

**BEST
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One of the most painful aspects of the current tough business environment is the impact on jobs. In this edition of the ILX newsletter our COO Eddie Kilkelly, looks at how letting staff go can become a win-win situation for everyone, especially for those facing redundancy. We also spotlight the culmination of two years work on the PRINCE2® June 2009 Refresh. One of our exciting new developments is making key parts of our refreshed PRINCE2® courses available on Apple iPhone and iPod Touch devices. The National Union of Students has become the latest in an increasingly diverse and expanding list customers to use our on-line, e-learning and classroom PRINCE2® products. And finally, if you ever wondered what happens when you leave your business card at an exhibition stand, check out our winners story.

We hope you have a wonderful summer and look forward to a brighter economic outlook for the rest of 2009.



Ken Scott, Chief Executive

Mix and match



Combining training methods can create a powerful learning platform, but the key to success is getting the blend right.

Eddie Kilkelly, Chief Operating Officer, ILX Group, plc.

There can be little doubt that recession is putting ever more pressure on learning and development organisations to do more with less. Consequently, many are re-evaluating existing training strategies and programmes. By adopting a blended learning approach – combining training tools and approaches such as e-learning, classroom training, coaching and mentoring – an organisation can significantly reduce training costs, while maintaining training effectiveness. In a period when redundancies often mean remaining staff have to take on extra responsibilities, blended learning also provides a cost effective and swift method to up-skill staff.

However, there is no off-the-shelf blended learning approach. Programmes are bespoke to each organisation and so require careful upfront assessment and planning. The investment in time upfront will pay dividends as a streamlined training department not only better equips the organisation to cope with recession, but also puts it in a favourable position to thrive when the upturn comes.

Learning style

Corporate culture is the biggest single barrier to adoption in any learning

programme and blended learning is no exception. It is therefore critical for the learning department to assess and understand the most appropriate learning style for the organisation, before embarking on a blended learning approach.

Despite the huge potential benefits of blended learning, an organisation may find that its culture is simply not conducive to anything other than traditional classroom training. This presents two choices. Either the organisation can concentrate its training resources on making classroom sessions as cost efficient as possible, although if the culture will not support non-traditional methods of learning, then their benefits will never be realised. Or it can look to make small incremental changes, such as making pre-course work or post-course work available online. This can lay the foundations for more changes later, if the business is amenable.

Several factors need to be considered when deciding which delivery methods to blend. The shape of the resulting blended learning programme will largely depend on the organisational challenge and the elements included. These vary greatly between organisations and include traditional workshops or seminars, mentoring, teleconferences, online

training courses, print, corporate intranet, videos, wikis, webinars, blogs, webcasts, podcasts and more.

The key is to consider the blended learning solution holistically to determine the structure of the programme that will best meet the organisational challenge, while using existing resources and complementing them with the most cost-effective additional components. Simply bolting on e-learning modules to existing instructor led training does not constitute a blended learning programme. This 'Frankenstein' approach is unlikely to engage learners or drive anticipated business results.

Delivery methods

Each delivery method should be chosen for what it can deliver best. E-Learning can deliver knowledge, but it is the practical application of that knowledge that leads to the attainment of skills. Think of learning to drive – it would be impossible to be an effective driver without both knowledge of the Highway Code and the skills to manipulate a car. Therefore, e-learning is very suitable to deliver knowledge, while more traditional classroom scenarios or on-the-job training turn that knowledge into skill.

Blended learning is also more flexible in terms of location, pace, timing, repetition and ongoing reference. This enables the organisation to choose whether to offer alternative delivery options for the same training course and can reduce travel costs and minimise disruption as staff

may not need to be out of the office to train. Learners have greater choice about how and when they learn, and the integration of on-the-job coaching and mentoring into training provides true skills transfer. Blended learning enables training to become a continuous process, rather than an isolated learning event.

A fully integrated blended learning programme is a rapid, effective and low cost way to deliver large scale training that is fully aligned to the working environment. It not only helps organisations cope with the short-term cost cutting initiatives necessitated by recession, but also prepares them to thrive when the upturn arrives. An organisation with a streamlined learning platform will be flexible and adaptable enough to capitalise on new opportunities when the recession is over.

Extra value

By identifying a variety of formats and elements that work for employees,

An organisation with a streamlined learning platform will be flexible and adaptable enough to capitalise on new opportunities when the recession is over

organisations ensure that all learning styles are met – visual, auditory and kinesthetic – and this leads to more stimulated and motivated learners. In the current environment, it is perhaps more important than ever to make employees feel valued and a training programme is an important tool.

By helping an organisation understand what learning approach is appropriate for its workforce, blended learning ensures that resources are not wasted trying to impose tools and methods where

they just won't fit. For example, take e-learning. In recent years, the received wisdom has been that e-learning is the panacea to all training problems, but in some instances non-technological approaches are more effective. The upfront assessment will help organisations determine these instances within their own business.

There is no recipe for the perfect learning approach as it depends on all the elements outlined here, including the audience, objectives and company culture, but there is a huge diversity among the learning experiences that come under the blended learning umbrella. An organisation will know it has the blend right when it successfully combines sustainable training benefits and cost savings into a blended learning programme that enables it to reach its business objectives.

