

CLIENT STORY

From rising above adversity to riding the wave of digital transformation in the education sector



TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

An international exam board

Founded in 1872, Trinity College London is a leading international awarding organisation who specialises in the assessment of communicative and performance skills covering music, drama, combined arts and English language.

With over 850,000 candidates a year in more than 60 countries worldwide, Trinity College London qualifications are specifically designed to help students progress.

Since establishment, Trinity College London has aimed to inspire teachers and learners through the creation of assessments that are enjoyable to prepare for, rewarding to teach and that develop the skills needed in real life.

Unprecedented events as a catalyst towards transformation

Back in the day for Trinity College London, as many other awarding organisations, investment in technology had not necessarily kept up with the rapid pace seen in other industries. As most of the examinations in performing arts or English language require in-person assessment, there was not much room for digital transformation.

However, with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole world was shaken up and most industries were disrupted by this unprecedented event, especially the education sector.

As a result, Trinity College London faced a pressing need to adapt to the changing educational landscape and keep their business going. With traditional live examinations considered impractical due to restrictions on face-to-face encounters in most countries, Trinity College London was urged to embark on transformative digital initiatives, driven by the urgency to enable candidates to take digital exams.

“ *All our face-to-face music, drama and English exams pretty much closed overnight, so we had to come up with innovative ways to continue as an organisation.*

Duncan Atkins, Chief Information Officer at Trinity College London

On the other hand, while the pandemic presented numerous challenges to the education industry, it also catalysed positive changes, **fostering innovation and prompting a re-evaluation of priorities for a more resilient future in education.** This was also a huge business opportunity for Trinity College London to **transform digitally.**

Responding to this need, the high-level executives of Trinity College London had a vision for their systems, where they aim to offer a single, integrated journey for every single user while enabling business intelligence to explore. Like many other integration projects, one of the main challenges is to understand and fully replace the existing legacy systems, siloed data and challenging infrastructure environments.

To achieve this vision and scale quickly to meet the pace, while ensuring that the expected quality is maintained, Trinity College London decided that they need an expert to support them.

Among other companies, NashTech stood out and demonstrated a proven track-record in the technology field, with expertise to help Trinity College London navigate their digital transformation journey and bring value to their business.

“ *We did a competitive tender, a request for proposal (RFP), lots of interviews, and NashTech really shone through.*

Duncan Atkins, Chief Information Officer at Trinity College London

Digital is the way forward

NashTech and Trinity College London worked together on the project which is at the core of their ongoing digital transformation initiative and assisted in creating new applications and systems, aiming at streamlining various labour-intensive processes and modernising legacy systems that are both expensive and susceptible to errors.

Sharing his thoughts on driving towards a more digital future, **Duncan** emphasised:

“ *There are systems where the architecture is sub-optimal because of the pace at which they had to be implemented, but they supported our customers during the pandemic. That is great in a way, but now, it is about putting in the next generation of systems and tools to drive a transition to a more digital business.*

He then stressed: **“Digital is definitely the way forward.”**





Enhancing users' experience

The new applications and systems that NashTech and Trinity College London were working on are also designed to **enhance customer experience and broaden the company's business horizons by integrating with diverse platforms and collaborating with various partners.**

For instance, the first project that was worked on together **focused on replacing the old exam management system with a new cloud-based submission and application management one.** The old system, where candidates submit their work and then examiners mark it, required the users to execute an abundance of manual tasks such as scanning and uploading documents to complete their examinations. The complicated functions had caused confusion and difficulties for candidates and users to navigate through the system.

“*We had a lot of people who would pay for an exam and would exit the process midway. They struggled with the confusing process.*

Duncan Atkins, Chief Information Officer at Trinity College London

Now, with the new system built on AWS, the process is streamlined, and customer experience is enhanced significantly. Emphasising on how the new system helped Trinity College London enhance the user experience, Duncan added:

“*Some of what we are trying to achieve was just improving the customer experience rather than necessarily taking the cost out initially. We want to get a more coherent customer journey that works for our users, and that they would not exit halfway through. And the process with the new system is much smoother, candidates no longer exit midway in their examination.*

Additionally, NashTech also supported Trinity College London in integrating 'Accredible', a digital certificate and badges platform, to the systems, allowing more accessible and secure certificates for their candidates. Now with the introduction of digital certificates, candidates' experience has been improved as the need to scan hard copies for submission to universities or other institutions was eliminated.

