Loughborough College: Delivering Health & Safety training online has a positive impact on staff training

Summary

By offering an online staff development resource for mandatory Health & Safety training there has been a huge increase in staff uptake and completion of training. There have also been cost savings for the staff development budget and time savings for the Health & Safety Advisor and staff undertaking the training.

About Loughborough College

Loughborough College is a general further education college located in the Borough of Charnwood in Leicestershire. It shares a large educational campus with Loughborough University and the RNIB College Loughborough. It offers qualifications from pre-entry to Higher Education level.

Loughborough College has a long standing reputation for providing high quality education and training across Leicestershire. Established in 1909 the college is proud to have recently celebrated its centenary.

The challenge

Mandatory Health & Safety (H&S) training for staff has to be updated every 3 years. With nearly 900 staff in the college, delivering this as a 1 hour face-to-face training session was becoming increasingly difficult.

In addition, even though regular training opportunities were available throughout the year, staff often booked on an event, only to drop out later due to pressure of other priorities, meaning the take up and completion of H&S training was only about 25%.

The catalyst for change came 2 years ago, when governors got involved and asked Harry Wheatcroft, the Health and Safety Advisor, to be responsible for providing reports of compliance.

He began to research other possibilities to deliver the training, including looking at commercial products and web-based training. Although there were
products providing generic training (e.g. manual handling), all of the options lacked the customised, bespoke element for Loughborough College staff.

In a chance conversation with one of the College media team, he discovered that the College had bought a licence for Articulate and were looking for a project to pilot the software.

Articulate enables the user to:

- Create presentations
- Embed video/audio content
- Add quizzes/questions
- Add interactive functionality

Harry agreed to pilot the software, and has worked with the Learning Technology support team led by Lyndsey Welch to produce an online H&S training resource. The resource is hosted on Moodle as a SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) package and can be accessed easily via a link from SharePoint, the staff intranet, from work or home, 24/7.

**The activity**

Harry planned the content and the interactions that he wanted. Then the Learning Technology team put together the resource using Articulate, using the most suitable features based on the content needs. In addition, four video clips were produced to add an introduction, some anecdotes and a conclusion, providing a more personalised experience.

A script was produced and then Harry recorded the narration after the resource had been produced. The design team were also involved in creating an html certification of completion that would be automatically emailed to staff.

The quality of the recordings and narration benefitted from the input of a media expert on the team and having access to a video/sound booth. The resource was made available to staff via SharePoint and was publicised via the staff development team.

Staff had the option to attend a face-to-face event lasting 1 hour, or to complete the online training package which included some assessment, at a time and place to suit them, as the resource was web based and accessible 24/7.
The outcomes

- A sustainable model of delivering training has been piloted which can easily be updated.
- The model can be transferred to other staff development areas e.g. safeguarding, equality and diversity.
- The online training resource allows opportunities for assessment that were not really available in the face-to-face event.
- On successful completion of the resource, staff are automatically sent a certificate via e-mail as evidence of their CPD. Copies of this are also generated for Harry and the staff development team.
- The staff development team find the whole process seamless and can easily monitor and provide reports of CPD activity.
- An unexpected outcome has been that Harry’s profile as Health & Safety Advisor in the College has been raised amongst staff.

The impact

- Approximately 70% of staff now complete the H&S training compared to 25% previously.
- The online resource only takes about half an hour to complete, making it shorter than the face-to-face event.
- There has been a huge reduction in both the cost and time associated with delivering the training, in terms of savings on staff time, room utilisation and refreshments at face-to-face events.
- The Health & Safety Advisor only needs to do about 6 face-to-face training sessions per year now, freeing up more time for other activities.
- Most staff seem to prefer online sessions to face-to-face and this pilot opened them up to a more blended learning approach. Harry explained, “Making training available at a time that suits staff is fundamental, offering them the flexibility to gain CPD at a time and place to suit them”.

Feedback from staff who have undertaken the course included:

“I was able to complete the training from a remote access, point, which saved me valuable time”
“Great that you can part complete it and then go back in where you left off”

“I was really struggling to engage with the face-to-face sessions due to changes in my timetable, the flexibility to do this when it suits me has helped”

Feedback from the staff development team was:

“Evidencing that staff have completed their training is always an issue, this system of e-mailing staff development to update their records is so simple”

The lessons learned

Harry quickly discovered that creating the resource was not just a matter of repurposing the PowerPoint presentation used in face-to-face sessions. He needed support to understand the tools available and exploit the full potential of the software.

Time was needed to develop the content, the interactions, the video clips and the narration for the resource. The support and expertise provided by the learning technology team was invaluable in producing a quality product.

However the time invested in producing the resource has been more than recouped as Harry only needs to deliver about 6 face-to-face sessions a year now, and staff only take half the time to complete the online resource compared to attending a face-to-face event.

The Learning Technology team has developed its own skills to be able to streamline the process of producing training resources and have themes in place that can be used for further resources. They have now produced a similar resource for student H&S induction which is accessed through the College’s learning platform, Moodle.

This can be exported as a SCORM, the required file type that is needed in order for the courses to work in Moodle.

This resource forces students to complete each screen and activity and reach an acceptable assessment score, before moving on. After satisfactory completion, a certificate is generated in Moodle to allow monitoring and tracking by tutors.

Due to its ease of use and effective outcomes the Learning Technology team is now starting to produce other training and induction packages using Articulate e.g. for safeguarding. The College has purchased more Articulate licences to train teaching and learning staff to produce online interactive learning materials for their own Moodle courses thus extending the impact of the original project.
Useful links

Loughborough College website

Jisc RSC East Midlands website

E-learning authoring and software tools that could be used to produce similar online training resources include;

- Articulate
- Adobe presenter
- Xerte online toolkit

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