Cambian Achieves excellence with e-learning

What happens when pressure within your sector, the high cost of face-to-face training and a lack of consistency in company training threatens to blunt your commercial responsiveness?

Cambian’s response was to throw its all into Achieve – a tailor-made e-learning strategy – that would meet head-on the company’s major constraints, and produce impressive results.

Through careful consultation, Cambian ensured that Achieve closely matched workflow and current systems. Importantly, heart & minds of staff were won over, which resulted in greatly improved training, greater working efficiency and an enhanced system for reporting outcomes. A win-win situation!

Cambian, together with partner Information Transfer, picked up the 2011 eLearning award for Widespread adoption.

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Background
Mental Health problems are far more common than many of us realise. Every year in the UK a quarter of the adult population will experience some kind of mental health problem, ranging from the worries we all experience as part of everyday life to serious long-term conditions. The majority of people who experience mental health problems can get over them or learn to live with them, especially if they get help early on. However, serious conditions need specialised services and specialised services must be supported by specialised training!

Cambian are the UK’s largest providers of specialist services in education, mental health and learning disability. They employ over 3,000 staff at more than 60 locations throughout the UK. Theirs is a care-based business, with a people-focus and a working environment of classrooms, wards and care homes.

Under pressure …

The care sector is heavily regulated and consequently the training load is very high. (Recent high profile TV coverage of another care provider has demonstrated how serious the consequences can be when things go wrong.) A wide variety of specialisms are required to sustain Cambian’s business, and training is crucial for ensuring that staff are fit to practice and work safely.

There is also intense commercial pressure on the sector. Local authority funding for care is highly selective on the quality of provision. Training capability is viewed as a key part of that quality, and is a differentiator in the bid process. So, commercial and regulatory pressures combine to enhance the importance of effective and efficient training provision.

Prior to 2011, Cambian was meeting its training needs through face-to-face training, sourced independently within the different divisions. This model was meeting essential training compliance requirements, but was presenting the business with significant challenges:

- **Cost** – reliance on face-to-face was expensive, both in using numerous external providers, and in the high cost of staff cover
- **Inconsistency** – lack of central co-ordination meant training quality was not assured and lack of central reporting meant cross-business provision could not be assessed
- **Risk** – no compliance issues were reported, but a lack of structured reporting meant gaps could occur
- **Scalability** – training provision was not responsive to business growth

Defining the challenge

In May 2010, the Cambian Board initiated a major change project to revitalise training across the newly expanded business and address these significant business needs. They were keen to harness the benefits of e-learning to provide consistency and efficiency in training delivery.

The very nature of Cambian’s business presented significant challenges to the adoption of e-learning. The business was highly distributed with limited technical infrastructure. However, perhaps the greatest challenge was the need to win hearts and minds for technology-based learning in a people-focused care environment. Every aspect of the solution would have to address stakeholder expectations, and the constraints imposed by the working environment.

To provide internal project leadership, Cambian appointed Mainstay Solutions, specialists in transformation of organisational performance through learner engagement. Cambian then appointed Information Transfer as e-learning development partner. Specialists in creating
bespoke training and communication solutions, Information Transfer also have particular experience in helping organisations drive adoption and embedding of learning technologies. They knew they needed to implement a blended learning platform that would be:

- Highly cost effective with regard to training delivery and staff cover costs
- Consistent and efficient across the business
- Reduce the risk of regulatory non-compliance
- Expandable for corporate growth

The response to this challenge was Achieve; a corporate blended learning programme with e-learning at its heart. Achieve integrates bespoke e-learning content and learning management technology with a host of offline learning opportunities. It supports all staff development at Cambian with consistent quality training, aligned with corporate goals and values. Maintaining the blend was important as Cambian wanted to give staff a portfolio that included on and offline activities and also mapped across to appraisal, supervision and spot checks.

