

London collaboration cuts risk and costs

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An innovative buying efficiency scheme developed by London Metropolitan Network is proving highly successful for members and has won a London Connects Award for its usefulness in public sector IT

Taking the plunge into new technology or outsourcing deals can bring risk for IT managers, however promising the benefits to users and however solid the business case.

The collaborative scheme developed by London Metropolitan Network (LMN) dramatically reduces this risk and generates important cost savings. LMN works alongside members and in partnership with suppliers to implement new technology and services in a managed trial. Once the technology or service is seen to be effective in the public sector environment and best practice has been established, LMN negotiates with the commercial partner to find a pricing model that delivers cost-savings to its members and a rigorous SLA to assure performance. Commercial partners feed funds back to LMN and its members as part of the scheme.

“We are very proud that this sustainable outsourcing model which we have developed with commercial partners is proving

so successful and won recognition from London Connects,” said Maria Iliu, Business Development Director at LMN. “Our value-add services are as attractive to the public sector in London as they are to the academic community.”

LMN runs a dedicated IT network with around one million users in London’s universities, colleges and public sector bodies. A not-for-profit organisation, financed by government, LMN Ltd receives most of its funding from the UK’s main academic connectivity provider JANET (UK) and has recently upgraded to the latest LMN 3 network for added speed, resilience and power.

LMN membership and services are open to any public sector bodies, not necessarily connected with learning, but where the use of the network is to the benefit of the local community. Existing public sector members include leading charities, prestigious museums, professional societies, NHS trusts and teaching hospitals.

LMN provides not only connectivity for its members but also the benefits of professional networking events and access to services on the collaborative model.

The first example of this model working in practice was an agreement between LMN and InTechnology, providers of a premium range of managed services to the public sector in UK. InTechnology’s VBAK service for secure data backup and restore is offered to all LMN members at pre-negotiated favourable terms and with a guaranteed SLA.

Rocketing data volumes and an increasingly severe climate of risk in London mean that the VBAK service attracts many public sector members to LMN.

“By collaborative sharing of preliminary risk and trials with our members and our commercial partners, we can offer this important service at reduced costs, with assured service levels and impressive standards of performance,” said Maria Iliu. “Our members taking this service can be confident of secure data backup and rapid restores.”

Other services which have been negotiated by LMN for its members as part of the buying efficiency scheme include email filtering from Message Labs.

Knowledge efficiency is another important dimension to the LMN collaborative buying model; knowledge is gained and shared during trials on how a technology works in practical terms in the public sector.

“By sharing knowledge, our members and our commercial partners derive solid benefits going forward,” concluded Maria Iliu. ●
Maria Iliu, Business Development Director
LMN Ltd, 7th Floor, 50 Hanson Street,
London W1W 6UP Tel: 020 7460 5204
Mob: 079 3268 4240 Fax: 020 7460 5207
e-mail: m.iliau@lmn.net.uk www.lmn.net.uk
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