

Supplier Relationship Management

Contact Details

This submission is made by Andrew Holdgate, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Information Services (IS) at the University of Nottingham.

Contact details:

University of Nottingham
King's Meadow Campus
Lenton Lane
Nottingham
NH7 2NA

Telephone: 0115 951 3348 E-mail: Andrew.holdgate@nottingham.ac.uk

Please note: Andrew Holdgate will be on leave from 5th to 27th June inclusive. Any queries during this time should be made to IS Admin Team (Telephone 0115 951 5151 ext. 68555. Email is-admin-team@nottingham.ac.uk)

Abstract

Working in an environment where change is constant, providing high quality, cost effective services to a large community with multiple, and conflicting demands is extremely challenging. To help meet this challenge we needed to work closely with suppliers and to encourage staff to manage, rather than provide, routine services with the objectives of: improving service levels, staff engagement and value for money.

A total of 120 suppliers and 55 Supplier Relationship Managers (SRM), staff responsible for each supplier, were identified. All SRM's receive specialist Supplier Management training, attend quarterly forums, have access to our specialist e-workspace, receive proactive support and participate in on-going needs based development.

To date, costs have been £130k with returns around £500k. However, the real achievement has been: the "buy in" of staff as they see the benefits for them, improvement of service levels / reliability for end users and improved working relationships with our suppliers.

Submission Outline

Background – Towards the end of 2007 it was recognised that as a department IS was not always working effectively with many of its suppliers nor were we consistently receiving best value from them. Furthermore, poor supplier relations were adversely affecting staff morale, productivity and service quality. Whilst there were some pockets of good practice these were largely down to the work and interest of individuals rather than a consistent policy applied across IS.

Following a detailed evaluation project we identified that the most common problems were:

- Poor communication (both Internally and with our suppliers)
- Focus on cost rather than overall Value for Money (VFM)
- Tendency to focus on the technical, with little consideration of the strategic or commercial aspects of the supplier relationship
- Perceived issues with suppliers were not always tackled and staff were unclear of where the responsibility for managing each supplier lay
- Our understanding of the market was poor and few of our suppliers were involved in our strategic planning
- There was no support or guidance available to staff in respect of ongoing Supplier Management
- No alignment of supplier management with the University's strategic goals and objectives

The project went on to recommend that in addition to addressing the above points we also formally identify and proactively manage each of our key strategic suppliers. As a result the post of Strategic Partnerships Manager was created and the Supplier Management Program was initiated in the spring of 2008.

This document describes the Supplier Management (SM) program, what it has achieved to date, how staff are being developed and supported within the context of SM, and the effect of the program, on our staff, customers and suppliers.

Scope of the Project

Program Launch 2008 - The IS Leadership Team was given an overview as described above and members were asked to identify key suppliers in their area using criteria which considered: spend, risk, and strategic importance to the organisation. A total of 110 suppliers were identified; this has since grown to 120.

In addition the Leadership Team were asked to nominate an individual to act as the internal account manager for each supplier, these staff did, and still do, perform this role as an integral part of their normal duties. The staff are known as Supplier Relationship Managers (SRM's).

The part time role (0.8 FTE) of Strategic Partnership Manager was formed to create, manage and develop the Supplier Management program, support and develop IS staff (particularly the SRM's), in their commercial activity. There were three immediate requirements:

- Begin working closely with SRM's to resolve immediate issues with known "problem suppliers"
- Define the role of the SRM (Appendix B)
- Devise and Develop a SM program.

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

Staff Development, Responsibility and Reward - Staff who were nominated to become SRM's had a wide range of grades, knowledge, ability and experience. Most of the SRM's were skilled technical staff but none had received any training or guidance in Commercial Practices or Supplier Management. Furthermore, there was a danger they would not fully understand their new role, its responsibilities, possibilities, or the support which would be available to them.

A trawl of the internet and our current training suppliers highlighted that whilst training was readily available on Tendering and Negotiation techniques there was virtually nothing available with respect to managing suppliers on an ongoing basis. One organisation which had recognised and attempted to fill this gap in the market was the HR Team Ltd; however, their material didn't fully meet our requirements. As a result a bespoke training workshop was developed in conjunction with Richard Moxham (HR Team) and Rich Cowley (IS Training). The workshops covered the roles and responsibilities of SRM's, supplier life cycle and placed particular emphasis on how to manage and motivate an incumbent supplier.

