

How social learning gives compliance training at Virgin Media the edge in delivering – engagement and bottom line results

Virgin Media delivered its first fully remote and live social learning intervention to fulfil IT Compliance training. It resulted in unprecedented engagement, higher levels of competency and significant business results.

This synchronous integrated learning solution across multi-media digital learning environments earned Virgin Media the prestigious eLearning Age Gold Award for Best Use of Synchronous Learning.



Training and Development
Learning Solutions and Technology

The Business Requirement

Virgin Media is part of the Virgin group of companies, the largest Virgin Company in the world, with 13,000 employees across the UK and a turnover of c£4bn. The name Virgin is synonymous with innovation, flair and competitive cutting edge. It clearly embraces and reflects those attributes.

To secure the options to bid for over £530m worth of public sector tenders, Virgin Media has to adhere to a host of IT compliance standards. To enhance its competitive edge to win these tenders, Virgin Media decided to collaborate to create a world first solution that used synchronous e-learning. This integrated solution, with different digital media environments to develop and deliver a learning programme, would train the IT services management team to ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library – a set of practices for IT services management) Intermediate level. This was to be an expansion of the hugely successful foundation level ITIL already in place.

Barriers to success

However, this posed considerable challenges:

- Traditional classroom methods would not work due to disparate location of its staff.
- There was significant complexity of the content for the ITIL Intermediate level over and above that for the Foundation level.

- There was no digital learning solution that existed for this subject and level at that time.
- It was vital that participants remained engaged as the programme would result in a formal examination.
- From Benchmarking statistics¹, only 53% of those seeking to comply with new regulations and requirements actually achieve it and that wouldn't be high enough.
- The cost of roll out to such a large audience would be costly so affordability was an issue.
- They had to deliver a credible return while offering flexibility and convenience to participants.

Nicole Jennings is the Director of Service Management & looks after the team that undertook this training.



“...The outcome was absolutely phenomenal!...Our people are world class; they're leading the way in this sort of thing. There's a real buzz about the place – I now have a group of people that were quite nervous about this type of training, to being real advocates – and for me that's just amazing...”

The innovative solution

Working with partner ILX Group, a programme of classroom training that typically spanned 3 intensive days was taken and rebuilt into a collaborative and highly flexible programme that spanned several weeks, to teams spread across varying locations and with varying degrees of workload constraints.

Instructional designers covered off three key areas:

- Content design - ensuring that 15 hours of delivery would cover the core content of the programme and enable a logical flow of work through to the intervening scenario exercises.
- Classroom management - maintaining an unrestricted flow of dialogue with the participants during the remote workshops.
- An Online community - building an on-going social dialogue with the participants that would maintain interest and pace.

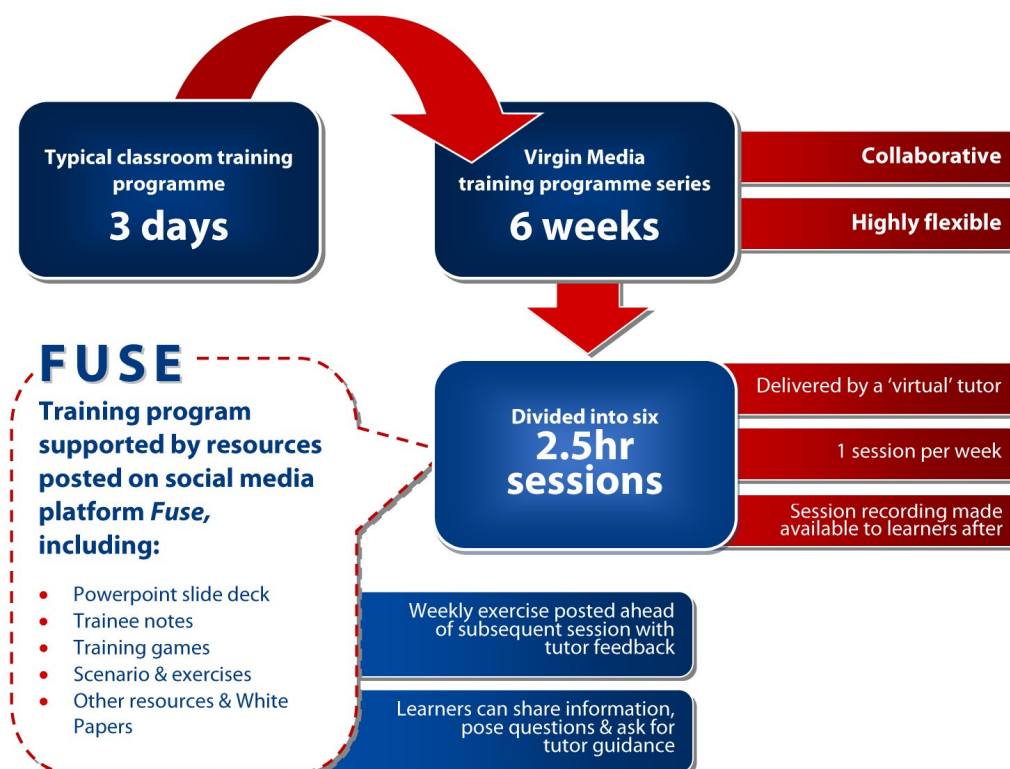
¹ Taken from Bridging the Gap - the [2012-13 Towards Maturity Benchmark](#)

It was identified very early on that due to the complexity of the subject matter, it would be necessary to engage the participants and allow them to collaborate. Managed as a pilot, they used Virgin Media’s Learning Management System, “Ignite”, together with “Fuse”, a social networking facility platform to allow for this collaboration between participants and tutors.

