

University College
Falmouth
Photography Centre
connect2 + checkout

case study of connect2 + events

In our case study with University College Falmouth, we speak to Scooby Gill, Photography Stores Manager, about using connect2 and the checkout module to manage the equipment in their Photography and Media Centres.

The study looks at how connect2 has enabled an efficient booking process for the university's 500 photography students, whilst allowing staff to plan in advance for the collection of student equipment.

background

"Before connect2 we used a software program that was developed in-house called FoxPro but this was just a simple checking in and checking out system and was not capable of making bookings. Instead, we used spreadsheets to book studios, darkroom space and digital suite space but students were unable to book any equipment in advance as this would have been impossible to manage.

We really needed to provide a more professional service and felt that the students and staff needed the ability to plan their work in advance. This led us to a search for an online booking solution, which was when we first met lorensbergs. We have been involved with the software for quite a few years now, and through several upgrades and developments, our new connect2 ebooking solution has been in use now for nearly a year."

choosing connect2

When we began looking at connect2 I was very much included in discussions about the system before we committed to it. As the person that was going to be using it on the 'front-line' this was critical and so I was extremely pleased that the management at the college had recognised this and not just gone ahead without involvement and feedback from the stores staff.

I was involved in a demo during a phone conference and that was my first look at the system. I was very excited that we were going to be getting such a system to manage the stores. It felt like a huge jump forward!

After discussions, a decision was made and we went ahead with installing connect2. Throughout each of the installations and upgrades we've done with lorensbergs, it has always gone very smoothly. The key to it going well was planning, organisation and preparation and that can't be emphasised enough. If you get it wrong at the beginning, it is a lot harder to put right further down the line and it also means you get the best out of the software.



ebooking
at its best

using connect2 at Falmouth

In the Photography Centre we connect2 to manage, book and check out the following:

- All of our equipment
- Darkroom space
- Studios
- Digital suites
- Scanner space
- Teaching areas
- Technical instructors' time.

*"We now have just under 500 photography students alone (not counting all the other courses, induction requests and external clients we also deal with) and **It is hard to imagine how we would cope without connect2.**"*

As this is all available via reports we also feed this information to finance who then charge usage to the relevant departments. These usage figures also help us determine future needs and requirements in terms of equipment and facilities.

The Media Centre at University College Falmouth use connect2 in a very similar way. In addition, our Interactive Arts Centre and I.T. Services also use it to book and check out laptops. Our Design Centre has also shown an interest and was investigating its use in managing equipment and consumables.

the benefits

"Our operation is extremely complicated and having connect2 as a 'tool' to manage our resources and facilities has been vital. With inductions and workshops to plan for hundreds of students every year it is hard to imagine how that would be achievable without connect2."

- Students can get the equipment and facilities they want when they want it and they can plan in advance. It presents our service in a more professional way and that in turn leads the students to operate in a more professional way, reflecting the industry that they are then hopefully going to be working within.
- Another great advantage is that the students are far more knowledgeable about the names of bits of equipment and how to put an equipment list together as a result of having to make their own bookings. It forces them to think for themselves and have less reliance on the stores staff and this obviously reflects really well on the quality of graduate leaving us to join the industry.
- In addition, with Cornwall being a predominantly rural environment and with some students and staff having to travel some distance sometimes to get to the campus, it has obviously been a distinct advantage for them to be able to plan and book equipment and facilities from home. That is a little environmental bonus!
- The students have particularly loved the *Find Free Time* feature and the Multi Calendar options, both which were as a result of student feedback.



making the most of connect2

Having been involved in the set up and training process from the beginning has certainly meant that I have a thorough understanding of the software and I am so pleased that I was able to set aside the time during the summer break to totally concentrate on this. I really believe that that time spent in the beginning meant the difference between the software working successfully for us or not. I explored every aspect of the software, tested it, played with it, experimented with it and was able to draw on the very helpful and professional support from lorensbergs until I was totally happy that our set up was right for us and the returning students in the new academic year.

"I really wish that we could return just for one day for students to experience the rudimentary system we used to have to work with so they would know how lucky they were to have such a useful system in place!"

passing on information

I passed this information onto my colleagues in terms of operating it at the counter front and then gradually introduced them to the other set up processes involved. That process continues as and when we need to make alterations to the set up. Then of course I had to carefully plan the training of the students into the software and this is crucial to the success of the software. If the students aren't 'on board' with it and making full use of it then it almost becomes a waste of time having such a system.

offering feedback

We do encourage the students and staff to feedback to us any suggestions they have for the software and I always include these in my reports to lorensbergs. I think that is a really important process and it makes them feel, quite rightly, a part of the development of the software.

I do however sometimes think that students take connect2 for granted a little these days. Perhaps it is as a result of the reliance on information technology in everyday life these days. I really wish that we could return just for one day for them to experience the rudimentary system we used to have to work with so they would know how lucky they were to have such a useful system in place! There would be chaos!!

planning is essential

In the early days of set up it did feel like we had a mountain to climb as there did seem so much to think about in order to get it to the point of everyday use. However, years on, it all seems so simple on the face of it and that is what I always stress to any potential customers. Give it the time and the energy in the first place, get it right, and it will work for you. I think the same thing happens with students when they first arrive. It all seems like too much to take in for them but I do give them an induction where they can sit down and play with it on a training account and the more they use it the more second nature it becomes.



working with lorensbergs

I've always got on really well with the staff at lorensbergs, particularly the Technical Support team. As we have been involved with the software for quite a few years now, and through several upgrades and developments, I have developed a good working relationship with the technical team, especially Caroline Lewis (Technical Support Engineer) and James Entwisle (Technical Product Manager). They are always willing to help and act swiftly with any issues that arise. We regularly provide feedback to lorensbergs and the customer input is clearly the basis of further developments with connect2.

in summary

I speak to a lot of potential customers and some have gone forward to buy connect2 on the basis of seeing how we use it and what we think of it. I always stress the importance of having a very clear planning process for set up and taking the time at this stage to get it right. I would also like to stress the educational value of connect2 as it isn't always an obvious benefit.

"We have clearly seen the change in student's knowledge and professionalism as a result."

Any potential customer looking for an ebooking solution is very welcome to come down and see it in operation within our Centre as there is nothing better than seeing how something works in the very environment it was designed for.

I have visited other universities to see how their set up of connect2 differs from ours and this has been mutually beneficial for swapping ideas and experiences as well as operations within the stores environment in general. It is amazing what ideas emerge through the different interpretations of the use and set up of connect2. I think this kind of collaboration is really useful and important for the development of connect2 and the sharing of ideas certainly ensures that you are getting the very best out of the software.

With thanks to Scooby Gill, Photography Stores Manager
University College Falmouth