The first workshop was split into five modules and delivered to 45 SRM's. It comprised one full day followed by four half day sessions and all were delivered over a six month period. After each session delegates had a number of tasks to complete before the next session. Subsequent repeats of the workshop have been run over three days as the role of SRM is now well understood and defined.

All of our staff development workshops are focused on the practical use and application of techniques, we aim to give SRM's a range of tools to help them understand, work with and manage suppliers. Everyone who completes the course receives a SM folder containing Quick Reference Guides; these are supplemented by more detailed "Toolkits" and templates available from the SM Workspace.

Effective Supplier Management requires regular communication, performance measurement against defined metrics, review processes, appropriate prioritisation and an understanding of each other's needs and objectives. To this end all SRM's are encouraged to negotiate a detailed Service Level Agreement (SLA) with their supplier/s. A SLA is defined in the SM Workspace where SRM's also have access to SLA definitions, toolkits and templates.

As resources for support are limited to one person, our emphasis has always been on encouraging SRM's to self help wherever possible. To support this strategy an e-workspace has been developed which provides access to the workshop documentation, Quick Reference Guides, Toolkits and other supporting information. In addition SRM's are encouraged to use the SM workspace as a discussion group, lessons learned and to highlight areas for development, or concern (see Appendix B).

SRM's are asked to feedback ideas and comments regarding the program and as a result a number of training workshops have been run and guides produced. These cover topics such as Negotiation Skills, Stakeholder Management and Market Research (more are planned).

We hold quarterly lunchtime forums primarily for SRM's but other staff are welcome to attend and these are used to provide updates, present real UoN case studies and discuss lessons learnt. The forums are regularly attended by over 80% of SRM's, members of the IS Senior Management Team and the University's Commercial Director. One of the most enlightening presentations to date was given by the account manager of one of our long standing suppliers on "what constitutes a preferred customer".

In 2009 the SM program was integrated with IS's annual performance review process. As a result all IS staff and particularly SRM's can now agree priorities and objectives for the SM work with their line manager and more importantly receive recognition for the contribution which their work with suppliers is making to the University. (Appendix A - Template of 2010 objectives enclosed)

Improved Relationships with and Value from our Suppliers – The drive of the SM program has been to focus suppliers on communication, performance against agreed metrics

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

and overall Value for Money (VFM). Many people, both from suppliers and the University, confuse value for money with “cheap” and in the early stages of the program we did considerable work on this. As a result IS has its own definition of VFM within the processes & policies section of the e-Workspace.

For a supplier relationship to be successful there is a need for mutual benefit and an understanding of the other parties' requirements. To facilitate this, open and honest communication at appropriate intervals is essential. The mantra of these meetings from an operational perspective is to ensure that all parties understand what is being done, by whom, to what standard, within what timeframe, and at what cost.

Our preferred method of managing the relationship is to develop a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which has a number of key components:

- An overview of the service being provided.
- A detailed description of each element of the service in terms of inputs and outputs which focus on the needs of the end user
- A method of defining and measuring the performance of BOTH parties
- A process for resolving and escalating both problems and poor performance
- A list of contacts
- Hours of business / type of cover

Some suppliers are initially reluctant to enter into such a detailed SLA, however, once the benefits and process have been explained most embrace the process as they appreciate the mutual benefit. Some have gone on to use the template we developed as their standard as they feel it gives them an edge on their competitors. That said, creating a good quality SLA is time consuming and hence, it is very tempting to skip over the detail, however, time taken early in the relationship will help avoid confusion, conflict and false assumptions and it ultimately pays dividends in saved time later.

Once the basics are in place the operational elements largely become routine and review meetings can turn to developing the business, sharing strategic objectives and exploring areas of mutual benefit. This is the stage when both parties really begin to derive maximum value and benefit from the relationship. See Appendix C which contains some Supplier References

Wider Relevance

The SM program was developed within IS in order to resolve the specific issues and concerns already outlined. However, these issues are by no means unique to IS, and even whilst still in its infancy, the program has been highlighted during a recent external audit of University procurement practices. As a result a recommendation for roll out across the University is anticipated. In addition the program could easily be adapted to meet the requirements of any organisation, HE, government or commercial which purchases goods and services on an ongoing basis.

