



Next Generation Learning @ Work in

The BBC

Rapid e-learning transforms leadership development

The BBC has a well established track record in their innovative use of learning technologies within their programmes.

The success of these programmes has positively changed attitudes to learning technologies throughout the organisation. It is now an accepted delivery mechanism but the increased demand for alternative media poses further challenges.

This case study highlights the next step in the BBC's e-learning journey as they turn to rapid development tools to deliver an award winning blended learning leadership programme.

In 2008, this programme has won the gold Elearning award for best use of rapid e-learning content. It was also shortlisted in the WOLCE blended learning award.



Introduction

The BBC has a well established track record in their innovative use of learning technologies within their programmes. Their experience ranges from developing high quality bespoke e-learning solutions (such as essential legal knowledge for journalists or Editorial Policy which underpins their College of Journalism) through to facilitating the informal learning that goes on between peers.

The success of these programmes has positively changed attitudes to learning technologies throughout the organisation. It is now an accepted delivery mechanism for learning and expectations of the end users – normally broadcast/media professionals themselves - are high.

However the increased demand for alternative learning formats poses further challenges - the organisation needed to respond much faster to new business training needs, to collaborate more effectively with in house experts to harness and share their knowledge and retain quality whilst reducing both cost and development times.

BBC Training & Development started to use rapid e-learning tools to help address these challenges, working with internal customers more effectively, so that they are able respond to rapidly changing business demands.

The business challenge

One of the BBC's core business strategies is the Creative Future strategy- designed to ensure the organisation can deliver the most creative content to meet the needs of its audiences. The 'people strategy' was developed by BBC People to ensure the organisation has staff with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver Creative Future.

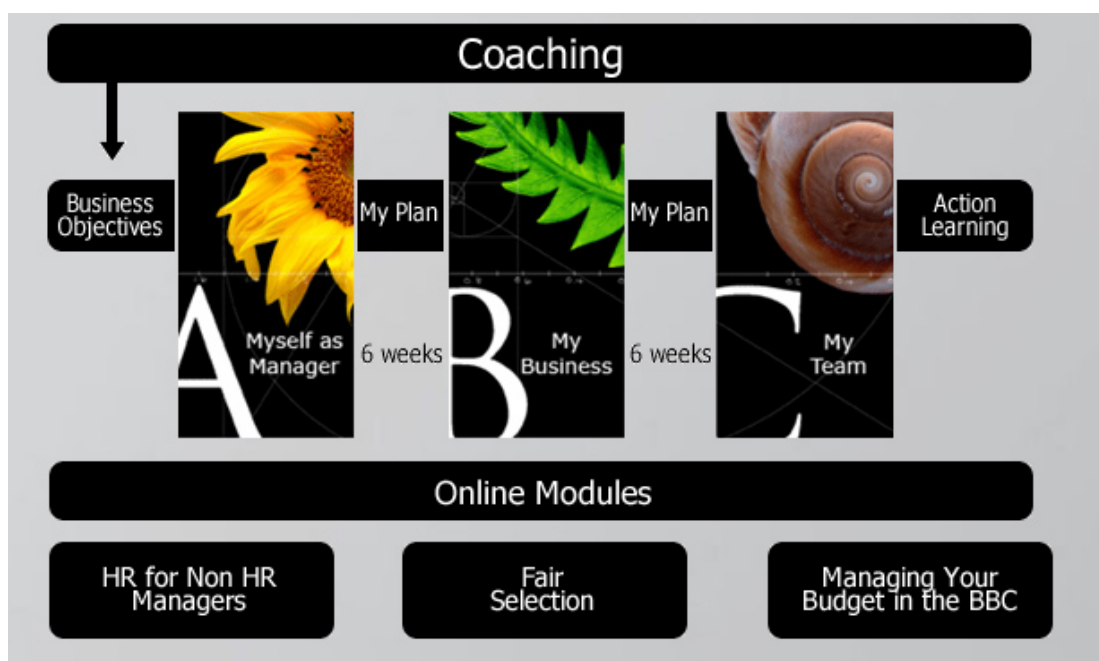
Building leadership capability is one of five key themes in this strategy so a new corporate leadership programme for new managers, **Leadership Essentials**, was developed. It was critical that the programme design addresses a number of issues:

- > Time away from the job had to be reduced for notoriously time poor leaders
- > Cultural fit had to be right, reflecting the specific challenges faced by the BBC.
- > Speed of rollout was also important.