**Listen to stakeholders**

The project began with a major consultation exercise involving stakeholders from across the business. Visits and interviews were conducted at a range of Cambian sites, spanning all three divisions of the business. Part of the consultation process was an audit of current training provision, to identify specific training needs at a corporate and local level.

There was significant consultation with Cambian board members, leading to definition of the key project objectives:

- Significant budget savings in 2011
- Train 100% of new build recruits via e-learning
- A rolling training compliance rate of 80-90% by the end of 2011
- Faster time to competency (reduce mandatory induction from 2 weeks to 1 week)

Stakeholder consultation also established the defining characteristics of the development phase:

- Bespoke learning content and systems would allow the specific challenges of the environment to be met
- Initial content development would focus on mandatory requirements then expand to specialist needs (to ensure a quick win for the business)
- Integration with HR administration and technical infrastructure would be key

**Identify champions**

The initial consultancy provided extensive evidence of staff requirements which included a survey of computer literacy. In addition, a working party was created, comprising 16 staff from across the business. The working party met twice for two full-day workshops. Their focus was to:

- Identify barriers to adoption
- Identify Cambian learner preferences
- Determine how to align e-learning with everyday workflow
Getting the right people on board was important as the working party members became e-learning champions, and were an important part of the communication process. A deliberate decision was made not to randomly select managers at each site to be part of this group. Instead, the team went to site meetings with a pre written spec of what they were looking for in a champion. The champions needed to be enthusiastic, somebody who the staff would take notice of and would also help push the initiative along. These criteria allowed the implementation team to identify effective champions.

**Keep the system simple and the content relevant**

Putting time and effort into understanding learner needs and expectations is always worthwhile. *Achieve* is designed to be as simple and intuitive as possible so that staff do not have to go through a learning curve.

Cambian directly employ a wide range of specialist staff who became their Subject Matter experts (SMEs). The SMEs were embedded in the content creation process which allowed them to directly relate the modules of learning to ‘real life’ activities. The case studies and scenarios reflected what staff would be experiencing on a day-to-day basis.

The content uses Cambian terminology, describes Cambian process and all the images are of Cambian staff and Cambian sites. The e-learning is also integrated with offline activities to help staff to localise their learning. By adopting this approach, when staff access *Achieve*, they immediately get a sense of familiarity. Learners are able to see that it’s relevant to them and their role in the organisation. Building this sense of trust is critical to successful learner engagement.

**Align with workflow and infrastructure**

Cambian has been in a period of significant change, so this element of the project was of particular importance. The stakeholder consultation and working party informed the design of LMS functionality and the integration with workflow and systems. In addition to this, specific steps were taken to ensure the solution was a good fit with operational activity:

- Extensive consultation, co-development and testing to ensure smooth integration with Cambian’s legacy HR system
- Liaison with the Cambian IT team as a significant capital investment was required to ensure that the infrastructure was robust and ready and that hardware and network upgrades were implemented in preparation for launch of e-learning.
- Liaison with the HR Process Review Team to ensure that local training admin processes were effective and efficient

**Think as marketers**

At the heart of communications and internal marketing initiatives to drive adoption was a powerful and memorable visual identity for the project, to encapsulate the values of Cambian and link them to learning and development.

Using the understanding of corporate vision and aims gained through the stakeholder consultation, they created the identity “Achieve”, and an associated set of graphic elements that are used on every component of the learning programme.

The implementation team conducted a formal communication planning workshop with key stakeholders. The aim of the workshop was to identify the key audiences and the behaviours needed from each, the key messages needed to influence behaviour, and the most appropriate channels to reach each audience. The outcome was a formal communication
plan, detailing the communication strategy and practical activities needed to promote widespread adoption of e-learning. Implementation of the plan was designed to:

- Demonstrate the benefit of e-learning for all staff
- Build anticipation for, and trust in, a significant new corporate initiative
- Empower managers to support staff in completing e-learning modules and offline learning activities
- Support an effective launch
- Communicate project successes and new development, post launch