It has become apparent that the techniques we are promoting within the SM program are of equal relevance to suppliers as they are to customers. Many of our SRM's are responsible for providing and running services which support University schools and departments and have successfully employed their SM skills in the context of supplier.

Within the University we have a number of strategies which this work helps to underpin. The most obvious being our Savings and Efficiency Initiative launched by the University Management Board last year it aims to reduce cost and improve efficiency. Similarly the IS strategy to outsource services whenever practical has close links to the SM initiative and is in fact underpinned by the need for effective supplier relations and management.

The next stage is to create a SM database (currently under final test) which will integrate with the workspace. The database will hold centrally, details of support agreements, contracts,

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

SLA's. In addition it will be a repository for other documents relating to: meetings, system documentation, supplier performance, risk, VFM, out of hours support and conformance to policies / processes such as the Technology Plan, Business Continuity Policy, and Incident and Change Management procedures. Once fully operational (autumn 2010) the database will underpin the work of our Supplier Management Program, Incident Management and Out-of-Hours Support staff as well as providing us with management information which will help to develop the next phase of the SM program.

In the spring of 2010 IS introduced a "Future Leaders Talent Management Training Program". As would have been imagined, interest for the program was high and it was significantly oversubscribed. It is noteworthy that 50% of the candidates who were accepted onto this program are trained and practicing SRM's.

Performance Indicators & Accrued Benefits

Objectives – To improve: service levels, staff engagement and value for money. This has been achieved as shown in the examples below:-

1) **Resolved issues with "problem suppliers"** – Some examples are given in Appendix D

2) **Roles & Responsibilities** – In making SRM's responsible for their supplier(s) we have created clear lines of responsibility and accountability. This has removed a level of confusion, given a platform for staff to have a pride in the services they provide to the University and supplied metrics which allow them to prove how they are performing. Measurement of individual staff performance is subject to confidentiality as part of the annual performance review. However, it is notable that in the past year we have not had a new "problem supplier".

3) **Supplier Management Policy** - We now have a consistent SM policy which is applied across the whole of IS. From the autumn of 2010 we will have information relating to all suppliers in one place. Both of these elements will facilitate a greater understanding of the suppliers and our joint obligations in delivering the service(s). In addition, common policies make support easier, facilitate succession planning and movement of the staff responsible for key services without causing disruption.

4) **Improve Communication** – Internally the training, forums, newsletters and ongoing support has raised awareness and commitment to the program. Given the various success's we have now reached a "critical mass" and are seeing signs that the program is becoming self-supporting (even Nottingham staff from outside IS are beginning to contact us). Externally, we have a greater understanding of our suppliers their needs and aspirations as they in turn do of us. This leads to more innovative and cost effective solutions to problems being proposed as we are better able to engage their "energy".

6) **Improve our Service to Customers** – Some examples are shown in appendix D

7) **Value for Money** – The cost of the program from January 2008 to date has been £130k. This total is mainly comprised of the employment cost of the Strategic Partnerships Manger and the fees of our consultant / trainer (the HR team). Savings are more difficult to calculate as many factors come into play, however, we conservatively estimate that the financial return alone of the program to date has been £500k. See Appendix D for some examples of how these savings have been achieved.

8) **Staff Involvement** - Although the majority of the focus has been with the 55 SRM's, their managers and suppliers the program has affected most of IS's 600 staff. It could not have taken place without the support and active involvement of our Senior Management team, Leadership Team and members of each Operational Team. The comments of some of those who have been involved in or affected by the program are attached in Appendix E

Supporting Statement – From Alison Clarke, Director of IT Systems

The Supplier Management Programme originated from a strategically directed project as part of IS portfolio of projects to develop a strategic vendor management programme.

The original project found that many aspects of an organisation are critically dependent on a range of suppliers, and there could potentially be expensive disruption to the business in the event of deterioration in a supplier's performance. The aim of developing the programme has been to enable IS to identify strategically important vendors and more actively manage relationships with these vendors. The programme has enabled IS to manage relationships and improve communications with vendors as well as influence and manage expectations across vendors. One of the significant benefits has been that IS can control critical vendor relationships which has led to improved vendor performance.

