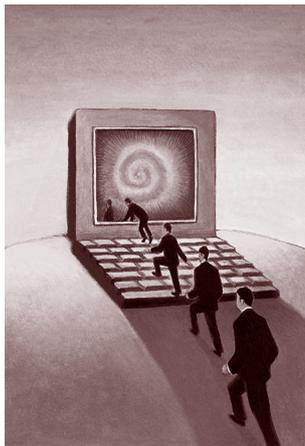


E-learning connects Cable & Wireless with big cost savings

... and helps to keep employees up to date in a constantly changing sector



International telecommunications company Cable & Wireless estimates that using e-learning in critical business and information-technology skills for its employees worldwide has cost about 80 percent less than the equivalent instructor-led training.

As well as cutting costs, Cable & Wireless believes that the system is helping to raise the level of knowledge within the organization. E-learning enables employees to dip freely into the training so they can quickly update and refresh their skills, which means they are continuously equipped with the knowledge to help the company to move forward in a difficult market.

In the two years since implementation of e-learning, around 5,500 employees have used the system and approximately 18,000 courses have been accessed. An evaluation carried out in April 2004 to seek learners' feedback found that 96 percent of the learners felt that they had been able to put their new knowledge and skills to use in the workplace, and 98 percent said they would use e-learning again.

Cable & Wireless provides voice and data telecommunication services to business customers in around 80 countries, and to residential customers in some markets, as well as services to other telecommunications carriers, mobile operators and providers of content, applications and internet services.

Employees take responsibility for their own learning

In the highly competitive telecommunications market, the company needed to ensure that its employees had the knowledge quickly to adapt to meet ever-changing business demands. The challenge was therefore to find learning that would be easily accessible and flexible enough to meet continually evolving training requirements. The training also had to be consistent in all of the many countries in which the company operates.

Cable & Wireless also wanted to empower employees by enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning. Improving sales capability and management skills were two main strategic training objectives that had been identified to improve company performance. In addition, the company sought a solution that would move it towards its goal of having a single, global, web-based system for all human-resource management and learning systems.

Cable & Wireless chose to provide most of its training through e-learning, which was to be delivered through Docent's learner-management system (LMS). The LMS was implemented in April 2002 and at the same time, Cable & Wireless rolled out a library of courses from Thomson NETg to nearly 8,000 employees in Cable & Wireless Global (UK, US, continental Europe and Asia).

This article was written by David Pollitt, the *Human Resource Management International Digest* editor.

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Mike Booth, e-learning services manager at Cable & Wireless, commented: “We first began working with Thomson NETg in the mid 1990s and had been impressed with the quality of the company’s learning content and its commitment to customer satisfaction. A critical factor in the decision to work with Thomson NETg on a wider scale was that its content is fully interoperable with Docent’s LMS. The depth and breadth of the company’s content is also impressive and the courses are available in a wide range of languages, which is important to us as a global company”.

Cable & Wireless currently deploys around 800 Thomson NETg online courses in business and professional skills, in topics such as leadership, communication and sales, plus a range of IT desktop and IT professional courses. The courses are available in multiple languages including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Japanese and UK and US English. Employees have access to all the courses as and when needed, to provide true learning-on-demand.

Marketing campaign

A comprehensive marketing campaign, which included mail-shots, road-shows and regular learning news on the intranet to educate employees on the learning available to them, helped to drive usage of the courses. Cable & Wireless sought to ensure that there were no barriers to learning and that all employees could access any course they wished.

Mike Booth commented: “In effect, the e-learning is used in a similar way to a library, where staff can choose from a wide selection of courses. We want access to learning to be as easy as possible so we have no authorization process. We find that this approach ensures a high usage rate. Marketing is also an important factor and we intend to expand our marketing program with the help of Thomson NETg. We plan to hold regular presentations to key managers so they can encourage teams to use the learning, and we will also be establishing drop-in centres where we will demonstrate the courses and LMS functions”.

He concluded: “Our vision for learning is to instil e-learning as a way of life across the entire Cable & Wireless Group. We want learning to become an integral part of our company culture, where learning is such a natural process that employees do it without even thinking about it. We have been able to create a world-class learning solution that is setting a benchmark for the rest of industry, so we believe that we are well on our way to realizing our vision. We have been able to develop a cost-effective, business-critical e-learning solution that is available to a global audience. Our employees now have a fantastic and highly flexible learning resource at their fingertips – which can only help to drive our business forward and keep us competitive”.

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