



Birmingham City University Case Study

We spoke to Helen Matthews, Assistant University Secretary, about how Convene has helped Birmingham City University with their move towards sustainability.

What prompted you to seek out a board solution? Does the university have a sustainable development programme?

We were not really influenced by any green instantiates by the university but we had been toying with the idea for a long time. Our move towards a sustainable and effective board solution was in part driven by five of our younger and considerably more tech savvy board members who viewed paper copies as a thing of the past. We had been using SharePoint, however this did not prove to be a workable solution for us. In conjunction with our IT dept, we undertook a board effectiveness survey which further strengthened the case for moving towards a paperless solution. We then invited three providers in for demonstrations; Convene, MinutePad and BoardPacks. Convene had sparked our interest when we saw it exhibited at the AUA conference, so it was already a strong contender. From the demonstration alone, we found Convene to be very user friendly and designed by someone who fully understands committees.

What was the meeting process like before Convene?

Our mailing and photocopying costs were high. For example our November board pack was between 700 and 800 pages and they had to be photocopied 26 times in colour. There was the added disadvantage of having to copy any late papers which ate into valued time. With Convene the process is so much quicker. We only implemented Convene in November 2018, but we are incredibly enthusiastic about its functionality, and we often find ourselves discovering new features over and above the ones we already know. We can't imagine going back to copying again!

Birmingham City University, with a student body of 24,000 from 80 different countries, is a large and diverse institution that prides itself on promoting academic excellence through its philosophy of placing students' needs and aspirations at the heart of everything it does.



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Who uses Convene?

Convene is used by the board and five to six sub committees, its subsidiary companies and the internal executive group. We are very keen to use Convene to its full potential, so we are considering a future roll out across the academic board. The Chair doesn't use Convene as yet, so we do find Convene's print option useful when we need to produce a paper pack.

What about security?

Convene allows us to easily decide who has access to particular papers. We had a recent board offsite that included a presentation containing sensitive material. We were able to put this on Convene securely, and to allow access to only those who required it.

What is the feedback from admin staff?

Extremely positive! Comments such as "I can't imagine how we worked without convene," "If you follow instructions properly, you'd have a hard job to go wrong with Convene". "Convene is very simple and easy to use from a user point of view" are just a few examples, and always wonderful to hear!

Any features of Convene you particularly like?

We particularly like the Review Room. Before Convene, our draft minutes were circulated on email, but now we simply place them in the Review Room. The minutes and associated comments are now instantly available on one document. The Document Library is also a vital feature since it allows us to put all our governance documents into one space; making it easy for people to access exactly what they need. The Resolution function is another key attribute. We use the written resolution to show that people had voted themselves prior to a meeting; even if they could not be present at the time. We have received glowing user feedback surrounding Convene's range of functionalities in this area, including the ability to build agendas, to see who has read the papers and when, and for late papers to be added.

Features

Award winning security

- Multi-factor authentication
- Document encryption on server and on device
- Real time decryption
- Remote data wipe on lost devices

Manage all stages of your meeting

Plan your meetings

- Attach documents to agenda items
- Control access & permission to files
- Digitally amend and distribute board packs

Engage your participants

- Start remote meetings
- Have real-time interactive presentations
- Lock participants' screens to the presentation
- Vote on items and approve documents

Follow-up easily

- Send a meeting summary immediately
- Track actions after the meeting
- Review previous meetings and documents

Quarterly upgrades

- Convene is updated every quarter. An upgrade is done when it is convenient for the client.

What was the training like?

Leonore Perrotte, our account manager, delivered a full day's training for our department, with a separate briefing session for our IT Project Management team. We followed on with a dry run of two meetings. Leonore emailed clear and concise follow up information for all governors. The effectiveness of the training meant that everyone here was left fully up to speed from the outset. Additionally, we haven't had a need to request further training support because Convene is so intuitive and easy to follow.

When we met another university contact at a recent Association of Higher Education event, we shared our contagious Convene enthusiasm, and arranged to meet with them and share information about the solution and all it has to offer.

Any advice to other universities thinking about going paperless?

Change of this nature can be daunting, and many of us stick with what we know even if there is a more effective way. Because our board was on side, the Convene process was relatively smooth. As a team, we worked together to achieve the transition, with IT looking after the procurement side.

We have really liked working with Convene!

Book your 30-day free trial at azeusconvene.com/trial

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