The programme has added significant value to the members of staff that have taken on the role as SRM and they are seeing the advantages both personally and through the management of their suppliers with the extensive training programme and self-support structure. One of the main challenges the programme has faced is that of culture change, as staff are not used to challenging suppliers on service requirements, SLAs, or providing KPI information based upon a contract. The training programme challenged the SRM's and many have asked since "why didn't we challenge before?". Another significant culture change has been the principle of adding value as previously staff were concentrating on the cost of a service rather than what it was delivering. The SRM's now understand what value really means, this can be either getting more for less or getting much more for the same.

It was recognised at the start of the programme that the main savings would not be in years 1 or 2, as year 1 has been predominately the start-up phase and the emphasis would be on ensuring that members of staff on the SRM Programme were trained. This resulted in staff having the basic (and some advanced) skills to manage suppliers with the level of confidence needed to ensure best results for themselves, the University and the supplier. Now that the start-up phase has been completed, we are seeing savings grow, especially as contracts are reviewed and renewed or the service requirements change in-line with the University's requirements.

One of the next challenges for IS will be to identify where we can add most value, and to work harder with our top strategic suppliers to gain significant value and advantage.

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

Appendix A – Individual Goals for SRM's 2010

Lead and proactively manage IS's ongoing relationship with [Insert Supplier(s) Name(s)] in line with Supplier Management best practice. Liaise closely with all stakeholders (internal and external) to develop and implement an approach which is in line with IS Strategy and will improve Value for Money / efficiency.

Measurement:

1. Demonstrate how you have worked with the supplier in order to add value to the University
2. Regular review meetings, have a documented agreement (SLA) in place which reflects current operations & requirements, update the Supplier Management database.
3. Contribute to the Supplier Management Online forum, share experiences (both positive & negative) in order to help us develop a knowledge base which is of benefit to all SRM's.

Appendix B –Supplier Management e-Workspace

Access to the Supplier Management e-Workspace is restricted to University staff.

The Workspace contains detailed information on each of the following areas, it is intended to be a "one stop shop" which contains all of the tools and information SRM's require in order to perform their role.

- Introduction to Supplier Management. This section describes the key principles of effective Supplier Management and the role of SRM.
- Details of our Suppliers and their SRM
- Quick Reference Guides designed to underpin training and be used in meetings. These cover a range of topics such as: Supplier Review Meetings, Procurement Process, Tendering and Negotiation.
- SLA's – This section provides: definitions of SLA, KPI & SLT and go's onto describe their use. Information on how asking for a draft SLA can assist with the selection of new suppliers. A Toolkit to assist both staff and suppliers when writing a SLA and a blank template of our preferred SLA.
- Details of Processes and Policies which are relevant to Supplier Management.
- Supplier and Market Research – This section describes the principles of Supplier & Market Research. It then provides a Toolkit suggesting how these principles can be used to best advantage when managing an existing supplier agreement or tendering for a new agreement.
- Training Material - Course notes and PowerPoint slides from each of the Training Workshops we have run.
- Minutes of meetings and the quarterly lunchtime SM forums
- An on line Discussion Group for SRM's

Appendix C – References from Suppliers

Contracts Director, Supplier one – “As you may be aware I have been undertaking tendering, contracts and the like for some 10 years now and I just thought it worth dropping you a note about the extensive contract negotiation and SLA development that we recently undertook with the UoN. I felt that throughout the process you gave a strong, clear lead both from formal presentation and clarifications across the table. This is something that often doesn't get delivered very well and it is vital for potential bidders to gain a thorough understanding of what's required. Where points of clarification did arise you conveyed meaning and contexts extremely well and I left meetings feeling much more knowledgeable and even motivated by the delivery and content. I feel we have built up a strong relationship over this time and one which would deliver future benefits to us both.”

Senior Account Manager, Supplier two – “As part of our objective to be a valued, trusted strategic partner to the University, we have welcomed the opportunity to work with the University proactively to reduce cost, increase efficiency and ensure that the green aspirations of the University are taken in account in all decisions. We have assisted the University in improving Value for Money through a number of projects, these being; SAN consolidation, VMware and System Backups.

Overall our joint partnership approach has enabled the University to take control and manage more of the infrastructure internally, again reducing costs. By engaging with the University in a more structured, formal arrangement we have become closer to the University and in so doing have been able to better understand our customers drivers and expand our business.”

