

A case study – creating blended learning curriculum for central government

In July 2011 the National Audit Office published a highly critical report entitled Identifying and meeting central government's skill requirements which detailed an estimated £275m annual spend on Learning and Development while 78% of those surveyed reported significant skills gaps in their organisation. The report also identified an uncoordinated and inconsistent approach to learning provision, incomplete and unreliable Management Information and ineffective integration of skills into the workplace.

As part of the establishment of HR Expert Services a cross-government central learning function had been created in recognition of the need to eliminate duplication, simplify the learning offer for civil servants, focus on business priorities and achieve greater value for money. The function was targeted with creating significant savings by reducing duplication through provision of a common curriculum to provide generic learning to a civil service population of c450,000 people working across 39 departments and 22 professions.

Potential2Achieve were engaged to work with a small team in the central learning function to design and develop the Management Development blended learning element of the common curriculum. Extensive learning needs analysis was undertaken across the civil service in 3 months consulting with departmental function heads who in turn consulted with 100+ end-users and line managers. This consultation formed the basis of the Management Essentials proposition which was signed off by the Civil Service Capability Board.

Management Essentials was required to support people transitioning successfully into new roles, help staff who are already in roles to develop the skills and capability needed to respond to current challenges and develop those who have the potential to progress to the next level.

The Management Essentials programme was designed to provide 4 learning journeys: Managing Self, Managing People, Managing Business Performance and Managing Change; specifically to meet the essential capabilities required in a civil service undergoing significant change resulting from unprecedented budget reductions. The learning journeys provided recommended pathways through a variety of learning solutions depending on existing skill levels and role requirements.

The learning solutions provided ranged from a downloadable quick and easy reference guide, through interactive workbooks to tailored e-learning and short-sharp skills development workshops. A key component of the learning journeys were resources designed to be shared between learner and line manager, specifically developed to aid the transfer of learning to the workplace.

The rapid development of learning solutions was undertaken in partnership with a managed service provider to create the content of the learning journeys in just 20 weeks. Feedback from the project sponsor was positive: "We would not have achieved without both teams working together in partnership, the way they did. The end product in terms of content was of a very high quality and a credit to the team".

A key driver from the National Audit Office report was to ensure value for money. The cost of classroom delivery reduced by 70% and the cost of e-learning dropped by more than half compared to an industry average. A reduction in departmental salary costs together with a 21% reduction in external spend resulted in a set-up year saving totalling £60m.