



Rotherham Pulled Back From The Precipice By An Injection Of Private Sector Principles (and a little help from Topaz Financials)

Three years ago Rotherham College of Arts and Technology was staring into the financial precipice. It effectively had no money and there seemed little possibility of the college getting its act together, being severely handicapped by a lack of commercial awareness.

Rotherham today is a shining example of how Further Education establishments can get off the critical list thanks to an injection of private sector principles. So much so that it is effectively taking Rother Valley, which has experienced similar problems, under its wing – although the official description is amalgamation.

The fightback to sound “commercial” health from challenging financial status by Rotherham has been successfully led by John Somers, Director of Finance, with more than a little help from Topaz Financials.

Recruited from the private sector where he was Group Financial Director of a property company that embraced Sheffield Airport, from day one in education, John Somers went into culture shock.

What he found was –

- Finance was placed a distant second to everything – and the IT systems he found in place simply couldn’t meet his objectives
- He was dealing with “fantastic, committed people” on the ground but who were in the main divorced from commercial reality
- Meetings were getting in the way of action in that they could often last for hours on mundane subjects

So John Somers opted for the course of direct action to inject private sector principle into public sector organisation – and no one escaped, not even the students. Students received a short sharp shock when he called in a debt collection firm to chase up missing library books – but it worked.

However he couldn’t tackle the overall financial problems without being able to underpin his commercial awareness campaign with a cost effective, highly flexible accounting solution. And he found this in Topaz Financials.

Two companies were short listed as suppliers – Topaz and Sun Accounts – and Topaz emerged as the winner.

“While we looked closely at both – and obviously Sun Accounts is the better known name – we liked the look and feel of Topaz,” recalls John Somers. “And though the Topaz solution was much more cost effective, that really didn’t influence the decision.

“Flexibility was the key and we were convinced we would get that from Topaz but weren’t certain that would be the case with the bigger company Sun.”

More.....



Continued

Today John Somers is a firm Topaz fan and more than willing to endorse the products based on his experience of the key role they have played in bringing Rotherham back from the brink.

Having found that Topaz Financials has done everything he has asked of it – and more - he is now looking to implement the newly launched Web Kiosk, a breakthrough technology which gives easier access to systems to users and non users such as budget holders.

“I am convinced that as more and more colleges become aware of what Topaz can do for them, this supplier will do very well in education,” says John Somers.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

About Topaz

Topaz was founded by a group of like-minded business professionals and began life creating bespoke software solutions and supporting third party applications. At the core of Topaz business solutions are software applications that have been developed by its highly experienced team of software engineers. From inception to delivery, Topaz solutions are produced with the highest level of professionalism.

Topaz EMS is an integrated Payroll and HR solution with an optional Time and Attendance module, its inherent flexibility and ease of use. Lends itself to many different sectors of the market providing numerous time and cost saving benefits. Whilst being competitively priced the solution is regarded as one of the most comprehensive systems on the market today. The consultancy services Topaz provide ranges from complex business process re-engineering to production of Gap analysis reports and ultimately technical specifications.

Topaz Financials covers all aspects of a financial accounting solution including sales, purchase and nominal ledgers, cashbook and fixed assets and specialise in key areas like credit control, commitment and project accounting. Their growing user base acknowledge the quality of software developed by Topaz but also the essential services and on-going support. Users come from a range of business sectors and include: Education, Recruitment, Manufacturing, Professional Services and Distribution.

For press information contact:

Laurie Chivers

Marketing Manager

Topaz

Telephone 01773 531551

Facsimile 01773 716121

Email laurie.chivers@topaz.co.uk

Website www.topaz.co.uk