CEO, Supplier three – “In 2008/2009, my company was responsible for the delivery and integration of a large High Performance Computing system for research computing at Nottingham University. Unfortunately, the system (which is composed of components from a number of manufacturers) exhibited intermittent instabilities which rendered the system unusable.

Following significant investigations lasting several months, the problems were tracked down to faulty components in all of the third-party servers used, as well as separate issues with regard to the backbone network. Given the size and importance of this system, it was imperative that both the University and Company worked together to resolve these issues in a collaborative manner, as well as present a unified front to our suppliers in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome. To this end, Andrew Holdgate represented the University in discussions with the Company and negotiations with suppliers. In my view, his involvement was key to the satisfactory resolution of the significant challenges we faced, and proved very important to the Company when a less collaborative approach would have seriously damaged our business, especially during one of the worst recessions in living history. While Andrew was single-minded in his aim to ensure that the problem was resolved to the University's satisfaction and without any technical or financial compromises, he also acted in a fair and proper manner, working with the Company rather than against it, and ensuring that problem resolution was managed at all stages by all parties. Following the successful acceptance of the system in early 2009, the Company and the University continue to work together as part of a fruitful collaboration. This outcome would not have been possible without Andrew's commitment, professionalism and integrity.”

Director, Supplier four

“Our aim has always been to offer best value for money by providing the highest quality of service at a competitive cost. We have been able to achieve this aim through this contract thanks to the close working relationship that we have formed with the IS department. It was defined in the initial tender that the successful contractor would be required to have a permanent on site presence based in the telephone exchange on main campus. We have been provided with office space, a pc and access to the University's network to enable us to carry out our contract with maximum efficiency.

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

Two of our key engineers have been provided with University email addresses and University internal phone extensions to enable IS customers to contact us as easily as possible. I believe that this process has made IS customers feel that we are part of IS rather than just a contractor working for the University.

Thanks to being based in the telephone exchange we are always in contact with key IS staff. We are always aware of project development and are able to deal with situations as they arise. Emails and telephone calls are a very good communication tool but when anything urgent arises there is no substitute for being able to walk in to next room and speak to the person who will deal with that problem directly.

The partnership we have formed with IS has been a great help in our ability to maintain what is a very strict SLA. We are given freedom to manage our own work as we feel is best as long as we meet the imposed deadlines.

Over the years we feel as though we have become a part of the University IS department. Many of our engineers have formed not only good working relationships but also friendships with several IS staff which only makes for a better working environment.

Through the development of partnerships the University has become our biggest client and we hope to be able to continue to offer the same high levels of service for many years to come."

Appendix D – Examples of where the Supplier Management Program has benefitted IS, our Staff, and our Customers.

Please Note - All examples are real case studies which IS's SRM's have dealt with over the past eighteen months. Due to the commercial sensitivity and confidential nature of much of this work most of the examples have had to be sanitised. Suppliers identified as "(Problem Supplier)" were within the group identified during the initial evaluation project and issues have now been resolved.

Corporate Software System 1 (Problem Supplier)

Existing Agreement - One off fee of £77k + annual support maintenance of £55k (no consultancy).

Negotiated Agreement (Internal) – As three departments use this system and were requesting mutually exclusive functionality from the supplier it was agreed that a panel be set up to manage the system and relationships internally. The IS SRM now acts as lead with the supplier.

Re-negotiated Agreement (External) - One off fee of £77k, Annual maintenance, to include 12 days consultancy £62.1k.. Includes option for extra days technical consultancy at discounted rate (must buy 5 day chunks). Price increases linked to RPI for 5 years and agreed detailed SLA with right to terminate for poor performance.

Hardware Upgrade Installation & support

Initial proposal - Seven machines in standard cabinets and 1 years standard warranty support (no servicing) £95k. In addition there was an outstanding issue with an unpaid maintenance agreement (cost not known) for 6 machines.

Negotiated agreement – Seven machines in bespoke cabinets, 3 years support and maintenance to include servicing before start of session included in project cost plus the outstanding maintenance issue written off for a total cost £105k.

End User Benefit – Increased availability of machines, shorter transaction times and shorter queues, particularly at start of session

Corporate Software System 2 – Project team renegotiate structure & content of tender prior to procurement. Carried out detailed renegotiation of supplier's standard SLA which now includes our right to terminate for poor performance.

End User Benefit – More robust service, faster response to problems.

