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Superconnected Cities

Recruiter’s growth boost as Leeds HQ gets £3,000 superfast connection

Growing executive search firm Hitchenor Wakeford has obtained a £3,000 upgrade to its web connection, boosting the company’s data capacity by 500 per cent.

The £5m turnover senior executive recruitment firm has offices in London and Manchester as well as its head office in Leeds and employs a total of 18 staff across the UK.

The business was awarded the £3,000 grant, which covered the cost of the new broadband connection at its office in King Street, Leeds, under the Superfast Leeds Bradford programme.

The faster connection to the firm’s Leeds servers, now 20mbps compared to just 4mbps before the upgrade was made, has already demonstrated savings equivalent to tens of thousands of pounds in increased productivity.
“The upgrade was a no-brainer when we heard about the availability of the connection vouchers for Leeds and Bradford. It has proved to be enormously beneficial that we can all do considerably more work in every single hour we are online,” said Hitchenor Wakeford chairman Paul Spetch, who managed the IT upgrade for the firm.

“We have team members working remotely and from homes all over the UK who all need to connect to the Leeds server, and although we maybe didn’t realise it before, we were making do with a really slow connection,” he said.

“We spend a large proportion of our time researching online, and accessing confidential documents held centrally in Leeds, and we already seeing massive time savings as a result of the lightning quick upload and download times, and that adds up to huge salary savings across nearly 20 staff,” he added.

“We are looking to maintain our growth as the market is becoming more active throughout 2014, and the additional capacity we have found through the superfast connection will be very valuable in coming months, and will add additional resource to the firm without extra salary cost,” he said.

The voucher is one of over 450 awarded to firms in Leeds and Bradford so far under the scheme, which launched in February. So far over £900,000 has been paid out to cover the costs of hardware and internet connectivity installation to Leeds and Bradford-based businesses by the Government’s Superconnected Cities programme, which closes at the end of March 2015.

“It is great to see a Leeds-based business gaining immediate benefits from faster web connections. It is exactly the reason the Government wants to see more uptake of the grants that have become even easier to apply for,” said Mark Durham, project manager at Superconnected Cities. “The productivity benefits to Hitchenor Wakeford are mirrored in many similar professional services firms where executives spend a great deal of time online researching, or working on the cloud. We urge firms to take ten minutes applying for the voucher because they will not be available for much longer and the benefits they deliver to businesses can be huge,” he added.

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Photo shows (L to R): Paul Spetch, chairman, Hitchenor Wakeford and Mark Durham, project manager

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For further press information, please contact:

Sarah Hone at Appeal PR on 01423 56 99 99 or email sarah@appealpr.com

Notes for editors

1. The Superconnected Leeds Bradford programme was officially launched on Wednesday 19\textsuperscript{th} February 2014 and is being delivered by Leeds City Council’s economic development service on behalf of the two West Yorkshire cities which jointly received the largest funding allocation for the programme outside London.

2. ‘Superfast’ broadband typically refers to download speeds of above 30 megabits per second. Connection Vouchers can be used to support a variety of technical solutions, including both wired and wireless connections. As well as meeting the ongoing running costs of the broadband connection, the SME will need to pay for the VAT on the connection charge. The scheme runs in Leeds and Bradford until 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2015.

3. Companies simply have to complete an online application form and obtain a supplier quote detailing the costs of connection. Further details and the application form are available at www.SuperconnectedLeedsBradford.co.uk

4. The ‘Superconnected Cities’ programme is part of a national programme to improve broadband connectivity and is running alongside the Superfast West Yorkshire infrastructure programme, which aims to bring high speed connectivity to residents and businesses in more rural areas. For more information about superfast broadband in West Yorkshire and Government-funded projects to improve access visit: www.superfastwestyorkshire.co.uk