

Kinetic Solutions



Accommodation now needs to enhance the student and customer experiences



Robert Turner, managing director

Kinetic Solutions formed in 1998, aiming to deliver the best student and customer experiences within the higher education industry with innovative software solutions. 20 years and 300 customers later, their focus remains the same, with a customer base stretching across the UK, North America, Australasia, Europe and Malaysia.

Managing director Rob Turner describes the impact and opportunities from three key developments within the higher education industry, namely the increasing focus on the entire student experience, the demand for strategic revenue generation tactics for commercial operations within higher education institutions (HEIs) and the continued influence of private property providers.

Kinetic Solutions produces Kx software and have two core products; KxConferencing, enabling event and venue teams to manage events from initial enquiry to final invoice, and KxStudent, allowing student accommodation teams to manage all aspects of the student experience from application through to graduation in one integrated system. Complementing their core systems is a suite of additional products allowing customers to manage business processes including parcel management, online delegate registration and guarantor functionality for overseas students.

With global headquarters in Milton Keynes, Kinetic Solutions enjoys an enviable market share within the UK higher education sector, with 21 of 24 Russell Group Universities and 72 per cent of the UK's Top 100 Universities using Kx software solutions. There is also a growing base in North America where the Boston-based team continue to support and grow their customer portfolio. The US team recently secured an exclusive vendor agreement to supply Sodexo Campus Conferencing

FACTS ABOUT KINETIC SOLUTIONS

- » Headed by Rob Turner, managing director
- » Established in 1998
- » Global headquarters based in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and office in Boston, MA, USA
- » Services include market-leading student accommodation and event management software for higher education institutions
- » 65 employees
- » Clients: 300 customers, the majority being within the UK and North America
- » c180 million bed nights managed in 2017
- » www.kineticsolutions.co.uk

“Our US team recently secured an exclusive vendor agreement to supply Sodexo Campus Conferencing with our KxConferencing suite”

with our KxConferencing suite, providing a single software system for implementation across multiple conferencing campuses.

In 2014, Kinetic Solutions was acquired by the Volaris Group, part of Constellation Software, who specialise in strengthening and growing technology companies. This has afforded us fantastic opportunities for investing in the building and development of our teams and products, as well as for working closely with other members of the Volaris Group – all industry market leaders. The sharing of best practice between different teams equips Kinetic Solutions with the necessary insight to continue delivering better service and products.

The continued influence of private property providers

Despite increasing debt levels, it is evident that students still recognise the value in a university education. Moreover, with 1.04 million students studying away from home, the demand for accommodation within the UK higher education sector continues to grow. Indeed, Cushman and Wakefield report that 602,000 purpose-built bed spaces were available to students for the 2017-2018 academic year. Bringing a more consumer-driven approach to the student accommodation selection process, private property providers

(PPPs) have driven radical change in the way that our Kx software has needed to interact with not only the management of the bed space and the student billing, but also the full sales and marketing cycle of these providers' services.

By introducing custom-made application websites that incorporate a more hotel-like booking process, we have been able to provide reassurance to students and parents about the options and facilities on campus. These responsive sites, coupled with integrated guarantor functionality, enable the KxStudent software to create an engagement level with students at the beginning of their university experience – something that the HEIs and PPPs can continue to build upon during the student's time with them.

PPPs continue to strive for excellence across the wider aspects of the student experience, one of the most notable being technology and the accessibility of a fast and reliable internet service. With most students now arriving at university with an average of five wireless devices, today's 18-24-year-olds have a lifestyle built upon internet use and an expectation that information is always at hand. The systems we produce at Kinetic Solutions must meet these demands, whether in the design of responsive websites or the need for students to make online requests and digitally interact with accommodation teams.

Students need their technology quite literally at hand



The increasing focus on the entire student experience

Cushman and Wakefield note that the marketisation of the student accommodation sector has led to a greater level of university competition. Two key areas of focus are the importance of future employability and the quality of the student experience. Student experience historically encapsulated three key areas: teaching

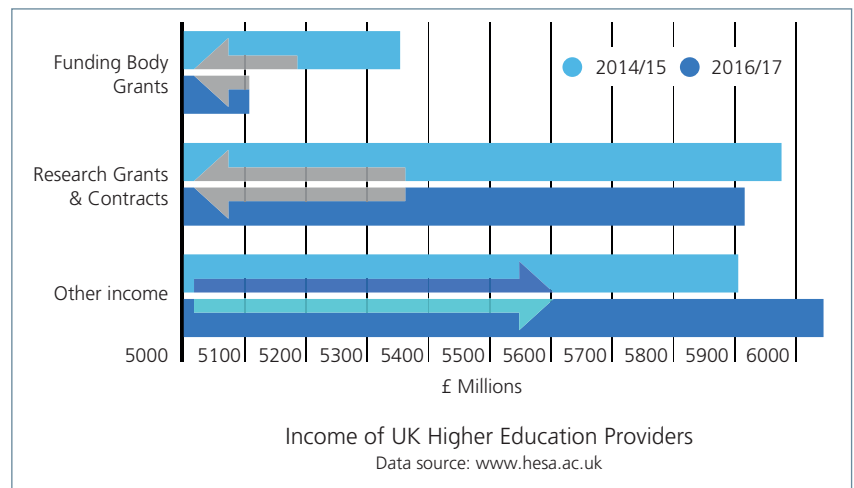
quality, accommodation quality and the price of beer! These narrow areas of focus are now dwarfed by the expectations of today's consumer-focused students who look for the maximum experiential return for the top-level tuition and accommodation fees now faced.

HEIs, whilst driven by the quality of their teaching and their students' future employability, must ensure multiple needs are met, including the diversity of learning surroundings, environmental consciousness, social integration and a focus on mental health awareness. Consequently, the Kinetic Solutions team continues to work closely with customers via initiatives such as the Ideas Forum – an online portal allowing customer teams to suggest and vote on future functionality – ensuring that we address the issues where they have the greatest needs.

As the full impact of the Higher Education Bill is still being digested, it is expected that the higher education marketplace will start to see new providers emerging that offer accelerated two-year degrees – an even shorter window for institutions to deliver the “best” student experience in. With much of that experience governed by the ease of technological solutions, we look forward to engaging with these new challenges to keep our customers ahead of the expectations of tomorrow's students.

The demand for revenue generation strategies

Research by the Association of University Directors of Estates reveals that UK universities continue to face funding challenges and are looking to their commercial outlets to generate additional revenue streams. One commercial avenue representing the greatest opportunities for HEIs includes segmented and targeted transient accommodation sales and international feeder-market business.



UK HEI revenue generation strategies aligned with the commercial opportunities that their facilities provide is critical in ensuring that selling opportunity windows are maximised.

An underpinning element of the revenue generation strategies now being implemented by our HEI customers is the confident, commercial attitude that they take to their markets. No longer are universities offering “budget” accommodation; instead some offer market-leading rooms in enviable central locations that they sell smartly, utilising online travel agents and flexible selling rate structures driving the highest yield. This is only made accessible using software that enables scaled selling through multiple channels without additional staffing requirements.

As the UK higher education sector continues to respond robustly to the challenges it faces – be that uncertainty surrounding Brexit, funding challenges or the increased focus on the value of the student experience – the team at Kinetic Solutions share the optimism and determination of our customers. There is undoubtedly significant ambition within our HEI customer teams, and Kinetic Solutions anticipate continuing to build on our original aim from 1998 – to deliver software solutions that provide the best customer and student experiences.

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