Learning style

- **Company culture:** Is it considered acceptable for employees to train at their desks? Will they be constantly interrupted? Is the company attention span short or long? Do non-traditional training methods have the support of the business? Does e-learning have kudos?
- **Technical constraints:** Are there any technical barriers to adopting e-learning? Is the company a highly technical environment or paper based? What will the architecture at work support? What infrastructure is available to employees at home?
- **Flexibility:** Is home working the norm? Does the organisation have a nine to five office based operation? Is it possible or desirable to increase flexibility?
- **Approach:** Does the organisation have established corporate standards and procedures for rolling out and ensuring a good uptake of training so that staff understand the true value of learning and the positive impact on their jobs? Are there transparent processes in place to ensure that any regulatory and compliance issues are met?

Blended learning assessment

- **Audience analysis:** Which elements of the workforce need to be trained? Is the workforce distributed? What types of courses have worked well with this audience in the past?
- **Course content:** What content is already available? What needs to be developed? Is the content suitable to be delivered in a different way?
- **Learning objectives:** What is the business problem or goal? What skills are required to benefit the business as a whole? What areas of the business can be improved through enhanced skills?
- **Knowledge and skills:** Divide the learning into two distinct parts, knowledge & understanding and practical skills and attitudes, then identify the most suitable non-classroom medium for knowledge and understanding, and consider complementary methods for developing skills and attitudes.
- **Outcomes:** Will the course lead to certification? What incentives will be used? How can progress be measured?
- **Communication:** What is the most effective way to launch the programme? How can the benefits best be sold to the audience? Is there a feedback mechanism?

UK ORGANISATIONS ARE STILL FAILING TO REALISE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY ITIL® CLAIMS ILX GROUP

Independent survey shows less than a quarter of IT staff are ITIL® qualified.

Key findings of the 2009 survey on ITIL® include:

- **51 per cent of senior UK IT managers and directors believed that having staff qualified in ITIL would give their organisation or business a competitive edge**
- **31 per cent of IT departments felt that the benefits of ITIL were not fully understood by management**
- **49 per cent of senior IT managers and directors claimed that budget constraints was the key barrier to the uptake of ITIL Version 3**
- **The top three reasons for project failure were poor communications to key stakeholders (34 per cent); missed deadlines (22 per cent); and exceeding agreed budgets (17 per cent).**

The study, which questioned 100 senior UK IT managers and directors across organisations from a variety of industries, showed the primary reason cited for not having staff trained in ITIL® remained a management level lack of understanding of the benefits. A number of business sectors including manufacturing, retail, distribution and transport identified budget constraints as another significant factor affecting the uptake of ITIL®. Only one per cent of respondents said that it was due to a lack of information in the market.

ILX Group's most recent survey, conducted by independent research

ITIL® creates a common understanding between your IT staff, suppliers, contractors and users

firm Vanson Bourne, shows the majority (72 per cent) of companies have less than 25 per cent of their IT staff ITIL® Version 3 qualified. While in November 2007 the biggest reason for not having plans in place for a migration to ITIL® Version 3 was time constraints. In 2009 respondents now cited budget

constraints and the benefits of ITIL® not fully understood by management as the primary barriers to uptake.

Eddie Kilkelly, Chief Operating Officer at ILX Group plc, said: "Project failure due to internal or controllable factors can be significantly reduced if staff are trained to properly manage projects and are provided with the right framework and best practices to avoid common mistakes. Talking to our customers, we have found that the cost of failure exceeds the cost of training. Market conditions for many businesses still remain tough – but getting basic processes wrong can be an incredibly costly exercise if people do not have the right skills."

"ITIL® creates a common understanding between your IT staff, suppliers, contractors and users within the business by creating a common approach and language towards IT services. The framework can deliver huge cost savings for an organisation by promoting the optimum use of people, process and technology – while reducing overall costs."

ILX Group plc provides flexible and affordable training through its e-learning, mobile and classroom learning approach, designed to overcome the barriers many organisations face in training staff.

For further information visit www.ilxgroup.com/itil-training.asp

For further information please visit us at stand P19 at itSMF – The IT Management Forum at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole between 9–10 November 2009.

NORTHERN ROCK ACHIEVES TOP MARKS WITH ILX GROUP'S BLENDED PRINCE2® TRAINING

British bank rolls out e-learning and classroom workshops to enhance project management skills amongst in-house IT staff.

ILX Group plc (ILX), the specialist best practice training company is working with Northern Rock to help deliver PRINCE2® training through a blend of two-day classroom workshops and e-learning. The programme will help Northern Rock to enhance project management skills amongst its valuable IT staff and improve reporting systems within the organisation.

To date twenty IT staff have been trained in PRINCE2® Foundation and Practitioner methodology with a 100 per cent pass mark. More staff are expected to take the test later in the year. A further fifteen senior project IT managers are also undertaking the APMG Programme and Project Sponsorship qualification which will help individuals manage multiple, complex and large scale IT projects.

