

‘Fulfilling Potential’

Award Winning e-learning for Business Success from Care Management Group



Introduction

Winner of ***‘The best e-learning project securing widespread adoption’*** at the e-learning Awards 2009, this compelling case study describes how Care Management Group has successfully implemented e-learning in its care-focused business, generating savings in excess of £300,000 per year.

The enthusiastic and widespread adoption of e-learning has transformed training provision and is delivering value across the entire business. The extent to which learning technologies have been adopted by this organisation is all the more remarkable when you consider the working environment. Care Management Group (CMG) supports approximately 600 people with learning disabilities and associated complex needs. It delivers its services in this challenging and highly regulated environment from over 100 Care Homes (Services) distributed in Southern England and Wales.

CMG depends on the skills and effectiveness of approximately 1,500 staff, mostly in the role of Home Manager and Support Worker. These individuals are required to display a wide range of competencies including care specialism’s, catering, housekeeping and basic business management skills. Provision of training was traditionally through face-to-face classroom courses, coaching and observation, however, this model was straining to meet the demands of a growing organisation and an increasing regulatory burden. In particular, training at CMG faced four significant challenges:

Inefficiency: Training was expensive to deliver, and did not easily scale to meet the requirements of a growing business.

Inconsistency: Due to the pressure on training resources, local sites were taking an independent approach, allowing training paths to diverge.

Risk: The care sector is highly regulated and all CMG services are subject to annual audit by national Inspectorates. Maintaining staff competencies in mandatory skill areas presents an increasing training burden.

Alignment with corporate values: With such dispersed training provision, it was difficult to align learning and development with corporate values and link it to business aims.

Addressing these Challenges

In 2008, the new owners of CMG recognised that if these challenges were met, enhanced staff training and development would support a whole range of new business goals. They identified that e-learning could deliver greater consistency and efficiency to training provision, and also provide a platform to support communication of corporate values and aims. However, they also realised that implementing e-learning in a fragmented organisation, with no existing technical infrastructure would present a formidable challenge.

CMG selected Information Transfer as its partner to help them meet this challenge. Specialists in creating bespoke training and communication solutions, Information Transfer also have particular experience in helping organisations drive adoption and embedding of learning technologies. The outcome of this partnership is '**Fulfilling Potential**', a corporate blended learning programme with e-learning at its heart.

Fulfilling Potential combines bespoke e-learning content, learning management technology and offline learning activity. It delivers consistent training messages, aligned with corporate vision and values, and has been enthusiastically adopted by staff throughout the organisation.

Aligning the Solution to Business Need

CMG is a healthcare business. Their staffs are carers, "*people people*", who do not use technology as an everyday part of their work, and would not expect to. To achieve successful adoption of e-learning, CMG and Information Transfer knew that Stakeholder Engagement would be crucial and that the particular needs and expectations of these stakeholders would have to be addressed by every aspect of the solution.

Aligning with business needs

Headed by the CMG learning and development lead, and beginning in July 2008, a stakeholder consultation exercise was conducted across a range of CMG services in London, the South East and Wales. The consultation included interviews with staff at all levels, an audit of existing training provision and identification of specific training needs at local level. A separate consultation was conducted with the full board of CMG, to establish the key objectives of all senior stakeholders.

The outcome of this consultation phase was a project specification that identified several key overall requirements:

- a bespoke approach to development of online content and learning management technology would address the specific needs of CMG stakeholders

- e-learning would focus on core skills required by the vast majority of staff
- immediate mandatory and specialist training needs would be addressed through modular, structured e-learning content, linked to offline learning activities
- Project development would be integrated with implementation of a new corporate technical infrastructure.

Understanding learner needs

The initial consultation provided extensive evidence of staff attitudes and preferences towards training in general and e-learning in particular. This consultation exercise was supplemented by a stakeholder workshop, where 16 staff from across the business completed a series of exercises designed to establish learning needs and preferences. In addition, staff had the opportunity to try a range of e-learning formats and feedback on their preferences.

Staff feedback informed all aspects of project development. Specific examples were:

- extensive use of audio in structured e-learning, as many staff have English as a second language
- simple, intuitive online learning records facilitate easy access for staff with low PC literacy
- case studies, scenarios and CMG photography help to localise the e-learning and build trust among users
- learning is further localised through linked learning activities that are completed within the service where the learner works
- Integration of CMG Subject Matter Experts into the content development process ensuring the quality and relevance of the e-learning while building trust.

