Case study/Report

Provider name & contact details	XR Training & Consultancy Contact 01268 663320
LIT Project title	**Giant Step towards E-Learning for XR Training & Consultancy**
Project summary : - Include the particular area for improvement that has been tackled through the effective deployment of technology	**Prior to the start of the project, we had not utilised ICT as a tool for delivering teaching and learning or as a tool to affect efficiencies in our day to day operations. The project was therefore targeted to deliver 5 distinct aims over a 6 month period, driving us to improve our communications, enhance staff CPD in ICT usage, enhance our training materials and pilot a training course with live candidates, using e-learning as the forum.** **As a small training provider, being able to access outside funding dedicated to supporting the project was vital. So was the opportunity to bring in an expert ICT/Moodle mentor and utilise the technical support provided by LSIS and JISC Eastern region, alongside our own IT consultant.** **We have developed, and continue enthusiastically to enhance, our own primary in-house e-learning Moodle platform. We are currently piloting a training programme with candidates, using the platform and gaining feedback as to its effectiveness. We intend to continue developing ways to make training more interactive, fun and instructive, incorporating blended learning tools and embedding additional avenues, such as links to resources and sites of interest parallel to the learning programme itself.** **Throughout the project, we have noticeably observed the skills development of trainers/assessors as they embarked on new learning delivery tools and methods. The "fear of the unknown" disappeared quickly and motivation for the project to succeed increased dramatically.** **The project has also allowed us to focus on improving communication opportunities internally and also with current/prospective employers, using technological tools such as WebEx. We now look forward to integrating such communication systems directly into the candidate learning environment.**

What were the aims of the project?	**The stated aims of the project were to:** 1. **Develop efficient internal/external communications using on-line technology (web conferencing using Skype, WebEx)** 2. **Develop e-learning materials such as quizzes, videos and practice tests, utilizing Moodle as the on-line platform, using laptops, supported by individual USBs in the workplace location** 3. **Develop and integrate hardcopy training material into e-learning packages, introducing more interactive and personalised delivery** 4. **Develop staff CPD in producing and delivering e-learning material and managing on-line testing procedures/processes** 5. **Pilot a group of candidates at one workplace organisation using e-learning and more efficient mentoring and assessment practices through use of Web 2.0 technologies, investigating an instant messaging forum accessible to all candidates and employers, sharing best practice.**
What did you do and how did you do this?	**The project was broken down into smaller tasks (as above), each with its own deadline for integration into the project achievement plan.** **Each member of staff was assigned their own role within the project as well as within the Moodle platform itself. We adhered, wherever possible, to the task deadlines given in the agreed action plan which, although tight, gave us a structured plan and timescales to follow.** **We continued to communicate informally and in formal meetings throughout the project, ensuring that any problems were addressed quickly to ensure impetus and focus was not lost.**
What role did your mentor play on your LIT project?	**A good mentor was critical to the project and we were extremely fortunate to have James Wilson of Writtle College agree to mentor us. James spent several hours training staff in the intricacies, structure and usability of Moodle, setting up programmes, signposting us to other assistance and websites and always being available to answer questions and provide advice.**
What have been the key benefits from the input of your mentor?	**As one of our trainers commented: "I had no experience of Moodle prior to the session, but afterwards I had a good overview of what it could do and how to proceed with my part of the project".**

