Accountancy Learning Ltd: Innovative accountancy app aids learning

Summary

Accountancy Learning Ltd have designed and developed their own educational games-based Double Entry Downpour app, which is enabling their learners to gain a better understanding of basic and complex accountancy terms. The app is extending the reach of their learning materials to a much wider audience and enabling learners to consolidate their knowledge.

About Accountancy Learning Ltd

Accountancy Learning Ltd has been providing training for Apprenticeships in Accounting and the AAT qualification since 1992. Accountancy Learning Ltd were recognised by the Learning & Skills Council as a Centre of Vocational Excellence in Accounting and more recently were the first provider in the country to achieve Certification in the Training Quality Standard with Excellence in Accounting.

The challenge

There were many challenges in terms of the process of developing the app. One of the most challenging processes was to task their Developer Tom Brookes with learning a new programming language to create the app. This was a time consuming process and one which also included the need for a subject specialist from the team to provide the input into the design and functionality of the game. It was important that the game was created to enhance learning and understanding.

“it’s key to have the subject specialist in there as well to ensure that you’re trying to cover all the required learning and meet the outcomes that you have put in place.” – Prue Deane, Director Accountancy Learning Ltd.

Accountancy Learning Ltd had already created learning materials for their Moodle VLE (virtual learning environment), but they had no experience of developing educational games. This represented a big challenge and learning process, requiring them to map out clear aims and objectives before they embarked on creating the game.
Prue also realised during the beta testing with their learners that they would need to ensure that the game was functional and could cater for different levels of ability.

**The activity**

The project inception came about after Prue was involved in the Dfes standards unit, where she saw that they had been using hardcopy dominoes relating to business administration. Prue felt that this would be a useful type of activity to have for double entry bookkeeping.

After much discussion, Simon Deane, Director Accountancy Learning Ltd and his team decided to create a dedicated app to provide their learners with another way of revising and learning about the different credits/debits and increases/decreases terminology.

An important factor in the creation of the game was to make it inviting and visually appealing, considering the hundreds of thousands of existing games and apps already available. Prue worked with Tom to ensure that the symbols representing the different accountancy terminology looked and operated effectively.

High scores were introduced as a way for the learners to challenge each other and introduce an element of competition to the game.

During the beta testing phase they trialled the basic structure with their learners and asked them to evaluate the game and provide their feedback. The learners who had a good overall knowledge found the game a little boring because the terminology, which drops from the sky, was falling too slowly. Therefore they introduced three different speeds, which meant that even learners with advanced accountancy skills would find it a challenge.
In terms of the game itself it is quite simple. Once the welcome screen has loaded, the user can select to either play the easier credits/debits game or the increases/decreases game. When the game starts an icon representing accountancy terminology literally falls from the sky and must be moved into the correct area before it falls off the screen.

The game works like this;

- The learner selects the standards required, then selects debits & credits
- The game automatically starts and the accountancy terminology falls from the sky
- There are left/right and up/down arrows to move the accountancy object into the correct area below
- The game is timed, so a higher score can be achieved the quicker each accountancy object is allocated
- Upon pausing the game speed can be changed to either medium or fast
- For a more challenging game users can select increases/decreases

“The welcome screen in Double Entry Downpour

“We wanted to have the different speeds in there so that somebody starting out wouldn’t be put off by it being too difficult. So we wanted to encourage them to develop their learning, but then for those that were a little more advanced, we wanted them to be challenged a bit, which is why we put three different speeds in
and also the increase/decrease version, which is much much harder than the straightforward debit/credit version” – Simon Deane, Director Accountancy Learning Ltd.

The outcomes

Learners have an app that they can use on their smart devices, which is a great revision tool. It has developed the skill set of the Accountancy Learning team and made the trainers think more about the end user.

“I think as a trainer you’ve always got to be thinking about not always what is cool or useful for us to teach, it’s about the impact on the learner and how the learning is enhanced.” – Simon Deane, Director, Accountancy Learning Ltd.

The learners have an app that they can use at any time and any place as a revision tool and because it is also entertaining it is the perfect tool to reinforce their learning and understanding. Learners can distance learn using the app. As accountancy is quite a dry subject, the app has additionally made it more exciting and accessible.

The app is an excellent revision tool that the learners can use at any time and any place to suit them. It has also been proven through research that games-based learning enhances the learners’ retention, skills-based knowledge and factual knowledge. Learners are more likely to complete tasks or problems through games-based activities than paper-based activities according to research by J. Lee, K. Luchini, B. Michael, C. Norris, E. Soloway from the University of Michigan. This research demonstrated that students completed an average of 1,296 problems each during 19 days of classroom activities using an educational maths game, compared to only 456 completed problems using the same paper-based activities.

“In terms of learning, the people that have used it or the learners that have used it really enjoy it and the feedback we’ve had generally is along the lines of ‘it’s a great way to learn because it’s fun‘ and it encourages you to keep practising and improve on your knowledge and so on, so we have had some really good feedback on it.” – Simon Deane, Director, Accountancy Learning Ltd.
The Double Entry Downpour app on an iPhone

The impact

Whilst there have been no direct studies on the effect that the app has had on the learners, it is quite clear that it has been a benefit to their learning and understanding of accountancy terms.

The app has also broadened their reach of learning materials to a much wider audience than before and has been downloaded from over fifty different countries around the world so it’s been very good for distance learning.

In terms of the staffing at Accountancy Learning Ltd, the developers were ones recommended by the RSC.

“The RSC have always helped us and been supportive, in fact the multi-media developers that we have they only got because they were recommended to us by the local RSC.” Simon Deane, Director, Accountancy Learning Ltd.

Jisc RSC South West have provided e-learning guidance and support to Accountancy Learning throughout many years.

“Without the support from the RSC we probably wouldn’t have been able to do it.” – Simon Deane, Director, Accountancy Learning Ltd.

There has also been some positive feedback on the Google play store:

“Really useful, great to train your brain to recognise debits and credits, which helps you save time during exams. I’m on CIMA now and find it really useful. Only downside to it were the arrows. I think it would be better if we could drag and drop the expenses to their specific sides. Other than this, excellent!”

Customer reviews on the iTunes store:
“Very interesting app, makes learning of what can be confusing fun! Could add more Debits and Credits examples….. eg. For revaluation, shares, consolidation, etc”

“I was impressed to find an app to practice my debits and credits. I like the changeable speeds as you improve and it just helps to drum home what you need to know. Gets you thinking quicker too. More simple games like this for the complexities of accounting please :)

“Easy to use and very addictive. A pleasure to use alongside working through the exams.”

“We’ve had feedback on the app store, where learners have left messages and so on, to say how much they have enjoyed it and that it is a great way to learn because double entry bookkeeping or double entry is quite a hard concept to get your head around and it’s really helpful in the learning process, so not only is it enjoyable but it’s a really good learning tool. And also learners that I teach a number of them have downloaded it themselves and found it to be a very very useful learning aid.” – Prue Deane, Director Accountancy Learning Ltd.

Useful links

Jisc RSC South West website
Accountancy Learning Ltd
Article on Jisc Inform
Double Entry Downpour on iTunes
Double Entry Downpour on Google Play
More than just fun and games: Assessing the value of educational video games in the classroom
The knowledge Guru: Why games should be your next learning solution
Does the use of games-based learning have a future in education?

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