

National Audit Office puts 4C to the test

The role of the National Audit Office (NAO) is to audit the financial statements of all UK government departments, agencies and many other public sector bodies. The NAO also reports to Parliament on the value for money that these departments offer.

This means that the NAO not only ensures that government departments are accountable to Parliament, but the organisation also aims to bring about real and tangible improvements in the delivery of public services. As part of their remit, ICT consultants 4C Strategies has worked with the NAO in an advisory capacity since 2006 on a major telecommunication and ICT project, assisting the organisation in developing an appropriate communications strategy and the subsequent procurement of appropriate systems.



All change at Victoria

The project originally came about when the NAO decided to embark on a major refurbishment of its London Victoria office. The renovations, which are still ongoing, are designed to create an open plan layout and working environment as a way of maximising space and encouraging more flexible working arrangements for staff. However, this restructured environment will be very different from how the offices and workspaces have previously been organised. These major alterations to office design have implications for the NAO's communications strategy, which 4C has been called upon to help resolve.

In addition to this, the NAO has identified that a significant percentage of staff spend a substantial amount of time out of the office, typically working at a client's site, or in some cases home working or working from an international location. 4C was asked to assist in providing a communications strategy that would enhance the new work environment, combined with current staff working patterns.

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The communications strategy comprised of the following stages:

- Infrastructure audit – to confirm the existing infrastructure.
- Interviews with members of NAO staff – to identify working arrangements and communications needs.
- Definition of a 7 tier user model – to classify the communication needs of all NAO staff.
- Definition of future vision – to enable the NAO to provide the required communications services.
- Migration planning – to enable the NAO to seamlessly migrate to new platforms and roll-out additional functionality.
- Advice on user adoption and changes to working patterns/working arrangements.
- Advice on data network design and security.
- Advice on security and authentication for wireless network.
- Disaster recovery and business continuity planning for communications systems.

Once the groundwork had been done and the strategy stage was completed, the NAO re-engaged 4C Strategies to assist with the detailed specification, procurement and implementation of replacement communications systems.

The NAO has been so impressed with 4C's input on the project so far that the ICT consultancy has also been invited to join an internal steering group to help drive the necessary internal changes in order to gain the best advantage from the new platforms.

The 5 key business benefits

When the migration is complete, the provision of the new communications infrastructure will allow the NAO to:

1. Significantly increase staff contactability and productivity – by facilitating a work anytime, anyplace, any device culture.
2. Improve customer service and response times – by routing incoming contacts to the right place first time.
3. Provide an improved image – by allowing NAO staff to conduct their day to day duties in a more effective and professional manner.
4. Reduce costs – by reducing the need to travel and facilitating site rationalisation.
5. Reduce its carbon footprint – by reducing the need to travel.

Jon Ashford-Clark, the Principal Consultant at 4C responsible for overseeing the project comments "*Since we were originally retained in 2006, 4C Strategies has developed a communications strategy report, advised on user adoption and changes to working patterns of staff, prepared a procurement specification and advised on the procurement route. To date, the project has remained on track and on schedule inline with the requirements of the National Audit Office.*"

Angus Waugh from the National Audit Office comments "*We have used the services of 4C for approximately two years. The company has always provided a professional level of service and given high quality consultancy advice.*"

To find out how you can make more of your communications by having a clear strategy in place, contact 4C to arrange for an initial no-obligation fact finding consultation. **Visit our website www.4c.co.uk, call 01858 438 938 or email office@4c.co.uk.**

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