



Rolling-Out e-Learning Effectively

A Case Study of Nottingham City Homes

Introduction

The Housing e-Academy provides e-learning training courses which are tailored specifically to the social housing sector. We have packages aimed at Staff, Board Members, Tenants and Contractors.

Nottingham City Homes joined the Housing e-Academy as Bronze Members in July 2010. Rob Clapham, Learning and Development Officer at Nottingham CityHomes said:



Photograph: Rob Clapham, Nottingham City Homes

"Nottingham City Homes are delighted to have joined the Housing e-Academy. This is a great opportunity to deliver high quality learning at a much lower cost than traditional training, whilst reducing the time people have to spend away from service delivery. The support we have received so far has been excellent, and we have high hopes and expectations for the future!" – Rob Clapham, August 2010

The Bronze Membership entitled Nottingham City Homes to 4 e-learning courses of their choice for all their staff:

- Fire Safety
- What is Housing?
- Data Protection in the Workplace
- Dealing with Anti Social Behaviour

For just £2,000 per year.

Obstacles to Overcome

e-learning is a very effective and inexpensive way to train staff as part of a blended approach with online and face-to-face training complementing each other side-by-side. Unfortunately there can be barriers to successfully implementing online training in an organisation.

The most common reasons people have to react negatively towards the idea of e-learning are:

IT Skills: *"I'm not very good with computers so I don't think I will be able to access e-learning."*

The Housing e-Academy Learning Management System (LMS) is designed to be very simple to use. By doing an IT check on all computers before roll-out and by having drop in sessions with technical support on hand you can make sure people feel confident accessing their online training.

Prefer Face-to-Face Training: *"e-learning cannot replace face-to-face training, it isn't as effective"*

Make sure that staff know that e-learning is not there to fully replace face-to-face training but is actually a tool to provide universal basic level awareness which means that classroom based training can be shorter and focus on more in depth aspects of a topic ensuring value for money.

Time: *"I'm too busy to fit long e-learning courses into my work day."*

e-learning can be done on any computer at anytime. It is designed specifically so that learners can dip in and out of training around other home and work commitments.



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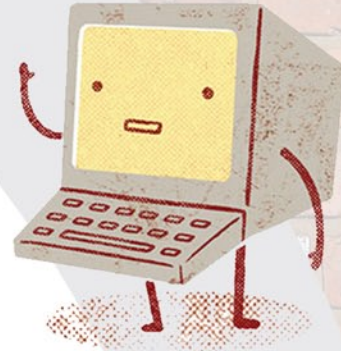
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Rob wanted to make sure that he received optimum Value for Money from the Nottingham City Homes and Housing e-Academy partnership and so took a very organised approach to the roll out of e-learning as a training method across the organisation.

Rob's Top 5 Tips for Effective Roll-out

1. Make sure you know how everything works before you start!

- It is important that you understand the system from both an administration AND learner point of view. Make sure that you have completed all of the courses that you are planning to set for your staff so that you can deal with any queries surrounding both content and technical access.
- The Housing e-Academy provide comprehensive administrator and learner user guides to all members and are always on hand to help deal with any trickier aspects of the system.



3. Make your staff aware of e-learning

- For successful roll-out you need to make sure that all staff know that e-learning is available to them and even more importantly, how they can access it! It's a good idea to advertise the e-learning system as much as possible e.g. in staff bulletins, newsletters, posters in communal areas, circular emails, on the company intranet etc. It is also a good idea to host 'drop-in' sessions where people can access the online training in a supervised area where they can have any of their questions answered.
- The Housing e-Academy has a wide range of internal marketing ideas and has posters and marketing materials available for organisations to use; we will even help you to design your own!

