

Costello Technology College: Enhancing Parental Engagement Through The Use Of ICT

Summary

Costello Technology College is a Specialist Technology College located in Basingstoke, Hampshire.

The College has around 1000 students in the age range 11 to 16. Costello has been looking for a way to use ICT in a more dynamic way to both engage parents in school based activities and to reduce the administrative work load. EventElephant has allowed the college to do just that.

The Challenge

Costello Technology College set up a parent focus group to examine how the College's new parent portal can be developed to meet the needs of their parents. Alongside this they are also running curriculum insight evenings: free information evenings designed to support parents of Y10 students in developing a better understanding of the various courses their children study.

The College was seeking new ways of communicating with parents both to facilitate an initial meeting of the focus group and to demonstrate how technology can help to improve systems and enhance parental engagement and communication. This, alongside the need to make systems more transparent and reduce administration overheads, was the key driver to using EventElephant.

The Activity

Members of staff at Costello were keen to enhance parental engagement on a number of different levels as well as reducing administrative burden in events planned for the pilot activity took place within two weeks of the pilot start date.

Two online events were initially set up and within 20 minutes professional web pages were made live including details of the events containing promotional graphical imagery. The first event was marketed directly to specific parents and the other was promoted through an open invitation to all parents. The invitation was sent via text message and contained a direct link to the event web site.

Only one member of staff at the College had to be involved and first line support was given by EventElephant through email. A minimum of input was required, reflecting the ease of use of the product.



The Outcomes

The College was delighted with the outcomes of the pilot. It didn't take much practice to be able to get each online event up and running within 10 minutes. Parents received information and details about events very quickly and registered on courses quicker than normal. Feedback from parents showed that they found the detail of the events very useful to make a more informed opinion as to whether they should attend. The College benefited from the ability to include a much higher level of detail about the event than they would by sending a letter home. Registration numbers and details were highly transparent to the school, and also provided opportunities for the College to undertake data mining.

The Impact

Dominic Tester, Assistant Head teacher at Costello commented: "EventElephant is a really exciting product. It streamlined the whole administrative process and management of some of the essential aspects of the event." Dominic went on to say "Feedback from our parents was excellent. They felt the product has huge potential and are keen to use its on-line payment functionality."

The product can easily be transferred to other contexts within Costello, who are now considering its use for many different events; including registration for family learning days and other information based events. The College is also considering using EventElephant for paid events including Adult Education Courses and school productions and is working with the service support team at EventElephant to ensure that all local authority financial protocols are met.

And what would the school do differently next time?

EventElephant enables users to include rich media such as video, if they want to go down that route, and Costello intend to use rich media to enhance future developments.

Top Tips

Costello offers the following recommendations for others attempting a similar activity:

- Have clear aims for all of your events and communicate them clearly
- Second guess questions you might get asked about the event and make sure you include these within your event website
- Promote your event! Push emails out where you can and ensure your audience knows where to book online!



About Costello Technology College

Costello Technology College, founded in 1908, is a Specialist Technology College located in Basingstoke, Hampshire.

The College has around 1000 students in the age range of 11 to 16 and aims to provide an outstanding educational experience for all. Ongoing work with the community includes; links with Primary Schools to deliver specialist lessons, running 'gifted & talented' classes, and organising staff training on managing the transition from Primary to Secondary. Costello also organises Virtual Lessons and there is community use of the school facilities on a daily basis.

There is already a strong sense of partnership between parents, carers, students and the College. Parents are involved in supporting their child at Academic Mentoring Days and parent and information evenings. Weekly information for parents is on the College's website and there is a regular newsletter. The EventElephant pilot activity was designed to test and trial how EventElephant could be used to enhance this partnership even further.

