

WEB-BASED TRAINING IS A MEDIA HIT

SUMMARY

Industry

Newspaper Publishing

Client

Trinity Mirror Plc

The Challenge

Improve IT skills while cutting the cost of classroom-based training

The Solution

Partner with Course-Source to provide an online library of IT and Soft Skills training courses that could be substituted for classroom training courses

The Benefits

Trinity Mirror Plc has made clear cost savings by introducing e-learning courses; has speeded up the training process; improved staff morale by introducing a training programme that helps make them feel valued and invested in; helped managers become more knowledgeable about legislative issues and has contributed to the success of business-wide change and personal development strategies.



“ We’ve made clear cost savings by substituting some classroom training programmes for e-learning courses...there have been business benefits too, without a shadow of doubt. ”

Lorraine Astbury, Regional Training Manager, Trinity Mirror Plc.

Trinity Mirror is the UK's largest newspaper publisher employing around 11,000 people across the UK. With a portfolio of more than 500 media brands, including some 240 local and regional newspapers, five national newspapers and four sports titles, some 20 million people read at least one Trinity Mirror newspaper in any given week.

Lorraine Astbury is responsible for Trinity Mirror staff training in the North West of England.

Just over two years ago, Lorraine introduced online learning to Trinity Mirror. Traditional classroom training was proving increasingly expensive and, as the main priority was improving IT skills within the organisation, e-learning seemed an obvious way forward.

“We needed basic end-user material – such as training in Word, Excel and Powerpoint,”

explains Lorraine. “This was the initial driver for the e-learning programme; this and the need to address the problem of people knowing they needed and putting in the relevant request for training but then having to wait up to twelve months for the relevant classroom course to become available. E-learning was an obvious way to fill the gap, allowing learners to take courses in their own time, at their own pace.”

Initially, Lorraine considered hosting courses on Trinity Mirror's existing system. Then she thought again.

“We were concerned whether our servers could cope with the additional load and whether our IT department could prioritise this project. I was keen to get going quickly, having everything on hand and being able to use it straightaway, rather than having

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meetings about meetings about meetings to try and get the programme implemented. It was clearly going to be far easier and more straightforward to call in an external provider, experienced in the field.”

Having given Course-Source the job, an e-learning system delivering IT and soft-skills training was set up for Trinity Mirror staff in the North West region, covering Merseyside, Cheshire, Huddersfield and North Wales. It was immediately popular and used right across all departments, including staff in editorial, advertising, customer services and marketing.

“People were very excited by the training,” says Lorraine, “going online immediately to see what was there. It also made them feel valued and invested-in.”

As well as providing training content, Course-Source provided a Learning Management System (LMS) to sit behind the learning platform. Lorraine says this has proved invaluable.

“We can draw all kinds of reports about who is using the system, for what training. We can find what scores they get on test results, how long they spend taking courses and so on. Through the LMS we have been able to access information about which courses are popular and used regularly and which are not. We can then take that information to improve both the system itself and its cost-effectiveness. For example in year 1, we had health and safety courses but, when we looked at the report, only eleven people had used it. This clearly wasn’t cost-effective, so we

removed it, adding workplace legislation material instead. This proved far more valuable for us and delivered a better return on investment.”

Other changes Course-Source made in response to user-reports included refining how IT courses were accessed. Initially, IT courses were accessed through a different route to soft skills training and users made to register through HR first. Because this wasn’t working for Trinity Mirror, Course-Source made the system much slicker, creating just one point of entry for all courses, with self-registration throughout, making life much easier for everyone involved.

Lorraine’s comments suggest Course-Source has lived up to expectations.

“We’ve been using the system for two years now and intend to renew our contract with Course-Source for a third year. We’ve already expanded the training into the North East region – covering Newcastle and Teesside – and are looking to put it into Scotland. Other regional training managers have expressed interest and, if we install the programme region by region, I anticipate we will be using it right across the country within the next two to three years.”

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Surprisingly, one useful benefit of the system has been that people

don't always complete courses. Lorraine sees this as a positive, not a negative.

"I expected people to complete courses, but the fact they haven't isn't a problem for me. I'm happy for people just to go in, learn what they need and come out again. Many people don't need to do a course from start to finish and I think this is one of the big advantages of e-learning. If they have an issue with one part of Excel, for instance, they can isolate that area, solve their problem and that's it. Unlike classroom training, where you have to do the whole course irrespective of particular needs, e-learning in this way automatically tailors itself to address particular elements. This makes it a much more popular, user-friendly resource."

"The main problem we have is time. Often people have the best intentions, but then something else comes up and, because they are learning at their desks, there is always something else to do. We've tackled this issue by making computers available in Learning Zones, away from desks and by encouraging people to come in either before or after work."

Finally, the big question – has the Course-Source learning platform delivered an acceptable return on investment? Lorraine believes it has.

"It's difficult to put a monetary value on it," she admits, "but we've made clear cost savings by substituting some classroom training programmes for e-learning courses. We've stopped

all our basic end-user classroom training and push people down the e-learning route now, with major cost-savings made through not having to use external providers. And, because the courses have been available immediately, people haven't had to wait to solve their problems or training needs, so ability levels have improved quickly, particularly when it comes to IT training."

Although this aim to improve IT skills was the main priority for Trinity Mirror when choosing to work with Course-Source, Lorraine believes there have been other, unexpected business benefits too.

"By introducing legislative material to our course portfolio, managers have been able to stay within the law and have more confidence in legal matters. Potentially, we could have saved on the costs of legal tribunals. More practically, the online training centre supports our strategy of encouraging individuals to take more personal responsibility for their development and growth. We've also introduced a coaching initiative at Trinity Mirror as part of a business-wide change programme, and Course-Source provides material to support this too. Yes, there have been business benefits, without a shadow of doubt."

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For more information call Course-Source on:

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