Partners United

CUSTOMER
Tribal Group

SECTOR
Education

COUNTRY
UK

CHALLENGE
Provide and support full-strength ERP system for the dynamic Higher Education sector, providing access via users' preferred technologies such as mobile

RESULTS
- **Commercial success:** 140 institutions and millions of individuals worldwide are using the solution.

- **Productivity enabling agility:** 60 developers support all these users while maintaining and enhancing a major system with thousands of screens.

- **Business focus:** Developers focus on business rules not technical details, so they can implement business change fast.

10 Ways Uniface Helps You Succeed

#1 PRODUCTIVITY

#2 RELIABILITY

#3 SECURITY

#4 INTEGRATION & REUSE

#5 SCALABILITY

#6 AGILITY

#7 SUSTAINABILITY

#8 TECHNOLOGY INDEPENDENCE

#9 COMMUNITY

#10 PARTNERSUNITED PROGRAM

Who We Are and What We Do

Headquartered in the UK, Tribal Group is a 1,200-strong provider of software products and services to the international education, training and learning markets. Among other activities, Tribal is the number one provider of student management systems to Higher Education, Further Education and training providers in the UK, United States, Canada New Zealand and Australia, with a growing international presence.

Our Uniface Application

SITS:Vision, written in Uniface, is one of the world's leading student and course management solutions, currently used by 60% of the UK Higher Education market and a growing number of institutions around the world, including the University of Sydney. In all, about 140 universities and colleges use the application, with well over a million individual users.

The system is sizeable, with around 3,000 entities and 10,000 screens. It was first developed in the early 1990s by a vendor that Tribal acquired in 2004. Essentially an ERP system for Higher Education, it supports the entire student management lifecycle:

- Helping universities identify which students to recruit

- Enrolling them, manage their studies and assessments, and then ease their transition into the outside world, whether to further study or employment

- Recording information about courses and outcomes at the level expected from a manufacturing system, so that, for example, the reasons for a student's degree class can be traced to the individual marks they got and the rules used to decide the class of award.

The system is of central importance to Tribal customers' businesses – and Higher Education is very much on a business footing these days, with leading universities turning over more than a billion pounds per annum. SITS:Vision is the system of record, used by virtually everyone in an institution. It's also an important tool in the institutions' drive to compete with each other, because it facilitates efficient online interactions with applicants and students – something that plays an important part in students' choice of institution. There is self-service support for everything from applications to enrolment on individual units of study, assignment submission and feedback, as well as paying fees and much more. The system also covers fees management and related accounting, which involves integration with systems outside the scope of finance for areas like library fees and sports center membership.

The product was written in Uniface from day one. Uniface has always helped us to meet the commercial imperatives of our marketplace. These days the main ones are the need to drive down costs, to keep technology current and to deploy product features on end-user devices, especially mobile.

UNIFACE
Advanced Development Technology

What is PartnersUnited?

PartnersUnited is the Uniface program for all of its partners, including Independent Software Vendors (ISVs), System Integrators (SIs) and Distributors. The goal of PartnersUnited is to bring Uniface partners together into a community to facilitate networking, collaboration and cultivation. It is designed to help partners do more and sell more by extending their reach across markets and into high-growth areas while offering members a global network to uncover opportunities and find new growth avenues. Ultimately, it is about helping Uniface's ecosystem of partners to be even more successful.

"*The Uniface team has always been responsive to our needs – we can see many features in the current release that relate to our earlier conversations with Uniface.*"

John Gledhill, Tribal's Group Director of Strategy & Innovatio

Why We Partner with Uniface

We push Uniface to its limits in terms of innovation. The majority of our end-users, in volume terms, are students, and they have expectations that outrun our capabilities. So we in turn are always asking for new features. Uniface then delivers great stuff and we deliver it to our customers. It's a symbiotic relationship.

The Uniface team has always been responsive to our needs, we have a good working relationship at all levels, and good communication – we can see many features in the current release that relate to earlier conversations with Uniface. That's the biggest single reason we stick with Uniface.

PartnersUnited and Us

We have played an active part in user events since the 1990s, for example doing presentations at international events, for example in Amsterdam and Las Vegas. And even though we are already using most of Uniface's advanced features, we find we always learn from meeting other users and partners through networking at these events – we get new perspectives about challenges and scale, for example. Talking to people from other sectors can be particularly useful –financial services companies can tell you a lot about presenting complex decisions in a simple way, for example via a comparison website.