What was the benefit of the support that you received from your LSIS Associate?	**The overwhelming benefit of our mentor was his willingness to assist us in any way, removing what we perceived as obstacles, through his prior knowledge and experience of setting up such a programme himself.** **If there was one thing we would do differently with the mentor, it would be to physically ask him to help us with the setup of the structure of the Moodle site. This has taken us a long time and we probably still have not got quite as it should be to maximise its efficiency.** **Our LSIS Associate remained in touch throughout the project and was willing to assist whenever required.**
What has been the impact and benefit of the LIT capital grant to your project?	**Without the initial impetus the LIT Capital Grant provided, it would be hard to envisage the amount of progress and skills development that has taken place in so short a space of time. The Capital Grant allowed us to purchase the necessary hardware (server, laptops, camcorders etc) and software necessary to carry out the project aims and also to engage the services of James Wilson from Writtle College as our mentor.**
What did the project cost, including LSIS funding?	**We have fully utilised the project funding allocated (£11,000 overall) to purchase ICT tools and mentor costs. XR Training & Consultancy staff have willingly participated in out of hours training, practice and work, contributing to the development of the Moodle programme platform and the integration of the training materials. We can expect further costs, expanding the programme, but it is envisaged that these costs can be covered by the savings made by using ICT in a more efficient and effective way.**
What has been the impact of your LIT project on your organisational improvement strategy?	**The impact of JIT on our improvement strategy has been on several fronts.** • **It has reinvigorated our ambition to utilise multimedia based learning materials as part of our blended learning objectives.** • **It has removed many of the barriers perceived or otherwise to the implementation of web based learning.** • **It has enabled us to the stage of implementing a pilot programme of blended learning** **We could go on listing many impacts but they could all be summed up as enabling**

What were the benefits of your LIT project?	**The allocation of funds to assist the project and the acceptance by LSIS that this was a project worth undertaking, were great stimuli in focusing us on taking the first step toward e-learning. We have now identified areas where savings can be made, enhancement of training materials can be implemented and improvements in the learner journey can be experienced.**
What were the savings to your organisation?	**Use of WebEx alone has obviated the need for our peripatetic Director, managers and trainers to expend time and expense in travelling to coordination meetings, initially focused around the project itself (saving £900+), but now expanding across organisation as best practice (see below). We would be expecting savings to be achieved in delivering directed and blended learning in the future.**
How did you calculate them?	**Travel and board expenses; prevention of training day cancellations; for example, trainers' expenses for 09/10 training year were in excess of £18,000. We should be able to halve that figure and reduce our carbon footprint in the process.**
What were the lessons learned?	**There are many lessons that we have learned from undertaking the project. A few:** **1. We were successful in allocating the right tasks to the right people. Moodle is a very structured platform, requiring the right degree of autonomy for individuals inputting and changing information. By allocating "rights", such as administrator or trainer and using "sandpit" areas, we prevented duplication or accidental deletion of information across the roles.** **2. The look and feel to the Moodle site is a very important factor to both the host organisation and to the candidate. This is something we possibly should have considered earlier in the process and utilised the help which was probably available us if we asked (but you cannot ask what you do not know). The look and feel of the Moodle site can also require programming code where you require the specialist skills.** **3. The Generator report generated at the beginning of our programme provided a pretty fair appraisal of our delivery approach: Very high on enthusiasm and results, but could do better on strategy and planning. To that end, the events run by LSIS, especially the event in Manchester "reflect on the future" was of special interest. The physical writing down of our thoughts and objectives was a really rewarding activity.**

What tips do you have for other providers?	4. Initial feedback from the pilot group of candidates was positive with teams commenting on how the VLE made the sessions more engaging and how it would enable them to access and download material between the face-to-face sessions. 1. It is absolutely essential to have a mentor who is as committed to ensuring the project succeeds as much as you are. He/She must have experience in what you are trying to achieve. 2. There is a myriad of software applications and resources accessible on the net. It is essential that you have a project team that is willing (and able) to dedicate the necessary time and effort in identifying the "best from the rest". 3. By sticking to the action plan objectives and timescales, produced at the outset of the project, progress was easily monitored.
How will you disseminate effective practice to others in the sector?	We are willing to demonstrate our progress in whatever forum is identified by LSIS and will be looking to produce further post-project reports to continue monitoring our progress in a tangible way.
Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project. Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications?	The funding and subsequent support received through this LSIS project has provided our organisation with the essential foundations, to enable us to pursue our passion to become a provider of blended learning. Yes. However, we would like to see anything that is going to print, or to be published prior to this happening for our approval.
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