Saks Education: developing your own e-Portfolio

Summary

Saks Education has successfully developed its own e-portfolio system which integrates all their learners’ data. It has significantly speeded up the learners’ progress and Saks’ learners enjoy the interactivity and the fact that they can access the resources at home.

Saks system is tailor-made to the needs of the learners

About Saks Education

Saks Education delivers NVQ apprenticeship training to over 240 learners throughout a network of hair and beauty salons. In 2006, Saks was ranked Grade 1 by Adult Learning Inspectorate (now Ofsted) and was awarded BEACON status in 2007.

The challenge

Saks education is committed to offer best practice and excellence in training and decided to invest in a comprehensive e-portfolio system which would improve the way learners are tracked and managed as well as enhance their learning experience.
The new system had to deliver on a number of key points, including:

- Better tracking of learners.
- Integration of learner data.
- Improvements in the quality of the assessment process.
- Reduction of teaching time.

Many Durkin and Tina Rook from Saks Education, attended numerous demos but realised that none of the commercially available e-portfolio systems could offer them everything they wanted. Saks realised that an off the shelf product wouldn’t work for them and decided to have their own system developed by an external IT consultancy.

**The activity**

Through their PRD group, Saks collaborated with fellow member LFE and shared the development costs for the groundwork of the new system. It then got further customised to Saks’ requirements.

**The outcomes**

The new system has been up and running for a year and the development is still ongoing. Around ten educators received initial training on how to use the new system and created a simple user guide for their colleagues.

The new system is a one-stop-shop for learners and staff:

- Prospective learners can do their initial assessment at home which links to their Individual Learning Plan (ILP).
- There are lots of interactive learning materials, DVDs and podcasts available on each unit.
- It contains an online assessment book; the online assessments are self marking, adapt for each learner and draw from banks of questions.
- The system has an e-tracker which is used to track all of the learners through their NVQ. It is used to set targets, enrol learners to qualifications and carry out performance reviews.
- The learner’s library of evidence can be mapped out against any qualification and criteria and flags up learners’ work ready for review.
- Learners are prompted by the system which sends them a text message to upload their evidence. Evidence such as videos and images can be uploaded remotely and through mobile phones using Bluetooth.
- Assessors can access the system at anytime, anywhere, to check on the progress a learner is making.
• The system can be used to run management reports and notifies the educator when new work is ready to be assessed.

Certain fields are automatically populated on different pages, e.g. name and address.

**The impact**

The new system has improved the learner experience and also brought wider benefits to the organisation, including:

• Learner progress has speeded up significantly.
• The new system is cost effective compared to the costs of licences for commercial products taken over the number of learners and period of time.
• A reduction in the use of paper to just 4 sheets.
• Improved communication with learners through the forum.

‘Developing your own system takes time and doesn’t happen overnight’, says Tina Rook, ‘but it can work out cheaper over a longer period of time, taking the yearly costs for commercial licences into account’.

‘You can also try and keep the costs down by sharing part of the development of a system with another provider who doesn’t have to be in the same trade as you’.

**Useful links**

- Saks Education
- Jisc RSC Northern
- ForSkills for Lifelong Achievement

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