The learning solution

A blended learning approach to the solution was developed, providing new managers with intensive bursts of skills development, integrated with online

learning and development through on the job learning, coaching and action learning sets.



The modular six-day programme is spread across three months and the online learning provided opportunities for pre-course learning, to clarify the different role and responsibilities of new leaders and offer them ongoing support, as well as consolidate the content covered elsewhere in the programme.

The plans for the programme incorporated aggressive timescales, with pilots running towards the end of 2007 and a full roll-out scheduled, for early 2008. Initially they considered options to incorporate 'off-the-shelf' elearning solutions featuring interviews with respected business leaders. However, the user feedback from these modules suggested that they were not sufficiently relevant to the BBC so the team turned to rapid development e-learning to help them address the requirement quickly.

Pilot feedback:


An early pilot highlighted that users were more comfortable with shorter 'bite-size' modules which they could realistically expect to complete as part of their working day shorter bite sized content – the programme opted for for a larger number (24) of short 10-minute modules which were also easier to mix and match with the live programmes or to reflect changing priorities.

Users also felt that the external content was inappropriate for the audience so the team chose to film credible peers from inside and across the organisation

to convey the key messages and raise awareness of the new leader's role in order to make the modules as relevant and authoritative as possible.

How did the BBC deliver content rapidly without compromising quality?

A common format across all the modules helped to streamline production and consolidate the Leadership Essentials brand - on starting the module, the learner goes straight into a YouTube style 5-minute video (quick and easy to upload into the video template in the rapid software). This leads into a more structured build using images, text and voice over which relate the experiences of the 'role model' leaders to the theoretical principles underpinning good practice. The learner can complete the interactive exercises (again from a range of standard templates) to test their understanding and think about their own assumptions of their role. On completion they download a summary of the content with very specific links to further resources on the intranet.

	<p><i>Capturing and sharing best practice.</i></p>
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Throughout development, they used a cyclical review process involving internal subject matter experts to check the quality, consistency and appropriateness of imagery and the visual appeal of the course. They were able to develop, review and refine a number of modules simultaneously without any compromise to the final product and when the software was upgraded, were able to introduce new features.

The trainer of the future

This new approach to delivering learning meant that training staff also developed new skills. An internal leadership and development specialist took the role of trainer and producer on the project, researching the business need and defining the learning objectives with SMEs and sponsors who were concurrently developing the content for rest of the programme. She managed the schedule and budget, as well as the audio production and worked with freelance production teams. As a result she considerably extended her expertise in areas including: filming, voice-overs, directing, and technology. This is part of an integrated philosophy towards developing BBC training professionals, dubbed the BBC's 'Trainer of the Future'.

Shortening time scales and increasing efficiency

The development programme was an ambitious one – 24 x 10-minute modules, grouped as 6 topics were created over a period of around 6 months. Whilst the process was not entirely linear, each module took on average around a week to build with a further week available for review and final amendments. Compared with the BBC's standard approach to e-learning development, the rapid tools not only reduced the development time by about 80%, but dramatically reduced development costs as compared with a more conventional model.

What did staff think of this approach?

BBC Training & Development's in-house evaluation team conducted an electronic survey via the intranet in early June 2008 to evaluate the initial reaction of users to the elearning modules and their fit with the other elements of **Leadership Essentials**.

