve when making them happen becomes too complicated and arduous. Good data empowers teachers to develop their lesson content and delivery and be the best they can be. Where the old processes were time-consuming, automation takes the grind out of necessary tasks, removes the risk of data error, and lets them concentrate on their core skillset.

Feeling more in control of one's daily work-life and being more self-directed is good for staff morale. Happier staff contribute to an overall better working environment where positivity, mutual support and improved outcomes can flourish. It also plays a key role in helping to increase employee retention that

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that in turn drives increased stability and continuity. This means less disruption for students and saves providers the significant costs and resources required for hiring and onboarding new teachers.

Course data is also valuable for college managers, giving them real time oversight of information such as attendance, that can help them shape future courses and provision. Strategies can be developed using accurate information that may be far more revealing than previous anecdotal evidence and reflective of actual rather than perceived changes in trends.

Individual learning journey

Ultimately, the day-to-day function of education delivery needs to be student-focused, with the experience of each individual learner a critical element in broader trends and outcomes. High quality data about individual learning journeys helps educators identify areas where a student may need more support or require a different approach in order to achieve their own particular goals.

Using accurate data is an essential tool for sharing information with students, as it represents honest and unbiased information. Teachers can use this to motivate, encourage and support better outcomes. When students can see that their learning experience is being recorded and evidenced in this way it can help with engagement, encouraging them to stick with their studies and achieve their goals. Supporting learner retention is not just important for the students. It's a vital objective for providers to maintain income streams that correlate to learner numbers and course completion data.

Data Security

Education providers hold lots of sensitive personal information, including student and employee contact details and addresses, employee bank details and identity documents. They also have detailed information about people's learning, their backgrounds and special educational needs as well as records of their performance and achievements. This is the sort of data that can cause immense reputational damage if it falls into the wrong hands. Digital solutions reduce the need for paper files and significantly reduce the risk of things going astray, keeping everything in a 'single' secure place from the point of view of the end-user.

Cybercrime is a growing concern for organisations in all industries and sectors, which is why it makes sense to choose a digital solutions provider implementing the highest-level cybersecurity measures with built-in compliance around data security. Well designed digital solutions are automatically updated whenever guidelines or legal requirements change, ensuring that compliance is also automatic.

Using the power of data - a case study

SPS Training Solutions is an education provider in the East of England that helps people acquire key skills in subjects like maths, English and IT; provides training for vocational skills in a wide range of industries; and runs short courses in subjects ranging from software packages to languages.

The provider implemented Advanced's ProSuite in 2017, when it secured funding from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Like many stakeholders, the ESFA required there to be a digital management system in place and offered the use of its own system. However, as SPS has contracts with other clients it made sense to set up its own solution that could effectively integrate all of its management and learning data into one place.

Director of funding, Ben Wise says: "We chose ProSuite because it was easy to use and it was critical that staff with little prior experience could input data and access it easily." Each of the different solutions within the system addresses a specific pain point and are fully integrated with each other. As such, they are perfect for users who want to start with one solution and build the suite over time. Advanced supports its clients with regular updates, new developments and built-in tools, making sure that they can access the most relevant and up-to-date solutions to operational challenges. SPS began with ProSolution, a student management information system and Ben estimates that using the Envelope feature combined with Web Enrolment has saved teams around 50% of previous admin time.

During the first lockdown ProSolution gave the provider a powerful tool to connect with and market themselves to previous students, as job centres were focusing on helping the growing numbers of unemployed people to access benefits instead of training. With no other income streams available at that time, Ben says: "We would not be here without ProSolution." The facility to easily contact previous learners and enroll them remotely has now become standard practice. "It speeds the process of enrolling unemployed adults who come for training and improves the experience for them too. Signing and returning documents digitally has streamlined the entire process, helping us to be a much more professional organisation."

The scalability of the entire suite was another critical factor in choice and SPS intends to add more solutions such as ProMetrics and ProMonitor in line with organisational growth and new funding.

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Achieve optimum results at every stage

At the end of the day, data is just information and it is only as useful as the processes put into place to access and measure it. Data becomes a hugely powerful tool for success when it is used correctly. Education providers amass large quantities of information and it is essential it is used to inform better decision-making and inspire new ways of doing things. Implementing a powerful suite of fully integrated solutions is the way to achieve optimum results. Systems that 'talk' to each other can also each contribute to a more detailed and in-depth collection of information that can help transform efficiencies within an organisation. These provide an opportunity to select from suite of solutions and add to these as the organisation grows and its needs change, to provide a truly scalable solution.

Implementing any new system requires careful decision-making, particularly for managers in the Education sector. It makes sense to consider data management systems and services from a solutions provider with experience in the

education sector, that understands the pain points, challenges and implications of the changing trends in education management and delivery. A well-resourced solutions company with longevity is more likely to be around and continue to supply developments and enhancements to their solutions in the long-term – a partner that can be counted upon to keep delivering the solutions and support that successful education providers need now and into the future.

Advanced's extensive experience with FE institutions means we understand that retaining students and maximizing their positive learning experience is vital. Our integrated suite of solutions helps providers through every stage of learner management, from prospect attraction all the way to exam completion and alumni communications. Visit [Further Education Management - ProSuite | Advanced \(oneadvanced.com\)](#) to learn more.

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