Peter Atkinson Assistant Director at Northern Rock comments: "We took the PRINCE2® training route as it provides globally recognised best practices. This was a strategic decision for us as we wanted to align the bank's IT project management framework to support the corporate planning process and to provide an efficient, agile IT service for the business. With the help of PRINCE2® best practices we are able to manage IT projects more expediently, whilst maintaining quality throughout the process."

Northern Rock's IT function develops and updates their own IT systems to serve their mortgage and savings departments and Northern Rock's customer facing branches throughout the UK.

Steve Chapman, IT Project Manager, who recently attained Prince2® Practitioner accreditation adds: "It's too early to measure the full extent of embedding PRINCE2® principles within our department, but we can already see the positive benefits. By combining the classroom workshop with e-learning modules, ILX provided us with a cost efficient and flexible approach to delivering training to colleagues. There was no need to install any applications on our side as everything was hosted by ILX. Colleagues were fully engaged throughout the process, gaining valuable knowledge and ultimately, a recognised qualification."

The programme will help Northern Rock to enhance project management skills amongst its valuable IT staff and improve reporting systems within the organisation

Eddie Kilkelly, Chief Operating Officer, ILX Group plc, says: "We are thrilled to see Northern Rock reap the benefits of using PRINCE2® methodologies. For many organisations a blended training approach is the only feasible way of enhancing staff skills in a busy work environment. Our training exercises are based on a variety of topics including PRINCE2® processes, the preparation

of a business case, risk analysis and full product descriptions. Each exercise is stand alone, and once completed, provides useful feedback and pointers on further revision and study. Our experienced training consultants work very closely with all our customers to ensure the right course is delivered in the right format. Hands-on support is also available to ensure a successful internal rollout and management of tests."

The project management method PRINCE2® since its introduction in 1996 and the alignment of a formal examination scheme has over 300,000 qualified people worldwide. Around 7,000 people take their PRINCE2® exams worldwide each week and currently ILX has the largest market share.

- **Are you considering implementing PRINCE2® within your organisation?**
- **Are you looking to gain a recognised qualification to enhance your project and programme management career?**
- **Do you want to know more about PRINCE2® before you commit to a course?**

Did you answer yes to any of the above questions? If so you should consider attending one of our free PRINCE2® Seminars. Visit www.prince2.com and click on the link for further details.



BIRKBECK COLLABORATES WITH ILX TO OFFER NEW ACADEMIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PRINCE2® COURSES

The UK's first national academic module to include option of PRINCE2® professional accreditation.

ILX Group plc (ILX), the specialist best practice training company is partnering with Birkbeck, University of London to deliver a new academic postgraduate module 'Project Management for Informatics' (PMI) that includes learning about PRINCE2® and the option for students to get PRINCE2® accreditation with ILX Group. The postgraduate programme MSc in Information Systems & Management in which the PMI module is compulsory starts in October 2009. Details can be found on www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/mism.

In addition to the postgraduate module, Birkbeck is also offering a short course Project Management with PRINCE2® where delegates have the option to get PRINCE2® formal accreditation directly with ILX Group. The short course includes an evening workshop hosted by Birkbeck and 40 hours e-learning by ILX. Courses start monthly: 19th August 2009, 17th September 2009 and 23rd October 2009. Online registration is available from www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/prince2.

Dr. David Wilson, Programme Director of the MSc in Information Systems & Management, Birkbeck, University of London comments: "PRINCE2® is a well known and widely respected project management qualification in high demand. A high percentage of job adverts appearing in recent editions of Computer Weekly included PRINCE2® as a requirement for mid-career computing

roles. The PRINCE2® qualification also has a wide appeal to those working in general management and finance roles. We chose to partner with ILX as they are well respected and the biggest International provider of PRINCE® accreditation."

This innovative collaboration is a positive example of how universities and personnel development organisations can collaborate to better respond to employer demand

"Birkbeck has promoted lifelong learning for almost two centuries. This course extends our management and information systems provision to particular specialised continuing professional development. By collaborating with specialist organisations like the ILX Group, Birkbeck can offer alumni and other mature students, support with specialised CPD and professional activities as well as our traditional academic educational development. All holders of the PRINCE2® foundation and practitioner qualifications can apply for credits on the Project Management for Informatics module as part of the MSc in Information Systems & Management. This innovative collaboration is a positive example of how universities and personnel development organisations can collaborate to better respond to employer demand."

Eddie Kilkelly, Chief Operating Officer, ILX Group plc, says: "We are delighted to be collaborating with Birkbeck and developing closer links with academic institutions."

"As projects become more global and in many cases the project team are dispersed in more than one location, the process of project management becomes even more critical and complex. Blended learning – a mix of classroom and e-learning – offers the best of both worlds because it delivers knowledge and supports skills attainment, while meeting the demand for a quick, effective and cost efficient learning. The PRINCE2® module will help equip delegates to have a good mix of skills that they can take and apply immediately in the workplace."

SUPPORTING YOU!

ILX has developed the online **Best Practice Bookstore** to enable you to purchase additional manuals to support your training, whether it's using e-learning or attending instructor-led courses.

Call or email for our latest brochure.
Tel: **+44 (0)1270 611600**
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