We have also been a regular participant in partner events and Tribal welcomes the advent of PartnersUnited. Bringing partners together is a good way to help us compare experiences that are specific to us, and add focus to what we do. It also signals Uniface's commitment to its partners. And why we see huge value in face-to-face meetings between partners and Uniface, we appreciate that the world is a big place so to have the opportunity to virtually interact with partners, via PartnersUNIverse, is also of value to us. In addition, to have one place where you can access technical documentation, product roadmaps and technical support is extremely helpful and we welcome that this is what PartnersUNIverse aims to achieve.
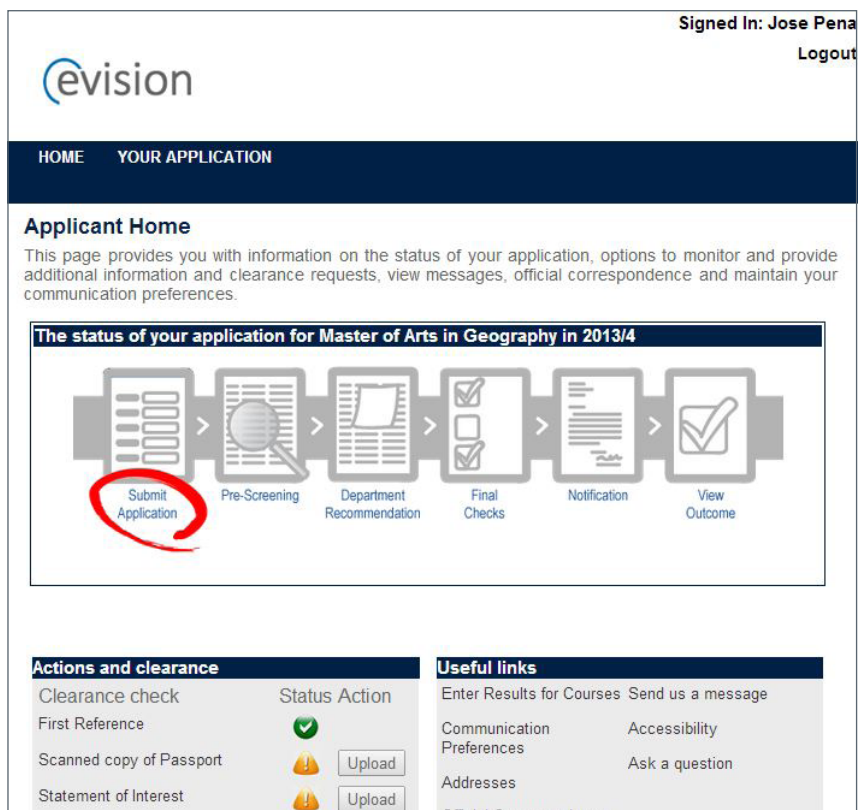
> " *SITS:Vision is the system of record, used by virtually everyone in an institution. It's also an important tool in the institutions' drive to compete with each other, because it facilitates efficient online interactions with applicants and students – something that now plays an important part in students' choice of institution."*

John Gledhill, Tribal's Group Director of Strategy & Innovation

Technical Benefits We Gain from Uniface

Productivity enabling agility. Our Uniface developers are more productive than those working in, for example, .NET. We can produce more output for a smaller input – just 60 developers do all our Uniface work including both development and supporting 140 customers and a million-plus users. Our development teams are located around the globe, including Australia and Brazil in addition to the core team in the UK.

Ease of integration. Although it provides a comprehensive solution on its own, SITS:Vision can also be integrated with other applications using a variety of techniques, including Uniface's web services functionality. For example, SITS:Vision has advanced facilities for recruitment and admissions that users of other applications often want to use – especially in the case of US universities that are starting to recruit internationally. Using Uniface we have built a configuration layer around our product that makes it easy for customers to use functionality within SITS:Vision in conjunction with third-party applications. Our customers don't have to use, or even be aware of, Uniface to do this, it is all implemented in the application.

