

Winner of the
**TechWorld 'Mobility
 Project of the Year'
 2008 Award**



Business case study

Industry: Education
Number of devices: 1000+
Number of universities: 5

Solution

- MDA Vario devices for Mobile Email and internet access

Benefits

- Enhanced learning methods
- Improved teaching assessments
- Greater development and experience for students in clinical fieldwork

ALPS: Yorkshire's universities health and social care students benefit from mobile learning and assessment programme

Company Background

The award winning **Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS)**, was created as a collaborative programme between five higher education institutions in the north of England. Its aim was to implement an innovative new method of mobile learning and assessment by providing 900 students from the health and social care faculties at the universities of Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan, Bradford, Huddersfield and York St John, with T-Mobile MDA Vario devices to support their learning and assessment whilst on work placements.



Practice placements for students' training in health and social care careers, such as medicine, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy or social work are essential for the development of students' skills and confidence in a practice work environment. ALPS recognised that these health and social care students need access to their university's learning systems anywhere and at anytime to enable them to work effectively and efficiently with all of the information they need.

The Challenge

The technological aims of the £1 million ALPS programme were hugely ambitious and on a different scale to any other of its kind in the UK. Connecting such a large volume of mobile devices to five establishments with different IT systems and management, while ensuring both secure access to the systems and complete mobile network coverage across many work placement facilities in the Yorkshire region, meant that ALPS had to pick technology partners with the best mobile learning solutions possible. There was also the added pressure from the strategic health authority, who were understandably concerned that, with the wrong solution, patient confidentiality could be compromised in such a project.

"T-Mobile's enthusiasm and understanding of what we were trying to achieve in this project was crucial to its success. The price package, strength of its Mobile Broadband network and the devices that were recommended, meant that T-Mobile was the perfect choice of partner."

Trudie Roberts, ALPS Director

Gareth Frith, the ALPS Mobile Technologies Project Manager, explains, "The ambitious nature and scale of this programme demanded the most secure and reliable network coverage available to us. The implementation of the T-Mobile devices coupled with the performance of the Mobile Broadband service has offered both students and tutors alike, access to the most comprehensive mobile learning solution in the UK."

The Solution

After a thorough procurement exercise in winter 2006/2007 to decide who would provide ALPS with the best mobile learning solution possible, T-Mobile was picked as provider of choice. Its partnership with online learning systems provider, MyKnowledgeMap and mobile software specialist, ecommnet provided ALPS with a cohesive team that was dedicated to help it achieve its ambitious objectives. This consortium of specialists that T-Mobile had put together was absolutely key in providing the programme with a broad range of innovative skills and expertise in mobile and learning technology. T-Mobile was also transparent about technology costs from the outset and offered the best fixed-monthly price for unlimited Mobile Broadband usage.

ALPS began the implementation with a three-month pilot scheme, once this was successful, each of the participating universities, all of which had different email platforms, Virtual Learning Environments and Active Directories, were fully connected within a six-month time period.

Initially, ALPS invested in 900 MDA Vario handhelds, a PDA style device that offers Mobile Broadband speed connections and, via the device web browser, ensures users can surf the internet like they would on a PC. Each of these devices was encrypted to make sure that all data, including that of the patient, was confidential and secure.

Trudie Roberts, ALPS Director, said: "T-Mobile's enthusiasm and understanding of what we were trying to

achieve shone through when we went to tender. The web'n'walk tariff, with a fixed price for unlimited mobile data usage, also appealed to us as we wanted to know exactly how much the technology was going to cost. This, combined with T-Mobile's Mobile Broadband network and the devices that were recommended, meant that T-Mobile was the perfect choice of partner for this project."

The Benefits

Improved teaching assessments

University tutors have been able to upload assessment forms to the T-Mobile MDA Vario for their students to complete while taking part in their work placements. Each assessment is customised to the individual student so that they are relevant to courses and learning styles. Tutors are able to access the student questionnaires which cover core competences such as team work and communication, reflecting on these skills as they practice them in a work placement environment, rather than having to wait for these assessments when the students are back at the university campus. Finally, they can use the MDA Vario to log in to a secure area, connected to the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) teaching and business systems, to record and store the student's assessment.

Gareth Frith, explains: "When students are out on essential clinical placements, historically it has been difficult for tutors to receive accurate and timely assessments from their students. Essential communication skills and other core competencies are now reported on as they are learned in the workplace, so that tutors can access student progress in the Virtual Learning Environment, as it happens!"

Enhanced learning methods

Using the Vario's Mobile Broadband speed connection, students can access learning resources from a central virtual learning repository at high-speed, and can reflect on their work placement on a live blog built into the assessment programme.

The multimedia capabilities of the T-Mobile MDA Vario has also enabled users to upload their e-portfolios (including video and sound files) online, giving tutors real-time access to their students' achievements. The e-portfolio records all of the student's own educational and professional experience, acting as a mobile curriculum vitae that can be accessed at anytime.

Gareth adds: "The ALPS programme is enabling students to get out into a practice environment and learn all of the necessary communication and patient skills they will need once qualified. They can carry out work placements confident in the knowledge that they have instant access to the information they need and real-time access to all of their tutors. Not only that – the environmental benefits are great too, as the T-Mobile devices dramatically cut down on the old paper-based processes that were in place before."

The Future

Within one year of the programme, T-Mobile and its partners have successfully enabled ALPS to roll out the mobile learning and assessment programme to over 1,000 students. ALPS plans to add more e-learning material and roll out more mobile learning devices to all of the health and social care students in West Yorkshire over the next three years. It also has immediate plans to implement newer devices, such as the Vario III and MDA Touch Plus.

Gareth concludes: "The success of this implementation provides clear indication of the advantages mobile technologies can bring to all sectors where using a mobile device is far more practical than using a desktop PC. ALPS has been approached by other university Centres for Excellence in Teaching & Learning about its pioneering implementation, increasing interest across many different departments. Our partnership with T-Mobile has been a key part of this success, and we intend to continue to work closely with them to develop our plans for the future."

To find out how T-Mobile can help your business, please call us on 0800 956 5001, email businessenquiries@t-mobile.co.uk or visit www.t-mobile.co.uk/business