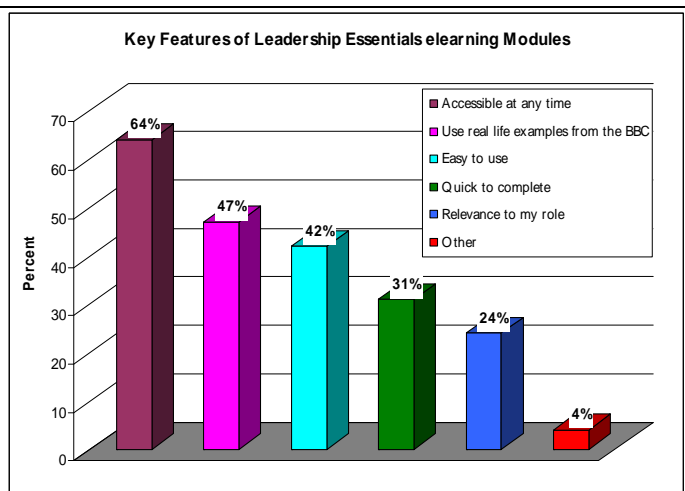
- > 93% of respondents thought the elearning supported **Leadership Essential's** face-to-face modules. One respondent commented: *"I found the modules a useful supplement to the course as they can supply more detail and encompass a wider range of subjects."* Another commented on the benefits: *"I found many of the speakers' experiences reassuring and relevant - a very supportive experience all round."*
- > **98%** of participants stated that they would use what they'd learned from the elearning modules (with 65% either "mostly" or "completely" likely to use what they'd learned).
- > The quality of the media in the modules was cited as a highlight: *"The quality of the videos make it easy and enjoyable to work through the courses."*

Learners views on key features

Comments included:

“Arranged into 'bite-sized' chunks, it's easy to fit into a working day, and convenient to work at your own desk.”

“I found the online modules useful to dip into when I needed a confidence boost.”



Measuring Business Impact

Given the size and complexity of the organisation and the diversity of the delegate’s roles, it was clear that a simple evaluation of business impact would not be appropriate. One solution was to encourage each participant to agree 2 business related objectives with their line manager before joining the programme. The objectives not only formed the basis of more tangible goals but also provided a common thread on which to focus the training. A business journal was used throughout the programme to keep track with progress.

Early results from the small number of initial case studies received from completers have begun to materialise and can be summarised as follows:

a) Improvements in broadcast quality:

“...some improvements to programme sound, editorial scope and techniques (interactivity, user generated content) are audible; working with existing team to implement a new sound to the programme.”

b) Timesaving:

“I believe with the skills gained, especially from a personal development perspective, this has allowed me to manage upwards to the Nations project team to ensure efficiency of time spent within meetings; by suggesting tighter agendas to deliver our objectives on time as the project moves through deadlines.”

c) Development of skills and talent within the organisation:

“On the practical side the tool kit of planning and prioritising my work flow has had a knock on effect within the department. The process has also included more delegation and development of staff which has increased the output and skill sets of my staff.”

d) Effective management of change:

“The skills I gained have allowed me to manage staff through the process to embrace this change as a step forward for the business, which will allow hopefully create a smoother transition to a department with a very different business culture than the current department.”

e) Management confidence:

“I feel more confident taking on the manager’s role.” “Better self awareness, confidence managing upwards, time management, work life balance.”

f) Performance management:

“I have been dealing with difficult feedback and performance issues competently and confidently.”

g) Effective decision making:

“Bad decisions could have cost us a fortune - they have been avoided.”

h) Value for Money and cost savings:

“Managing the merger of two departments and identifying savings through reducing duplication of resources, etc.”

In conclusion

Following the success of this project the BBC now have an increasing number of large-scale rapid e-learning projects in development, such as Business Risk and Data Protection. As a result, the skills of learning and development specialists are being honed to use these new tools so that they are able to seek out, capture and share best practice within the organisation.

‘The judges from the e-learning awards summed up the strengths of this approach in their citation: The BBC demonstrated an appropriate use of a blended learning solution which fitted the culture and utilised peer to peer support to engage busy line managers in their leadership programme.

This entry did not just focus on speed and reduction of cost but also

highlighted a strong commitment to production quality with credible and authoritative content. The process of design was pivotal in transforming the learning and development professional from the role of being a course deliverer to a business enabler.’

The BBC’s Top Tips for using rapid e-learning in effective learning blends:

- > Listen to users early in the development process and don’t be afraid to respond to their feedback.
- > Smaller bite sized modules fit better into busy working days and can be mixed and matched according to individual need.
- > Use video to seek out and capture good practice within the organisation to provide authoritative and credible content.
- > Consider externally hosted rapid development solutions if your development team are geographically dispersed which greatly facilitates a group of people working on the same project
- > Use integrated review tools and automated quality assurance processes to help you work on different parts of the project simultaneously
- > For speed and efficiency plan and build clusters of modules in parallel using shells created within the rapid development software
- > Develop new skills for trainers so that they can exploit the tools