SITS: One of the world's leading student and course management solutions

" *This isn't without its challenges, but the way Uniface and our software are written makes it easy to upgrade – and customers like the new features they get each time"*

John Gledhill, Tribal's Group Director of Strategy & Innovation

Support for customers' own functionality. Uniface's support for web services also makes it possible for customers to customize the SITS:Vision application by configuring functionality of their own – including a new workflow. They can encapsulate the functionality as a web service, and then make it available to other applications. It could even be hosted via SITS:Vision's web portal. This approach is particularly useful for frequently used activities such as an address change, which might need to be reflected in several applications, not just SITS:Vision.

Business focus. The choice of Uniface, with its support for model-based development, enables Tribal to keep up with a fast-evolving business environment. Functionality is quick to create and modify and Uniface enables developers to focus on business rules – and on the realities of admission, assessment and so on – rather than technicalities.

Platform independence. There is no need to create specific software layers or versions to cope with different deployment operating systems or databases. A related benefit is that SITS:Vision customers can implement the solution on the platform of their choice – and then, if they want, migrate to a different one – without any overhead for either themselves or Tribal. This also helps with integration of SITS:Vision with third-party products that may require a specific database or operating system.

Configurability and traceability. Uniface's rules-based design has helped Tribal to produce an application that is strongly rules-based. This has a number of advantages for Tribal's customers, not least that it makes the system highly configurable. Customers can configure rules for a task like deciding a student's eventual degree class, and then the system applies them. As well as automating a potentially time-consuming process, this provides full auditability.

PartnersUnited: Connect, Collaborate, Cultivate

Global networking and collaboration is the cornerstone of PartnersUnited. This is done online and through international and regional summits and events. Partner events provide a forum for the senior managers and technical managers of Uniface's partners to come together and discuss compelling topics and look at Uniface development from a business, as well as a technical perspective with the aim of adding value to partners' businesses. Opportunities include:

- A range of networking opportunities, including 'speed networking' to meet as many people as possible and identify colleagues with shared interests

- Moderated sessions to discuss strategies and issues

- Partner case studies

- Round tables and presentations on topics such as globalization, Cloud and mobile

- Contributions from industry experts such as Forrester

- Breakout sessions where participants can cover their special interests in additional depth with "likeminded" colleagues.

A Future with Uniface

International sales. While future development plans focus on the needs of existing customers, many of them will also make the product more appealing to international customers. This is particularly true in the area of enhanced support for consumer platforms such as tablets. In fact, the product already has several customers in North America, Australia and New Zealand. Although SITS:Vision is primarily targeted at English-speaking countries, it is suitable for other markets through the Unicode support in Uniface. Thanks to this functionality adapting screens and reports to other languages is simply a matter of translating boilerplate text, and in fact that has already been done for certain markets. Interesting and notable examples being China, where both English and Chinese details are stored, and Wales, where legislation dictates that systems need to be usable by both Welsh and English speakers.

Personal Experience. Tribal expects to facilitate the increasing personalization of students' experience based on, among other things, application of analytics to historical information. For students to get value for money, they don't want to be treated as one of a crowd – they want a tailored experience. And there are ways to help someone fulfill their potential by using the data in the system to give them a differentiated experience. For example, we could recommend modules based on someone's career aspirations and what has helped others to succeed in the same area. The rules-based nature of Uniface will help to make this type of "automated counseling" relatively easy to implement within SITS:Vision.

Cloud. Our customers are interested in cloud as a vehicle for reducing both costs and carbon footprint – a major objective for public bodies. Aggregating IT systems and putting them in the cloud addresses both these objectives, and many institutions have already done this with emails. We have our Uniface application running in the cloud already and have demonstrated it at the Uniface user group; some of our customers are testing it with their students. The Uniface application was easy to virtualize, with no need to change code. We are now thinking about how best to handle some areas that are client/server rather than web based, and how to take advantage of a cloud platform's ability to respond to peak demand.

UNIFACE
Advanced Development Technology

About Uniface

Uniface, the most productive, reliable development tool in the industry, provides a model-driven environment for the rapid development of scalable enterprise mission-critical applications. Learn more at www.uniface.com

Uniface B.V. Hoogoorddreef 60, 1101 BE Amsterdam, The Netherlands
© 2016 Uniface B.V. **www.uniface.com/legal**

Europe: +31 (0) 20 311 62 22
Global Offices: www.uniface.com/contact

US: (248) 233-0866
Email: ask@uniface.com