

# OPENCAST TURNS 10 AND PLANS FOR NEXT DECADE WITH NEW HYBRID HQ AND CITY HUBS

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INDEPENDENT technology consultancy Opencast (<https://www.opencastsoftware.com>) is 10 years old this month – and is planning for the next decade with a move into a new HQ designed for hybrid ways of working post pandemic, as well as opening three new city hubs – in London, Leeds and Edinburgh.

Opencast Software started up in 2012 after its co-founders Mike O'Brien and Charlie Hault (pictured, top left) had met at the gates of the school where their respective twins attended. The pair set out on a mission to create a new way of doing technology consulting based on clear values and an approach that puts people first.

Charlie and Mike, who remain co-chairs of the company, bootstrapped the new business without venture funding and grew it entirely on revenues from consulting work. Today the company is over 260 strong and aims to employ close to 500 people by the end of 2022 to meet a sharp rise in demand for its services across government and business.

Welcoming the 10th anniversary landmark, Mike said: "Charlie and I started the Opencast business in 2012 with a mission to challenge the traditional consulting model by putting people at the heart of all our thinking. From start-up through to today's rapid growth, we have lived and breathed that mission. We're confident that the plans we have in place put us in a good position for the decade ahead of us."

Like other businesses operating during the pandemic, Opencast has had to adapt to new ways of working, with its entire team moving to working remotely from home following lockdown in March 2020. Lockdown meant the closure of its offices, and those of its clients, with the delivery of work by people dispersed across the UK.

Lockdown has also led to the emergence of a much more nationwide Opencast team, as new people joining the business no longer need to work from its headquarters in Newcastle. Today around a third of the people working for the business are based outside of the North East.

With careful planning and support, including meetings online and a plethora of communities on Teams, Opencast has ensured that remote working has been no obstacle to it continuing to deliver great services for clients or maintaining its company culture.

Right place, right time

Following the end of lockdown, Opencast has had to consider the best way forward for its people to continue to deliver their work for the business. Extensive discussions and planning have led to the creation of a new flexible 'hybrid' policy that does not impose a requirement to be in an office but rather be led by the principle of working in the right place at the right time to deliver impact most effectively.

The focus of its efforts has been on helping people have maximum impact and flexibility through a '4H&C' model giving people the option to choose where they work based on what works best for the work they and their team need to do – whether that is at home, HQ, hub, host or on the client's site.

Explaining the new approach, Opencast chief people officer Cate Kalson said: "At Opencast the empowerment lies with our people to make hybrid working work in practice. Hybrid working for us is not about being in the office between certain hours or set days. It's about our people being at the right place at the right time, to deliver their work, with their clients and their team.

"We'll be working hard in the coming months to ensure that we listen to our people, and also our clients, about how the new arrangements work as well as they possibly can – maintaining maximum flexibility throughout."

#### New hybrid HQ and city hubs

Coinciding with its 10th anniversary, this month Opencast completes its move into a new hybrid headquarters in Hoults Yard, Byker – just yards away from its old offices.

The new HQ (see photos) has been designed after extensive consultation with the Opencast team. Designed by xsite architecture with Studio Kind, the space offers improved technology, more sustainable energy consumption, a mobile app for desk and room booking, and meeting and events spaces allowing people to get together, collaborate across hybrid teams and host social events for Opencast communities and broader networks.

In addition to the opening of its new HQ, in April Opencast is building its national presence with the opening of three new city hubs – in London, Leeds and Edinburgh. All three hubs are located in buildings operated by Spaces, part of the Regus group.

The new hubs offer Opencast people living in or near those locations – as well as anyone from its team visiting and needing a place to work – the option to work from those spaces, with access 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The company has existing communities in each of these locations and is actively growing its teams located in these regions.

The Spaces partnership means that Opencast people will be able to work out of 48 other Spaces locations across the UK too, so everyone has a convenient, comfortable not-from-home working option. The company is planning to open further hubs in other locations in as it grows further, led by the emerging place-based communities of Opencasters across the UK.

Opencast people working near the new hubs have welcomed the move, which will offer them the opportunity to have somewhere other than home to work, and to reconnect with colleagues face to face.

Edinburgh-based agile delivery manager Darren Horobets-Farley said "Looking at how fast it is moving it's hard to think that Opencast is only 10 years old. It is hard to keep up with all the changes sometimes, but I love every minute of it. Roll on another 10 years! Looking forward to the opening of the new Edinburgh hub space. It will be a welcome change to get back to meeting some other Opencasters face

to face, especially in the gorgeous surroundings of Edinburgh city centre. Add to this the fact that my wife will finally get some peace and quiet around the house again!"

Leeds-based developer Luka Abeywickrama said: "It's great to see Opencast emerging out of the pandemic cocoon with new hubs propagated across the country. What a fantastic way to celebrate 10 years. Having Leeds on the OC map is a treat, and I look forward to checking out the local hub."

London-based developer Liandra Giacomine said: "I'm excited to have the chance to socialise with my colleagues in a vibrant location in London and to have a change of environment from home. As always, Opencast considered our needs and feedback when choosing the London hub and given us the freedom to choose how often we want to use it. I truly appreciate this as it shows that OC trusts and considers our opinions when making decisions."

### Celebrating 10 years in business

Opencast marked its 10 years in business with a special staff conference and celebration party on 31 March. Keen to ensure that its 10th birthday celebrations have a purposeful outcome, the company will soon be sharing more information on how it intends to make the landmark 'for good' including through a new commitment to support 10 charities chosen by its people.

### Ends

For further information, please contact Julian Blake, insights and content manager, on 07767 266476, email [julian.blake@opencastsoftware.com](mailto:julian.blake@opencastsoftware.com)

### Editor's notes

Photos: Opencast co-founders Mike O'Brien and Charlie Hoult cut the cake at the company's 10th birthday celebrations (top left), and some of the company's new starters for 2022 gather for the event (top right). Inside Opencast's new Byker HQ (bottom left and right).

### About Opencast

Opencast is a growing team of specialists who work at the heart of government, global finance and growth enterprise with a range of technology and digital consultancy services. Our OpenCulture empowers independent-minded people in our mission to do the right thing for our clients, our team and wider society: good teamwork to make life better.

Opencast specialises in developing end-to-end enterprise solutions for government, health and social care providers and global financial services, as well as for renewable energy and regional enterprises.

We provide services in digital architecture, user-centred design, software, digital & technical delivery, DevOps, cloud & platform engineering, and live services support.

Opencast was founded in 2012 by co-chairs Charlie Hoult and Mike O'Brien. It is headquartered at Byker,

Newcastle Upon Tyne, with our people located nationwide, including in London, Leeds, Edinburgh, York and Manchester.

#### Opencast clients

##### Public sector

Acas

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department of Health and Social Care

Department for Work and Pensions

Government Digital Service

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Marine Management Organisation

##### Healthcare

NHS

NHS Business Services Authority

eConsult

##### Financial services and insurance

Barclays

Breaking Wave

JP Morgan Chase

Morgan Stanley

Newcastle Building Society

RBS

Lycetts

Insure the Box

Ibacas

##### Renewable energy

Natural Power

Offshore and Renewable Energy Catapult

Elmtronics/Mer

Wind Energy Benchmarking Services

##### Voluntary sector

Citizens Advice

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