**Communicate, communicate, communicate!!**

Deliverables from the communication plan were a wide range of communication tactics designed to deliver the key messages to relevant audiences. Tactics included:

- A company-wide poster campaign
- An awareness-raising brochure, delivered to all sites
- Roadshows, presenting *achieve* to site managers
- A range of *achieve* merchandise (pens, mousemats, pads etc)
- “*achieve something special*” - a powerful short film designed to reinforce the key values of Cambian and show how e-learning supports these. Rather than use actors, the hr and operations directors provided the voiceovers clearly demonstrating management support for the initiative. It has proved hugely popular and effective, and is being used externally as a showcase of Cambian’s capability

Figure 1 shows examples of the communication tools used to promote adoption of Achieve.
**Time to test the water**

A crucial part of the project was a two-phase pilot implementation:

- In phase 1 e-learning was launched to champions and other selected individuals to test infrastructure, functionality and user acceptance
- In phase 2 e-learning was used for induction training of new joiners at two new Cambian sites

In each case, user experiences were evaluated through an online survey and telephone follow-up.
Achieve was launched at Cambian on 23 May 2011. Over a 4-week period, 8 structured e-learning modules were released, covering a range of mandatory and specialist training requirements. Modules contain linked offline learning activities and integrated assessments.

The intense focus on stakeholder engagement, learner needs, workflow and communication has resulted in enthusiastic adoption by Cambian staff. Senior leaders have been delighted by the tremendous uptake of e-learning. Figure 2 shows the extent of usage only 10 weeks post-launch.

### Figure 2: Use of Achieve e-learning at 26 July 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve has been adopted right across Cambian:</td>
<td>2,577</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-learning has been enthusiastically adopted at Cambian:</td>
<td>11,643</td>
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<td>Achieve has delivered a huge increase in the availability of training:</td>
<td>16,740</td>
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<td>The vast majority of staff are using Achieve:</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<td>A large number of staff have already completed all of their initial e-learning assignments:</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>E-learning is an embedded aspect of work at Cambian:</td>
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<td>One e-learning module is completed every 7.6 minutes, 24 hours a day.</td>
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**Learners like it**

The usage figures demonstrate the extent to which e-learning has been adopted by Cambian staff. Cambian have also found that staff are clearly also enjoying the opportunity to learn at a time and place to suit them as a large number of staff are accessing Achieve from home.

To evaluate the learning experience the project team implemented an online survey, delivered via the Achieve LMS. There was a fantastic response with 1256 completions. Headline outcomes are shown in figure 3.
The approval ratings and free-text responses from the survey indicate a real enthusiasm for e-learning. Staff report that Achieve is accessible, easy to use and helping them learn relevant skills and knowledge. Examples of free text responses include:

Very easy and quick. A great new way to learn.

It was very good, easy to understand and follow, very informative too which helped through each topic.

Brilliant idea! I have enjoyed using ‘Achieve’. I can do it in my own time when I am ready. Most important of all it doesn’t take me away from caring for our residents. Congratulations & thank you!

Giving learners a voice through free text responses has also allowed the team to identify areas of improvement. Any negative comments from users doubtful about online learning or who have specific issues with content or functionality are reviewed on a regular basis and inform future developments of Achieve.
Achieve has provided us with the ideal platform to ensure that all of our staff receive a consistently high standard of training which in turn means they can provide the high quality care that we expect of them every day. I would like to thank our staff for the exceptional take-up figures. It’s their acceptance, hard work, determination and ambition that has got us to this point.

Kathy Poole, Group HR Director, Cambian Group

**Delivering results – the business and operational impact**

In the short time since it has been launched, Achieve is already demonstrating that the project objectives will be met and exceeded.

Cambian is seeking to drastically reduce the direct cost of training by moving appropriate courses to Achieve e-learning. So far, they have seen 80% cost reductions in delivery of individual modules using e-learning compared to classroom training.

Based on the eight modules currently live, and making a conservative estimate of the full uptake of Achieve, projected savings will be double the initial target for 2011.