Aligning with the working environment (workflow)

Both the initial stakeholder consultation and workshop were used to ensure that the e-learning would integrate with existing workflows, be accessible, and provide managers with enhanced access to better information about learning and development activity. Local services have no Learning & Development resource, so e-learning is managed centrally while local managers have access to specific L&D reports regarding their staff. Learning administration and reporting is performed through intuitive, task orientated interfaces. Importantly time for e-learning is integrated into existing shift patterns.

Technical infrastructure

Perhaps the greatest immediate challenge to implementing e-learning was the lack of any technical infrastructure. Until November 2008, local CMG services were not networked, had no e-mail or online access (some services had no computers at all), and the plan was to go live with corporate e-learning in February 2009!

Development of e-learning was therefore aligned with a major infrastructure roll-out, which involved Information Transfer working closely with CMG's technical providers, Barchester. Effective communication, transparency of process and a rigorous, but condensed, testing schedule ensured that all CMG services went live with e-learning on February 2nd 2009.

Marketing & Communications

A key objective of the project was to use e-learning to communicate and reinforce the rejuvenated corporate vision and values of CMG. They wanted to create a powerful and memorable identity to encapsulate those values and to provide a basis for the communications and internal marketing initiatives that would help drive adoption. They conducted a communication planning workshop with stakeholders from across the business. The aim was to identify the key audiences and behaviours needed from each, the key messages needed to influence behaviour, and the most appropriate channels to reach each audience. The outcome was a structured communication plan, detailing the communication strategy and practical activities needed to promote widespread adoption of e-learning.

Communication and internal marketing used cascade briefings, presentations, multimedia, e-mail, road-shows, posters, newsletters and a staff competition to deliver key change management objectives:

- demonstrate the benefit of e-learning for all staff
- show managers how their workflow will be improved
- build anticipation for, and trust in, a significant new corporate initiative
- empower managers to support staff in completing their learning
- support an effective launch
- Communicate project successes and new development, post launch.

The plan wasn't just about 'selling' e-learning to the learners. It meant helping line managers understand the benefits for them – to answer the 'what's in it for me' question.

Creating a strong identity was seen as key and to further support the launch of Fulfilling Potential a 10-minute movie presentation entitled "***Every moment has potential***" was created. This presentation showcases the vision and values of CMG and how these are supported by learning and development. It includes contributions from a range of CMG stakeholders. The movie was loaded onto every PC at CMG immediately prior to launch of Fulfilling Potential.

Business Impact & Benefits

After an intense 4 month development period, Fulfilling Potential was launched on 2nd February 2009. At launch, 6 structured e-learning modules, covering a range of core

training needs, were delivered to all staff. Essentially, every member of staff was re-inducted into the company. Each module was accompanied by an offline learning activity and an assessment. The focus has been on learner needs, integration with workflow and extensive internal communication all combined to drive enthusiastic adoption by CMG staff.

'Uptake of e-learning has been fantastic' - Fulfilling Potential (FP) has been enthusiastically adopted by CMG staff as demonstrated by the following outcomes after only six months:

- 7,507 e-learning module completions recorded
- 10,619 training hours delivered online
- The vast majority of staff are using Fulfilling Potential with 93% having logged in and started training.
- Fulfilling Potential is on target to achieve 100% completion of the first six modules within 12 months.

CMG have conducted a telephone survey of Regional Directors and Home Managers to assess the business impact of Fulfilling Potential. Outcomes from the survey demonstrate that e-learning is already having an impact on service quality and risk reduction. Managers consistently report:

- compiling staff rosters is much easier as training is completed more quickly and staff do not have to leave the service to attend training
- fewer agency staff are required to cover for staff on training courses, providing better continuity for service users
- training expenditure is greatly reduced
- Improved monitoring of training activity, including praise from regulators for Fulfilling Potential.

Feedback from Learners

Usage numbers indicate wholehearted adoption of e-learning across the business. CMG also conducted an extensive online survey 3 months after launch to examine the user attitudes and behaviour that underpinned this success. The survey outcomes show excellent approval ratings for a range of questions relating to the access, usability and effectiveness of Fulfilling Potential.