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

Consultancy Agreement 1 (Problem Supplier) - Initial proposal for project £76k reduced to £66k (for same work). Agreement that the lower day rate we agreed will form the basis of all future agreements.

Voice & Data Cabling (Installation & Moves) – Negotiated competitive fixed rates for all routine work eliminating the time consuming and costly need to quote for each job. Committed to fixed response times as part of a detailed SLA which includes quality standards. As a result IS were able to reduce the lead time for routine installation and moves of points from an average of 9 weeks to under 10 days without increasing costs. By developing a close working relationship the suppliers staff now work as an integral part of the IS Network Team giving them greater flexibility.

Corporate Software System 3 – Gain agreement to a three year maintenance contract (as opposed to the suppliers standard 5). This gave the UoN time to decide its strategic approach to this area. Gained agreement for the UoN to be able to import / export data to /from the system.

Corporate System (Hardware & Software) (Problem Supplier) – Stabilise the relationship between IS, our internal customer and between the UoN and supplier. Agree a three year deal which includes upgrading the management software (old version obsolete) and extends the maintenance cover on all of the hardware and software such that it co-terminates in 2011 (half of the units were due to be end of life summer 2010). In addition we unravelled the two other arrangements associated with this procurement such that both parties now fully understand their obligations and everything co terminates in 2011. As a result the University managed its current issues, gave the incumbent supplier an opportunity to prove themselves and is now in a position to re-tender the entire agreement from a position of strength in 2011.

Installation of High Performance Computing System (Problem Supplier) – Identify the issues surrounding the project which, at the time was 3 months late, work with the supplier, academic and IS staff to identify an appropriate technical solution for the performance problems. Negotiate and agree acceptable performance criteria, test schedule and independent arbiter. Identify the need for enhanced support to ensure the future stability of the system, negotiate a SLA which included additional support with the supplier. Re-negotiate the payments of the exiting order and agree how the costs of the performance enhancements are to be met.

This project went on to deliver a working system, became a model for future procurements of this type and the enhanced support arrangement has subsequently improved the systems up time by over 15%. See also Supplier comments in appendix C

Retender IT Support Services – The retendering project reduced the cost of the support contract by £130k over the 3 year life of the contract. Three bids were received and the contract was awarded to the incumbent supplier who also agreed to the immediate adoption of the new pricing structure. In addition the new contract included the transfer of a significant amount of routine work from IS to the supplier thereby freeing up IS staff time for other “value add” work. The contract is underpinned by a detailed SLA which includes escalation, service credits and right of termination in the event of poor service.

Consultancy agreement 2 - Renegotiate the consultancy rate, from £nnn / day to £nnn for the same on site consultant. Minimum saving £30k in first year estimated total saving £60k.

Outsourcing of a Service - Initial costs for providing the service in house were £45k + £1.5k per annum hardware support + £18k hardware replacement every three years. In addition IS staff would be carrying out all support of the system. The service was eventually outsourced with a saving of £35k in the first year and £4k per year thereafter this includes costs of all hardware, and software support.

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

Corporate Software System – Renegotiated the terms of the agreement and SLA such that they were more favourable to the UoN and secured a reduction of the set up costs of 5% and a reduction of the annual support agreement by 7%.

Problem Supplier – After all attempts to resolve the situation in a mutually acceptable way failed we negotiated an early end to the support agreement and reduced the cancellation fee by £36k (79%). Due to the way this negotiation was handled this supplier is currently being considered for other work.

Appendix E – Comments from Supplier Relationship Managers

Included in this section are references from IS staff and a précis of answers to questions which we ask of those attending our Training Workshop's and Quarterly Forums.

1. What have you found most valuable about this training course?
 - Opportunity to explore variety of ways to add value.
 - Being able to think objectively about the current relationship.
 - Understanding of the expectations of a SRM & understanding of the life cycles involved.
 - New perspectives.
 - Framework to work with.
 - Practical examples.
 - Expanding my knowledge of SRM. Lots to apply in real life.
 - Breadth of coverage – opportunity to discuss with colleagues.
 - Good paperwork that can be used for reference.
 - Discussion on SLA's.
 - Excellent quality trainer, especially as not section specific.
 - Opportunity to reflect on supplier relationship.
 - Space to think about the whole process not specific detail.
 - I will apply these principles to internal management of users.
 - Enjoyed the course, very useful.