Telephone interviews were conducted with site managers to access the operational impact of Achieve after just 10 weeks. Managers consistently report that Achieve:

- Makes training more accessible to their staff and integrates well with daily workflow
- Increases the time staff have available to spend with service users
- Enhances the quality of their reporting inspectors from the Care Quality Commission

The new system has also enhanced the way that staff undertake NVQ qualifications. They no longer have to wait to be enrolled onto a specific course as all the modules are directly mapped to the Qualification Credit Framework. This means that as soon as staff member begins an elearning module, their activity is recorded within their portfolio and they are able to work towards relevant certificates and diplomas.

At every level with Achieve, I haven’t ceased to be impressed: by its design, its delivery, its accessibility and its professionalism. I’ve never seen anything like it; it’s very helpful and much better than other systems I’ve seen previously

Barrie Green, Operations Director, Cambian Group

**The launch is only the beginning**

Sometimes, elearning initiatives don’t reach their true potential. Often, this is not due to either the system or the content but because of a failure to recognise the importance of continuing support. This has not been the case at Cambian. Communication and change management support has continued since the launch of Achieve:

- A dedicated Central Administrator has been appointed to oversee the day-to-day operation of the system. She handles user queries and support requests, acting as the link between Cambian HR, Cambian IT and Information Transfer.
- A weekly conference call for the project team was instigated during development of Achieve. This regular call has continued post-launch, now with a focus on the ongoing support and development of the system.
Cambian project team members continue to act as ambassadors for Achieve, visiting sites to promote usage, support users and assess the impact of e-learning.

Initially the content on Achieve focussed on mandatory training, however it has been so popular, Cambian is implementing further phases of content development to extend the range of specialist training available. Indeed, there have been so many suggestions with regards to what could go on the system, that a steering group has been established to ensure that what goes on Achieve continues to meet the needs of the both learners and the organisation.

**A resounding success**

E-learning is now an embedded part of working life at Cambian. The enthusiastic adoption of Achieve is demonstrated both by outstanding usage figures and very positive feedback from learners. And, crucially, this enthusiasm is already being translated into clear business benefits for Cambian.

These benefits have been achieved in the face of significant barriers to adoption of e-learning. Working in a people-focused, care based environment, with highly distributed sites and limited technical infrastructure, successful adoption has been driven by:

- Careful alignment with the business and its goals
- Engagement with stakeholders from across the business
- Thorough and effective communication
- On-going support and championing

This quote from the leader of the business sums up how the sympathetic use of e-learning has empowered Cambian’s people-focused business:

> At the heart of everything we do in Cambian is enabling people to reach their personal best. Achieve is making that happen for our staff and ultimately for the people in our care. We have highly committed, professional individuals and their enthusiastic response to blended learning is making a real difference across our business.

**Saleem Asaria, CEO, Cambian Group**

**Top tips from Cambian to ensure that e-learning becomes widely adopted into the organisation:**

1. Establish the business need for e-learning, and why traditional classroom learning wasn’t sufficient
2. Be aware of the challenges of rolling out technology in a care environment

*Devising a strategy to go about winning hearts and minds, including:*

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<td>3.</td>
<td>Conduct consultations to ensure that stakeholders are listened to and that major needs and issues are understood and incorporated into the final design.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Identify e-learning champions and how to use them most effectively.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Ensure that the system is kept simple and the content relevant to the work environment.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Make sure that communication and marketing strategies work to convey message and win people over.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>To ensure staff get a sense of familiarity and localisation with the e-learning, ensure that the content uses in-house terminology and is integrated with offline activities.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Take time to implement the e-learning using a phased-in pilot, where user experience can be evaluated, and changes made.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Interview managers approx 10 weeks post implementation to understand the operational impact of e-learning.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>To ensure that e-learning becomes embedded into an organisation, it is critical to provide on-going communication and change management support to staff.</td>
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