



Blaenau Gwent saves cash by moving to e-learning

As a result of financial constraints and capacity issues Blaenau Gwent considered how traditional training delivery needed to change to cope with these new challenges.

Despite the situation it was imperative that the learning experience was provided and, if at all possible, enhanced. The result was substantial cost savings and a product that is more flexible and offers a more in-depth learning experience.

The classroom based recruitment and selection course, which was delivered to 450 managers in the previous 2 years, was redeveloped into a blended programme of e-learning and mentoring. The old programme required learners to attend three half day classroom based courses, complete a mock interview process with each other and then with volunteers who were attending a prepare- for-work programme.

The estimated cost of one such course was £1,000 or £85 per head, a cost incurred of £37,500 for those 450 managers.

Simon Green, Blaenau Gwent's L&D advisor, created the new e-learning using Learning Pool's rapid e-learning Authoring Tool. He says "The e-learning part of the programme must be completed by staff before they actively participate in a recruitment process and they must achieve a minimum score of 80% in the online assessment. We can easily tell what scores learners have achieved because the e-learning is delivered via our Learning Pool DLE which automatically evidences the learning taking place.

Once they've achieved the grade they'll then sit on two recruitment processes (for example, agreeing the job description etc, short listing and interviews) as an observer. They are debriefed and mentored after each stage by a panel member or HR colleague before they can go on to recruit in their own right."

This new approach was launched via a pilot in November 2008 and has received positive feedback from the learners who've undertaken it so far. Simon says "They like the self directed learning approach and the inbuilt flexibility that e-learning brings. They can do the course at their own pace and in their own time and no longer have to wait for a place on the next available classroom course which could have been weeks away with the old programme."

"It's also good in terms of motivation and succession planning as staff can undertake the e-learning part (even if they aren't a supervisor) knowing that when the time is right the observer role can be arranged fairly quickly."

And return on investment is good. "Whilst we have made actual cost savings by changing the way we train our staff we've also made other, less tangible but equally important returns on investment too," says Simon. "We're using less paper, people are away from the office less and the admin burden associated with traditional courses has now gone."

"ROI is gained from doing things differently and more efficiently which in turn leads to cost savings. Doing things via e-learning is a good way to be more effective and efficient with fewer resources."

So how much cash have they saved? "We're expecting to train about 50 or so managers in recruitment and selection in the coming year which equates to a cost saving of about £4,200. But that's a conservative estimate because we may include this programme in a new induction programme we're developing for all new managers. Either way, it's an actual hard cash saving for the council which has to be good in this climate."