



Department for Work and Pensions' Jobcentre Plus: operating and maintaining the most popular employment and training website in the UK

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EDS is a key Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) business partner, we provide critical support for the delivery of their Jobcentre Plus network.

The challenge

In 1997 UK Jobcentres used to display job vacancies on printed cards on bulletin boards in local offices. This system was limited by the number of jobs that could be displayed in each location and by the time it took to keep the boards up to date. It was also a chore for jobseekers to wade through the cards to find suitable vacancies.

Communication with employers was equally limited. To advertise openings, they either had to call or visit their local Jobcentre. Even then, it could be several days before vacancies were fully distributed to other jobcentres. Frustrated by this the UK Employment Services turned to EDS to help overhaul the system.

Improving Public Services and Making a Difference

As part of Government's extensive welfare reform modernisation programme, EDS worked in close partnership with the DWP to support its radical transformation programme. A programme that sought to amalgamate parts of the UK Employment Services with the Benefits Agency, to create a single, joined-up and more efficient organisation, Jobcentre Plus.

EDS designed and deployed a network of touch screen kiosks, known as Jobpoints. These were located in Jobcentres and revolutionised how prospective employees searched for jobs – the days of cards mounted on job boards are now long gone. EDS deployed around 9,000 Jobpoints to Jobcentres in the first year alone and research has shown that 92 per cent of users find them easy to use.

An added element of customer choice and flexibility is now provided by the Touch-screen terminals and Customer Access Phones in a further 120 sites such as libraries, supermarkets and local authority premises. The ever popular Jobcentre plus website also allows jobseekers to quickly and conveniently search for positions online, it provides support for customers in finding jobs and supplies information on benefits, training and how to apply for a job.

It was EDS that set up the first Jobcentre Plus contact centres. These centres efficiently provide a convenient point of contact for jobseekers and employers. If jobseekers want to talk directly to Jobcentre Plus they can telephone Jobseeker Direct, a nationwide number that puts them through to the first available operator anywhere in the country. This allows workloads to be evenly distributed among staff throughout the country, reducing the time callers have to wait for an operator.

Jobcentre Plus services for Employers have also become increasingly flexible and responsive. Employers can now contact Employer Direct to list vacancies, or they can submit them directly to the Jobcentre Plus Job Bank through Employer Direct Online. This is a free online service, launched in May 2005, that enables employers to post and manage their vacancies via the Jobcentre Plus website.

Programme Success and Takeup

EDS' contribution to this transformation project has been considerable. In just a few years we have helped the service move from a traditional office and paper-based system to one of the world's most innovative public employment schemes.

The technology initiatives that provide critical support for Jobcentre Plus have been widely recognised for their innovation and performance:

- Winner of Best Government to Business project – Government Computing Awards for Innovation (2005)
- Winner of Best Take-Up project – Central e-Gov Excellence Awards (2005)
- Officially designated "e-government best practice" by European Commission
- Heralded as the "most innovative e-business project of the year" by Computing Magazine
- JCP website has consistently, and independently, been placed number one in the following categories over the last four years: Government – Central and Business & Finance.

The Jobcentre Plus site has been an extremely popular website:

- In a single week in September 2006 it experienced a record 5.4 million job searches, making it the UK's number one recruitment website
- It handled over 120 million job searches between April and September 2006
- It is ranked the 57th most popular website in the whole of the UK

Scale and Complexity

EDS' partnership in supporting the government's welfare transformation programme began as far back as 1999 with the Modernising Employment Services (MES) programme. This saw EDS merge six regional Labour Market System (LMS) databases into a single national job bank database. With 7.5 million client records, 1 million employer records, 400,000 job vacancies, 30,000 simultaneous users and 320 transactions a second, this was the largest-ever database migration of its kind. This database provides critical support for Jobcentre Plus' network of Jobpoint kiosks.

Helping DWP deliver Jobcentre Plus also posed significant challenges for EDS. Initially the UK Employment Services and Benefits Agency were still operating as two separate organisations, this meant that in theory EDS was required to deliver one overall project to two separate clients. To overcome this EDS decided that all work would be delivered on one front, to the client that most closely mirrored the proposed Jobcentre Plus organisation.

Now, Jobcentre Plus, the Department and its delivery partners operate, a large-scale and complex organisation that interacts with over 275,000 employers to place 17,000 people into work every week. Customers can now access services through around 1,000 locations across Great Britain, including over 800 Jobcentre Plus offices. Over 400,000 jobs are listed each week on its website and more than 4 million job search requests are received. Jobcentre Plus is an excellent example of how Government and its agencies are working with private sector suppliers to deliver complex and large-scale reforms to offer citizens increasing flexibility and choice on how they consume public services.

What the Client said:

The Jobcentre Plus website has gone from strength to strength this year with more and more jobseekers and employers turning to the Internet to find and fill jobs. The site has become an important channel to help people back into work and to provide quick and easy-to-use access to the jobs available to them.

Lesley Strathie, Jobcentre Plus Chief Executive