The very high approval ratings demonstrate that that e-learning has been genuinely adopted across the business. Staffs aren't completing e-learning modules because they 'are there' or because some are mandatory, they are using them because they are accessible, easy to use, relevant and because staff believe that e-learning will help them in their work. The extent of adoption is further evidenced by the huge range of positive comments recorded from users of Fulfilling Potential. A few examples are shown here:

“The modules brought my work to life, with the real people, case studies, and solutions offered. Such a brilliant way to learn! Seeing what you learn while listening to the voiceover makes what is being taught stick permanently.”

Olufunke Dare, Lead Support Worker, Perryn Road

“I think that the combination of e-learning and hands on experience with the service users enables me to gain a better understanding and will enable me to do the best possible job required for the benefit of the service users.”

Judith Davis, Sleep-in Support Worker, Newport

“I found e-learning modules very effective in updating my skills in the working place. I love every moment and thank you all very much!”

Shernette Graham, Lead Support Worker, Pierpoint Road

“The “stop and think” was a great way to get my brain working and to see if I understood everything. I was worried about learning on computer that I would forget some of the information I learnt, but in fact I remember a lot.”

Amber Andrews, Support Worker, New Dawn

There were also a range of subjective comments relating to details of content and interface (some users love the introductory music, others don't like it etc!), but you can't please all the people all the time! These comments have been collated and are being used to guide the development of subsequent modules.

Feedback from Managers

“Some of my staff didn't like using computers and they were a bit worried about it. Funnily enough, the ones who were most scared absolutely love it – it's really brought them to life! Their IT skills are improving, and it's making them more confident in their work.”

Faye Gallagher, Home Manager, Bluetts

“Fulfilling Potential has really reduced staff costs, because I'm not paying for another member of staff to cover when somebody else is out for a day on training. Now staff can complete training in quiet times on shift – like when service users are out at day-care, or in the evening on a sleep-in.”

Christine Charlton, Home Manager, Bury Road

“We've recently been inspected by CQC [Care Quality Commission]. They are really hot on training, and the inspector thought Fulfilling Potential was great. He was really impressed at how we were able to deliver so much training from within our own service. We got an “Excellent” for our inspection, by the way, – and training is all part of that!”

Margaret Mohammed, Home Manager, Beddington

“It's much easier to monitor training activity, and now we have a process in place to make sure that training is being completed. We get visited by the local safeguarding

board, and now it's easy for us to show them how up to date we are on the safeguarding training."

Barbara Hobbs, Regional Director, Croydon, Lambeth & Morden

Return on investment

For core training areas now delivered via e-learning, Fulfilling Potential has cut costs by approximately 90%, and is already saving CMG over £300,000 per year (from the initial 6 modules alone).

Comparative cost of training for a single course (module)		
	Classroom training	E-learning
Number of staff assigned	1,400	1,400
Delivery cost per head	£17.50	£4.67*
Total delivery cost	£24,500	£6,538
Staff cover cost (4 hr @ £8 per hour)	£32.00	£0
Number of staff requiring cover**	1,260	0
Total cover cost	£40,320	£0
Total cost of training per course	£64,820	£6,538

NB: *Cost of e-learning is based on the total costs incurred by CMG (including content development, LMS development, hosting, support, communication and change management support etc.) annualised over three years.

** Almost all CMG staff (including home managers) work directly in the care of service users. If they have to be absent (for a half day training course) they must be replaced by another staff member.

Key Success Factors

Fulfilling Potential has shown how e-learning can be enthusiastically adopted within a people-focussed working environment, and can rapidly deliver significant business impact.

Significant barriers to adoption have been overcome and e-learning is now embedded at the heart of CMG operations, and that is testimony to all the hard work of those involved. Key success factors have been:

- a thorough **understanding of the needs of the business**, and how learning and development can support them
- **involvement of stakeholders** from across the business in every aspect of development and launch

- Using **effective communication**, promotion and support.

The extent to which e-learning has been adopted is demonstrated by the remarkable usage figures, high approval ratings and hugely positive feedback from learners. Crucially this adoption of e-learning is delivering business benefits by improving efficiency, reducing costs, reducing risk and improving service quality.

CMG is a care-based business. Fulfilling Potential has demonstrated how their people focussed services have been enhanced by creative and sympathetic use of technology. Staff at all levels have adopted that technology and used it to make a difference for the organisation. The impact of Fulfilling Potential is summed up in this comment from the leader of the business:

“Fulfilling Potential has had a huge impact for CMG. And beyond learning and development, that impact goes right to the core of our values.”

David Spruzen, Chief Executive Officer, Care Management Group