- The resulting programme comprised of a series of six 2.5 hour virtual Instructor Led Training (vILT) sessions, supported by a host of resources made available to participants.
- A weekly exercise was posted with the course tutor providing answers and feedback prior to the subsequent vILT session.
- The social network allowed participants to collaborate, share information, pose questions and generally seek guidance from the course tutor. ITIL was broken down into the 5 core subject areas (courses) and each designated a “community” in the social network. Alerts created for new postings or resources drove the learning process with this 2-way communication
- Session recordings were made available to learners afterwards for anywhere, anytime use.

They discovered that manually connecting participants to the community and receiving email alerts whenever anything new was posted increased engagement and usage was optimised.

The following diagram illustrates how all the learning methods and tools were integrated throughout the programme:



Learner Engagement

The technology has been extremely well received by delegates with a high degree of engagement from all communities using the social networking platform as a result of collaboration between users and the tutor. What could be a very isolated activity is now highly engaging and has even allowed delegates to check their learning directly with the trainer rather than in front of a group. The platform was also utilised to introduce problem solving solutions via social media.

The initial pilot proved that initial activity to drive information to participants pays dividends. The use of Ignite also allowed greater flexibility for participants and throughout the entire programme - only four people missed a session and were still able to “catch up”. Those participants who needed extra time to understand or revisit the training were able to do so using the recordings.

In addition, any participants who were less likely to interact in a classroom session enjoyed the opportunity to listen to the WebEx and question the course tutor via live chat and at their convenience.

The constant support provided to participants over the 6 week period (rather than just 3 days) has helped embed the learning much more deeply with L&D professionals acting as coaches and mentors rather than just facilitators.

The way the course was designed and built has created communities of practice outside of the classroom, increasing the productivity within Virgin Media. The group exercises held within the communities encouraged a deeper understanding of colleagues’ roles, responsibilities and perspectives, together with issues they each encounter within Virgin Media.

One employee:

...Your WebEx courses (best thing since slice bread), you have brought the courses to our desks without us having to sacrifice workload, Loving it, keep it up...

What were the Business Results?

The result was that the cost of training delivery and content complexity were greatly reduced while the capacity to reach a larger audience increased 50-fold to 1,500 interactions at any one time.

Cost savings

In terms of financial benefits, 36 people using traditional classroom training methods would normally cost approximately £65k, however the new programme was delivered at a fraction of the cost, £18K, representing a cost saving of £47K or 72%!

Virgin Media could train another 201 staff for the same cost which equates to a saving of 82% or £298,000 with the benefit of enabling more learners to competency. They have already selected the next 60 learners.

Competency & Engagement

From a UK 67% average pass rate, the programme delivered an impressive 87% first time pass with one participant achieving a score of 100%!

67%
Avg UK pass rate -
87%
Avg pass rate – VM

One learner got
100%!

Capacity to run **50**
courses at once:

30 people in
each virtual
classroom
1,500 speaking
and interacting with
the trainer from their
desks

36 people have
been trained at a
cost of **£18k**

Same training via
traditional
methods: **Cost**
£65k

Virgin Media could
train another
201 staff
for same cost!

From an initial 12 learners increasing to 36 during the programme and another 60 people due to follow and the volume of traffic through the social media platform, the effective engagement of this innovative and world first programme is clearly illustrated.

At any one time there is the capacity to run 50 courses at once with 30 people in each virtual classroom. This means that this solution could support 1,500 people speaking and interacting with a tutor from their desks.

Summary - Meeting expectations

The results were staggering and beyond what the organization initially envisaged with engagement, pass rates and subsequent embedding of the learning, achieving significantly higher results than even the current UK averages.

The success of this training programme is now being recognised across Virgin Media Talent & Development as a potential way to deliver learning and development in the future regardless of subject matter or discipline. Increased flexibility centered on social networking has literally changed the shape of talent and development within Virgin Media.

This story was brought to you from Towards Maturity as a result of the good practice partnership with e-learning age awards

By Marnie Threapleton
Head of Advisory Services
Towards Maturity @towardsmaturity

Tips for using social learning to improve Compliance training

- Encourage staff to share their own ideas for good practice using videos, social networks and blogs. Communication with learners is everything!
- Devise a system with regular alerts and updates – this will increase engagement and usage of e-learning.
- Use virtual meeting/classroom environments to engage with learners who are less likely to interact in a face to face classroom setting.
- Provide opportunities to access live content offline.
- Use social networking to increase motivation and participation rates.
- Think about learning outputs at the design stage - what are the desired outcomes and how can learning media be used effectively to achieve them.
- Introduce group exercises within e-communities – it will stimulate a deeper understanding of colleagues' roles, responsibilities and issues within your organisation.