

CASE STUDY

CDW HELPS EDUCATION CHARITY LGFL 'BRIDGE THE DIVIDE' BY BOOSTING ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN.

OVERVIEW

- LGfL national procurement project aimed at putting a device in the hands of every child
- #BridgeTheDivide initiative involved the sourcing of Lenovo Chromebooks and Winbooks at highly competitive prices
- CDW's National Distribution Centre managed the configuration and delivery of the machines to schools across the UK
- The project saves schools up to **£10 million** in costs and helps improve the life chances of many young people

ABOUT LGFL

- LGfL is a not for profit charity supporting over **3,000** schools, academies and local authorities with a mission to advance education
- LGfL supports schools by delivering scale in procurement and the development of secure broadband, IT services, and curriculum resources
- LGfL helps tackle inequality by providing disadvantaged children with secure access to great technology
- Since its inception over 20 years ago, LGfL has saved schools over **£300 million** and has delivered some of the largest EdTech and cloud-based projects around the world

CHALLENGE

LGfL is a not-for-profit charitable trust whose mission is the advancement of education. That ambition involves providing a broad range of services aimed at energising teaching through digital platforms, providing safe online learning, and tackling social inequality to ensure that no child ever gets left behind.

One of the primary means of fulfilling its role is to save schools money through economies of scale in technology procurement. This is important at the best of times. But when the pandemic struck, and many children across the UK had to learn from home, access to devices became more critical than ever before.

"Schools were approaching us concerned that many children – particularly from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds – did not have the equipment they needed to learn remotely," says John Jackson, Chief Executive Officer at LGfL. "Also, because the pandemic had created an enormous demand for laptops, it was proving difficult for schools to buy direct in the numbers they required. It was the perfect storm. That is when schools asked us to help out."

The solution was to launch an ambitious national procurement effort called #BridgeTheDivide for up to one million Lenovo Chromebooks and Winbooks. By procuring at a large-scale, LGfL intended to save schools millions of pounds and increase access to devices for children, enabling them to work more effectively from their home environment.

"No-one had ever gone to market before for such a large number of devices," says John Jackson. "But a serious crisis demanded a serious response, and we were determined to get children the technology they needed. We knew we would be creating a significant market and had the power to drive prices down. This would save schools money, allowing them to buy more devices or re-invest in other areas."

SOLUTION

LGfL looked at market engagement with potential partners, with CDW producing the best overall solution in terms of procurement, configuration, logistics and support. "It was apparent early on that CDW could negotiate some very exciting price points for #BridgeTheDivide that would enable us to deliver high volumes of technology into schools," says John Jackson.

"But it was about more than that. CDW was bringing a lot of value-add to the project in terms of end-to-end integration. The sheer logistics of shipping, configuring, and delivering such a high number of devices worldwide to the UK was hugely challenging in the middle of a pandemic. But CDW showed that it had the risk-appetite to collaborate on what was going to be a hugely ambitious project."



Working in partnership with Lenovo, CDW formulated a proposal to supply four different student-centric devices on both Windows and Google platforms, complemented by a range of peripherals. Stretching across 17 months, the solution also covered configuration services to be undertaken at CDW's 120,000 square foot National Distribution Centre in Rugby, along with device shipment to hundreds of schools around the UK.

"There were two immediate challenges," says Matthew Smith, Account Director at CDW. "Firstly, securing the number of devices that were needed was difficult because we were competing in a global market at a time when there was tremendous demand for laptops. But our partnership with Lenovo meant we were at the front of the queue."

"There was also the challenge of managing the sheer volume of devices. We were looking at handling tens of thousands of laptops at the NDC at any one time, often to schedules that could change at short notice. This was going to put huge pressure on our warehouse and configuration teams, requiring the implementation of various new working practices."

One of the first responses was to ensure that the LGfL project was adequately resourced, requiring increased staffing to cover the addition of a night shift. New working practices also needed to be introduced to ensure that social distancing was fully observed.

The devices would arrive at the NDC, with

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— John Jackson, Chief Executive Officer at LGfL



each of the delivery vehicles allocated an unloading bay. Corrin Davis, Head of Warehouse Operations at CDW, takes up the story. "The receiving team would then check the paperwork and liaise with the driver of the vehicle, before overseeing the unloading of the pallets. The stock was then verified against purchase orders, with each device identified with a serial number, which was scanned onto our system. This gave full traceability throughout the warehouse on an end-to-end basis."

Normally, the incoming devices would be placed on racks within the warehouse. But the volumes for LGfL were so large that additional storage facilities had to be put in place. "There were intensive efforts to streamline warehouse operations," says Corrin Davis. "It was crucial that devices moved through to configuration and despatch without any delay."

The configuration also required high levels of orchestration to ensure the smooth flow of devices through the NDC. A significant percentage of Chromebooks and Winbooks needed to be set up to individual schools' specific requirements. The number of technicians in the configuration team was

almost doubled to around 90 to cope with the volumes. In addition to the night shift, extra bench runs were added so that work could be carried out efficiently.

"Many of the schools didn't have extensive IT departments so relied on CDW to configure the devices to meet their needs," says Gareth Head, Configuration Senior Supervisor at CDW. "Hundreds of laptops were moving through configuration at any one time, with tasks like etching, tagging and windows imaging all being carried, often overnight, so that they could be despatched the next day."

While the LGfL work was vital, the warehouse and configuration teams were still processing existing orders for other customers such as the NHS at the same time. This needed an enormous organisational effort to ensure there were no disruptive knock-on effects.

"The warehouse and configuration teams were the unsung heroes on this project," says Matthew Smith at CDW. "They were responsible for a supremely well-organised team effort that led to the LGfL devices getting into the hands of the schools with no delays. All the staff at the NDC should be very proud of what was achieved."

OUTCOME

For LGfL, the #BridgeTheDivide collaboration with CDW was delivered on several fronts. Firstly, says John Jackson, it has had a transformative effect on how schools could procure new devices.

"CDW helped us save schools well over £10 million to-date," he says. "This has enabled them to buy more technology or invest elsewhere. It has been a fundamental game-changer in the way that technology is procured for schools and has been a profound event that will have a long-term effect on the digital market."

In terms of implementation, LGfL has been delighted by the way that CDW organised and oversaw the logistics of shipping so many devices from around the world, and the way that the NDC then processed them and got them out the door.

"Everything was planned upfront in an

orderly way, despite the turbulence in the global market," says John Jackson. "LGfL and CDW worked in true partnership throughout, communicating proactively with schools and being honest about any supply delays that did occur – even though most were completely out of our hands. That resulted in high levels of openness and trust."

LGfL was also impressed by how the devices were configured and shipped, often to multiple addresses under tight timelines. "That was the art of this," says John Jackson. "CDW was configuring and delivering tens of thousands of devices, in a short space of time, and the number of challenges encountered by the schools could be counted on one hand. It was beyond brilliant."

"CDW did a tremendous job on #BridgeTheDivide. We were pushing the

boundaries to make big things happen. And for that, we should celebrate the successes, because it was an extremely effective partnership."

Ultimately, the project aimed to support children with their learning and improve the life chances of young people across the country. "It has had a massive impact," says John Jackson. "Thanks to our work with CDW, the number of devices that have already been shipped is well into six figures. That has enabled the schools to deliver positive outcomes for children. It has had a real educational impact."

Neil Bailey, Education Sales Manager from CDW adds: "We are proud to have been involved with the #BridgeTheDivide project. There is nothing more important than our children's education, and CDW is delighted to have played a central role in supporting LGfL."

To learn more about education technology solutions provided by CDW, please contact your Account Manager or email education@uk.cdw.com.