2. Have a roll-out plan

- It can be difficult rolling-out e-learning to an organisation, especially if they haven't used it before. The best way to do it is to split the organisation into sections and roll-out the e-learning bit by bit. Start with a small pilot group made up of learners from different areas of the organisation e.g. different job roles, different levels of IT skill etc. This will help you overcome any teething problems on a small scale and will enable you to get feedback before you roll-out to the organisation as a whole.
- A member of the Housing e-Academy team can come out and help you with any aspect of roll-out including assisting at guided pilot groups to make sure we are there to answer any questions that your learners have.





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4. Keep it Interesting!

- Incentives don't have to cost a lot of money; it's amazing what a bit of competition can achieve! Nottingham City Homes decided to roll-out their e-learning course-by-course. The first course 'Fire Safety', was made compulsory to all staff but to make it a little more fun, Rob decided to award a prize and a 'Team of the Month' certificate to the department who completed the training first. This proved to be an extremely effective plan and led to the highest completion rate of a course that the Housing e-Academy has ever seen!

"By getting Department Managers on board and adding a dash of competition, people who may have tried to avoid the training give it a go and once that first hurdle is overcome, learners become a lot more likely to attempt other online courses."

- Chloe Weatherhead, Head of the Housing e-Academy

- Emily French from the Housing e-Academy team went to Nottingham City Homes to help Rob host a stand at their 'Wellbeing at Work Day'. It gave staff a chance to have a look at the training on offer and even to have a go.

"It was great showing the staff how to use the e-learning, once they had a go nearly all of them wanted to get back to their desks so they could complete the course themselves. Once you break down learner misconceptions and they see how easy to use the training is, roll-out becomes a lot easier!"

- Emily French, Member Support, Housing e-Academy



5. Keep it up!

- Aim to keep up the enthusiasm of staff by continuing to advertise e-learning and promoting learner achievements. Monthly competitions such as 'Team of the Month' and 'Learner of the Month' go down well and help to remind people of the available training. Having a 'Course of the Month' is also a way to get people to do non-mandatory training. For example everyone who completes that course within the month could be entered into a prize draw.

- The Housing e-Academy also run competitions; Star Students nominated by their organisations for learning achievements are entered into a prize draw to win an iPod Shuffle and our Housing Hero award is given to the organisation who has achieved the highest course pass rate in the previous quarter. Both of these awards are advertised in our Hou-Zine magazine as well as on the website and our Blog. This is great PR for organisations and also recognises the hard work of our members.





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The Results

All of Rob's hard work paid off as they received a very enthusiastic response to the e-learning system. Sheryl Frazer received the e-learner of the Month award for October for her hard work and enthusiasm towards e-learning.

"I really enjoyed all the Housing e-Academy courses. They were easy to access and use, convenient, interactive, fun, and the tests at the end were quite challenging. Nottingham City Homes is saving a lot of money and staff time by using e-learning, and I think it can be a great value and modern alternative to more traditional training methods"

– Sheryl Fraser, Estate and Caretaker Manager for Nottingham City Homes



The 590 staff at Nottingham City Homes completed a whopping 780 courses in just 3 months which is a truly fantastic achievement.

This includes almost 90% of all staff completing the mandatory Fire Safety training in this time-frame.

Rob is determined to keep up the enthusiasm for e-learning within the organisation as part of a blended learning approach. A number of volunteers have put themselves forward to become 'e-Champions' who will be trained to deal with technical queries from learners as well as to become ambassadors and promoters of e-learning for the organisation. Naomi Hepworth from the Housing e-Academy team will be holding a training day for the new e-Champions

"e-Champions are a great way to keep up enthusiasm for e-learning. Although they need to have a good grasp of the system, the main reason they are selected is based upon their approachability and enthusiasm for e-learning. e-Champions are on hand to help learners with minor queries and to help people access their training. Not only does this free up the administrators time to concentrate on other aspects of the system, it also means that people become more comfortable in asking for advice which helps to further breakdown any existing barriers people feel they may face with online training." **-Naomi Hepworth, Account Manager – Housing e-Academy**

So congratulations to Nottingham City Homes who just go to show that if you plan your roll-out effectively, you can see some truly amazing results from utilising e-learning within your organisation.