2. What have you found most useful about the quarterly forums?
 - Networking with others in similar roles especially those with more experience.
 - Opportunity to step-back, reflect and engage theory with practice.
 - New ideas for dealing with suppliers.
 - Checklists & Templates which help me prepare for meetings.
 - Group discussions, sparking ideas.
 - Structured approach to developing SM.
 - Experience's of other SRMs.
 - Made me rethink my existing approach and introduce new items and techniques.
 - Action planning
 - SLA, KPI & exit/renewal

3. How has this helped you in your work?
 - I will be able to address issues with my supplier more effectively.
 - Framework for doing various tasks

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

- Framework and reference points to work against.
- It has saved me a considerable amount of time
- Improve role of vendor management.
- Good background and application of principles.
- Enable me to be more effective with suppliers.
- Hopefully produce a more effective relationship with my suppliers.
- Being stricter with suppliers! Pin them down to specifics more and chase.
- Far more in depth knowledge of SRM that will help in several aspects of the job not just SRM.
- Negotiate better.
- It's made me suspect there is complacency (both sides) in current relationship.
- Has highlighted the value of having a relationship with a supplier.
- Help understand the approach of suppliers
- More direct approach to relationship management.
- Enable me to better manage Account meetings.
- Provide a structured framework to refer to for guidance.
- More confidence in dealing with suppliers.

Comment from a Senior SRM

I was already confident in managing suppliers, but the course, forums and supportive collaborative workspace has enabled me to reflect on what I already did and I have been able to make significant improvements to the processes I was following.

The training has been fantastic, the course trainer has been very professional and it has been great to share ideas and experiences with like minded colleagues.

I manage some of the University's main suppliers such as Microsoft and HP, this programme has enabled me to ensure we are gaining best value from our relationships on a global basis, with one service I have responsibility for being used in our UK Campus's and two international campuses. Without this programme we would not have been able to negotiate a contract which gives us the value for money we have achieved.

The user community has benefited significantly, just with one contract we have saved over 2 days work for all of our customers (50,000 globally) over a year, which is 2 days extra value they are adding to the organisation.

Comment from a Budget Holder not directly connected with the SM Initiative.

The scheme has certainly helped to promote staff development by not only giving staff time to reflect upon the need for Supplier Relationship Management and the benefits which it can bring to an organization, but also giving them practical skills which can be used in other contexts e.g. Negotiation skills.

The importance of this scheme has come into sharp focus for me in my role, as I can see that many of the issues which we have with suppliers (poor delivery, no contract, and unreasonable expectations on both sides) come from the fact that we did not do the ground work in the first place. Where this has been done, you can see the positive benefits coming out.

For me, like many staff, the SRM scheme has really extended and challenged my skills. This is an area which has always been "done by others" or which "someone else is doing"! It has made me think more carefully about what we actually want out of the "relationship" and what is important to us.

The benefits to the user community are legion! If we can manage the relationship or help to guide others, we reduce the risks and liabilities on behalf of our organization. In many instances, we can show "added value" that would otherwise not have been gained e.g. on site engineer, free removal of kit.

Comment from a Budget Holder who is also a SRM.

University of Nottingham - UCISA Staff Development Award 2010

I think the Supplier Management program has enabled us to improve our skills in a range of areas such as understanding both our own and the suppliers' needs, negotiating, understanding SLAs and contracts, and how to get the best overall value for money. It has allowed us to learn skills that you might not traditionally have expected IT and library staff to have but which are certainly attractive if you want to progress to more senior positions in HE.

It has been particularly valuable to learn this in house so that we can improve and embed good practice across IS and has also helped colleagues to network across teams. The supplier management work also links to initiatives on savings and efficiency, risk assessment and business continuity. The skills we have learnt can be applied to work with internal customers and stakeholders as well as external suppliers.

The importance of my relationship with key suppliers is obvious but I now feel more able to actively manage the relationship, ensuring that they understand the University's needs, looking for ways to add value and get the best deal but also ensuring that I'm a responsible customer, someone they want to do business with and will hopefully go the extra mile for.

The University benefits by having a group of IS staff able to get the best value for money, including maintenance cover so that we can recover equipment/services as fast as possible when required. It may also help us to influence future products, beta testing etc so that the University's needs are met in the future.