

The Royal Shakespeare Company – compliance sets the scene

The RSC environment

The Royal Shakespeare Company, RSC, is one of the best known theatre companies in the world, with roots which stretch back to the building of the first permanent theatre in Stratford upon Avon. They employ over 700 people working directly on producing and running the productions or supporting the work that takes place on stage. Everyone in the company, from directors, actors and writers to production, administrative, technical and workshop staff all collaborate in the RSC's distinctive and unmistakable approach to theatre.

Her Majesty The Queen is Patron of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is the RSC's President and chairs the Company's Annual General Meeting.

The Business Needs

Health and Safety is a serious issue, both on stage, off-stage and at employees' desks. With such a high profile and worldwide known brand, the RSC wanted to set an example of excellence. One aspect of H&S is the safe use of computer displays and the RSC decided to take a step towards the wider use of e-learning by ensuring compliance to the Display Screen Regulations. This would demonstrate its serious approach to health and safety responsibilities both to employees and others.

The RSC, like many employers, needed to find a cost effective, efficient way of training all their 700 employees in the safe use of display screen equipment (DSE) and to ensure that user workstation assessments were completed.

As well as complying with current DSE Regulations, the RSC wanted to ensure that employees were comfortable at work.

Business considerations included cost, quality of the training provided, access to training and locations of employees.

What was the Learning solution?

The RSC is a member of an industry safety group and discussed possible suppliers with fellow members. Following a recommendation from ITV Plc they contacted a health and safety elearning consultancy, Praxis42 Ltd

The supplier provides generic e-learning for compliance to DSE legislation. However the RSC required some bespoke alterations. The RSC's training and safety team worked with the supplier ensuring the delivering of a unique product in a highly cost effective manner. The brand appearance was important to the RSC and this was achieved at minimum cost.

A unique advantage of using e-learning for compliance training is a significant reduction in administration, record keeping and assessment. The RSC ensured the supplier provided appropriate training and support to training management during implementation comment and that any internal technical issues were resolved quickly. Telephone support was available during the roll out period.

What was the benefit?

....to management

- > Simplified administration
- > Better record keeping
- > Simple communication to ensure learners engage with the training

Technical/H&S training co-ordinator (J.Y.)at the RSC said.

'As the RSC's administrator of the eSolutions online DSE training and UWA modules, I have found the system very easy to manage. The after sale instruction I was given was clear and concise and I am confident in being provided with ongoing support from the team at Praxis42.'

The site is very easy to navigate, therefore ensuring that I can easily keep tabs on how many people have completed or are in the process of completing the various sections of the training and UWA's. The email feature is a particularly good aspect of the system as it helps ensure that the invitation to undertake the training meets the company's requirements.'

.....to learners

Learning department administrator (A.C.) at the RSC said:

'The online VDU training was very user-friendly. The instructions were easy to follow and the site easily navigable. The User Workplace Assessment was particularly useful and helped me to make my working environment more comfortable'.

.....and to the Business

For the RSC this has been a quick win as an introduction to e-learning. The implementation process supported the training team. Employee users have provided positive feedback on the quality and ease of use of the products.

The training is an important part of RSC's health and safety management programme. It sets the scene in reinforcing a culture of safety; where managers and employees understand their responsibilities and identify and control hazards in the workplace; perhaps doubly important on stage where the focus is on the audience and the hazards are behind the curtain.

6 Top Tips from the RSC case study

1. Use industry contacts to find out about potential suppliers.
2. For economy ask suppliers to customise generic products (a little alteration in appearance and some content make users think the course is specific to your organisation).
3. Compliance training shows immediate savings in administration and significant improvements in management information
4. Tailored generic topics, especially of compliance are an excellent way in to e-learning (although the Towards Maturity research shows that you only make a difference to the learning culture if you go beyond compliance.
5. Ensure the supplier gives full support during implementation, including helping you solve your own internal technical problems (They will talk the same language as your IT support team).
6. Safety training in a straightforward topic like DSE ensures consistent safety awareness throughout the business. Safety is as important in the office as in the factory, production unit, machinery spaces or on the stage.