“*Nowadays, you can have a record of achievement folder with Accredible and all is easily shareable through a secure link, rather than having to scan your certificates to send them off.*

Duncan Atkins, Chief Information Officer at Trinity College London

Being more sustainable in the education sector

Along with user experience enhancement, the new systems and platforms also allow Trinity College London to become more sustainable and secure.

Before embarking on the digital journey, since most of the examinations that Trinity College London held was face-to-face, flying examiners to different destinations contributed significantly to their carbon footprint.

“ Our carbon footprint was pretty horrendous as we were flying examiners all around the world and we still do that to a degree, but by providing digital products, it improved palpably.

Duncan Atkins, Chief Information Officer at Trinity College London

He then added, “Although the pandemic was the catalyst, still, there were a lot of other good reasons to start on digital transformation journey. Mostly it is around improving efficiency and being a greener company as our green credentials are really important to us.”

As a result, **the new digital cloud-based systems and platforms have helped Trinity College London achieve sustainability in their operation.**

For the graded music exams, Trinity College London now provides a digital solution allowing candidates or their instructors to record instrumental performances and submit the videos to the platform. Examiners can subsequently access the videos to assess and grade the exams remotely without the need of flying to another destination by using the designated marking platform.

“ Flying people around the world, organising, scheduling and booking rooms, all of that just did not scale well and the process was not as slick. So rather than flying examiners around, we are now looking at digital alternatives as much as possible.

Additionally, with the introduction of digital certificates made available through Accredible, printed certificates are gradually becoming a ‘once upon a time’ thing, thus, reducing waste and driving towards a more sustainable future.

Furthermore, as the system is backed by blockchain technology and watermarks can also be put on the digital certificates, this allows both candidates and other users of the platform a more secure approach in awarding and keeping certificates.

Now, with the reduction in flying examiners across countries and printing certificates, Trinity College London is moving forward with a greener approach while saving operational costs and achieving higher efficiency.

Duncan then later added that although they still offer paid printed certificates for those who needed, Trinity College London has become a digital-first organisation.

“ Digital certificates work well for us and again, they improve our green credentials a lot. But the need for printed certificate is not yet come to an end. We still have a lot of young children taking our music exams when they start off their music journey and want a bit of paper to stick in the wall. So, we offer a paid option for paper alternative as well, but the digital approach is showing signs of staying.

Reusability is the key

Regarding the functionality of the systems and platforms, Duncan stressed that, “*Reusability is the key for me.*” He then continued,

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Delivering a music exam is very different, let's say, from delivering four skills in an English exam. But there are commonalities, there are still candidates and marks. So, these services should be reusable.”

As the systems and platforms were built on AWS, one of the significant highlights is that it also offers a scalable, extensible, and reusable benefits to Trinity College London.

The partnership

Thanks to the partnership with NashTech, Trinity College London not only enhanced their user experience, but also optimised operational costs, became more sustainable and secure, as well as got to know more about Agile methodologies as the business was following the traditional waterfall approach prior to the engagement.

Although there was an initial challenge in time zone difference, both NashTech and Trinity College London worked out the arrangement and tried our best to collaborate to achieve the set goals.

Talking about the working relationship, Duncan stressed:

“*On the practical note, we can't deliver without NashTech. With the ability to scale quickly and at a reasonable cost, I'm really impressed with the quality that NashTech has provided. It is really great, and I have fed that back on numerous occasions.*”

He then added,

“*The team at NashTech do like to challenge, which is great and that is what we want. We don't want a passive partner. I have worked with several offshore partners and some of them were not driving things and it just felt far too passive, whereas we never had that from NashTech. NashTech has got us moving on the digital transformation journey.*”

By driving exciting changes and presenting different interfaces to replace the existing legacy platforms, Trinity College London is committed to continuously improving and offering enhanced services to their customers. As the education industry is evolving constantly and transforming digitally, Trinity College London looks forward to improving the user experience as well as strengthening the relationship with their candidates and customers by adopting digital-first strategy, thus, riding the wave of digital transformation in the education sector.



We are experts in technology, delivering smart solutions that solve business challenges and create value. Our award-winning teams apply deep expertise and passion to deliver complex IT projects globally.

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