



Newsletter 09

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to announce that 17,796 users are registered on the platform and this figure is likely to increase in the forthcoming months. It can not be under estimated the wealth of information that is available from such a large number of people on diversity issues. Since commencement of the project, the DP has provided innovative and internet based e-learning modules to 2340 beneficiaries who participated in modules that covered disability, gender, age, Welsh language, and religion and belief. The possibility of providing training, receiving feedback on learners' opinions and situations in relation to diversity issues, and obtaining valuable research on e-learning methods is phenomenal.

PROGRESS SO FAR

Since the commencement of Action 1 the cumulative figures for modules completed so far are:

- Race Module = 2040 beneficiaries finished
- Disability Module = 1420 beneficiaries finished
- Gender Module = 1160 beneficiaries finished
- Age Module = 847 beneficiaries finished
- Welsh Language = 540 beneficiaries finished
- Religious Beliefs = 331 beneficiaries finished

These modules are up-dateable and partners are in the process of providing personalised case studies to include in the Mark 2 versions. The combination of e-learning modules and e-communities can be engaging and informative, which some organisations and users are finding rewarding and interesting way to communicate and network with their colleagues. Results from the first report on ICT skills & e-learning have demonstrated that e-learning is possible if organisations manage the technology, ICT skills of learners is sufficient, organisational culture support the activity and staff want to participate.

Although the DP provides the modules to the organisations, each organisation in its' own unique style must deploy the modules, provide leadership and empower their learners to use the facilities and tools available. Understanding how to get the best out of e-communities, and to train individuals to run effective

Our Modules include:

Age

Disability

Gender

Religion & Belief

Sexual Orientation

The Welsh Language

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e-communities of practice will be another important advancement in the coming months. E-communities can be used to create new networks, share ideas, empower beneficiaries, and develop best practice amongst partners, and also have the potential to provide alternative work structures that can assist in work-life balance. The e-communities are a valuable source for allowing beneficiaries to have a method in feeding back their thoughts and emotions on the modules which also reflects their needs. For example a user from a county council wrote;

"I personally, found the course very interesting. It made me concentrate on all the various aspects of working and personal life. A lot of what was in the various modules is common sense and respect and courtesy for your fellow human beings. Fortunately I deal with a wide spectrum of people during my working day and when I started work, 44 years ago, I was taught to respect all people, which has lasted the passage of time. All 5 modules have had a direct action in my personal life, some that have brought hurt and others great personal and inner joy. I agree with the comments of other people, that it would be useful to be able to recap part of a lesson. One difficulty I had, was not knowing how long there was to complete the assessment; therefore, I was putting myself under pressure to complete ASAP. Many thanks for an enjoyable experience."

All organisations to some degree have developed their own style and approach to deploying the modules which in turn provides valuable information to innovative approaches to learning using

different methods of learning. It is envisaged that the information from these approaches will lead to a better understanding of e-learning.

RESEARCH

The University of Wales (UWB) submitted 2 reports on *Existing Pedagogy and Learning Methods in e-Learning* and a *Report on ICT Skills & e-Learning*, to the partners at the 5th DP Meeting held in Llandrindod Wells on the 27th of February 2007. The purpose of the former report was to investigate current research into existing pedagogical practices and methods in e-learning environment, to consider leading trends in e-learning, and to examine current technical developments that are shaping future e-learning whereas, the second report evaluated the effectiveness of e-learning with particular consideration for the effects on the affective domain of the participants.

Existing research in this area was explored and 11 Training Coordinators from 9 project partners were interviewed to provide the relevant background information about ICT in their organisation. The interview questions were made available to the Training Coordinators before the interviews which gave them the opportunity to obtain further information from within their organisations if necessary. The information obtained in this way was based on the opinions of the interviewees if there was no factual data available but because of the nature of their work these opinions should provide a fair representation of the facts.

The areas examined were the levels of IT skills and their distribution, the attitudes towards ICT and the barriers to the use of ICT. The findings demonstrated that a clear 'digital divide' exists in the general population and in the partner organisations. The divide is between skilled regular ICT users and unskilled or low skilled non-regular ICT users. Based on the results obtained e-learning in organisations is possible if a number of factors are in place. Many of these can be managed by the organisation involved, if not actually controlled by them.

- Technology must be in place.
- ICT skills of learners must be sufficient
- Organisational culture must support the activity
- Staff must want to participate

e-Learning has a great potential to support learning for employees. The multimedia aspects make the content enjoyable and accessible, and the delivery options mean it can be used in almost any learning situation where the technology is available. Most employees now have the ICT skills and experience to make good use of the new medium. Well designed learning systems are simple and easy to use, so they do not interfere with the learning. The barriers it raises for low skilled learners can be managed and reduced. An organisation that wants to use e-learning as a convenient, cost effective and enjoyable form of staff development for all its employees will target these barriers.

Please contact BTC Group Ltd if you wish to obtain copies of these reports or they can also be found in the Equalities Network Library.