

Tales from our E-learning journey

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The Project

- To develop an E-learning unit of study at Masters level focusing on organisational culture in the NHS and the effects on the workforce of the increasing use of immigrant professional labour.

Background

- Increasing multicultural society.
- Shortage, maldistribution and misutilisation of nurses (ICN 1999).
- Migration of qualified nurses who have 'portable' skills.
- Ageing workforce.
- Increased workload.
- Diversification of nurses' work.
- Government target of 330,000 nurses by 2004 (Buchan 2002).
- International recruitment.

Why Go E-Based ?

- E-Based learning is a way of meeting some of these challenges (Hanson, 2002) :
 - **widening access and increasing flexibility.**
 - **dealing with more diverse students.**
 - **funding stretch.**
 - **globalisation.**
 - **threat from competitors.**
 - **greater demand for accountability.**
- A grant in 2002 / 2003 allowed us to start developing an E-Based unit.

The Journey

- August - September 2002.
 - **Research Phase.**
- October 2002 - June 2004.
 - **Programme Development.**
- July 2004 - January 2005.
 - **Validation/Revisions.**
- February - May 2005.
 - **Pilot Internally.**
- June - July 2005.
 - **Evaluate and Report.**

Journey Obstacles

- Some of the problems were:
 - **availability of staff with relevant expertise.**
 - **external recruitment partially successful but late.**
 - **staff sickness; project halted to search for new project manager.**
 - **lack of defined dates for completion.**
 - **demands on time and resources of developers and academics.**
 - **considerable enthusiasm and subject knowledge within school but lack of expertise in learning technology.**

Where we were last year.....

- New project manager and project plan.
- Study guide and first section of unit complete as e-learning material.
- Pilot planned for January 2004.

Where we are now.....

- School commitment to complete project remains very strong.
- All seven topics and the study guide have now been completed and rewritten.
- Validation is being planned for Summer 2004.
- Feedback and reflections from the evaluation of the Managing Low Back Pain E-learning unit will be used to refine the unit.
- Pilot and detailed evaluation is planned for Winter/Spring 2005.

What have we learned : Design

- Best practice method identified so far has been to follow the three stage process (Jones, 1992) of Divergence, Transformation and Convergence :
 - **Divergence - brainstorming ideas - including what we wanted to include and what could be achieved within a specific timeframe.**
 - **Transformation - focusing on one area to develop and the objectives required to produce it.**
 - **Convergence - finalising objectives and identifying the risks and possible solutions before proceeding with the production of content and design.**

What have we learned : IHCS

- The mistakes of this project (e.g. timescales being under-estimated) have proved valuable in highlighting how future developments could be improved.
- The experience has benefited IHCS in terms of an increased insight into academic and technical staff roles in e-learning.
- Parts of the unit have been able to be taken forward by other units enabling them to be developed faster (e.g. Study Guide, initial look and feel).
- Developing directly onto screen rather than by paper first is a much smarter way of working.

What have we learned : BU

- The procedures for validating E-learning units are not on a par with traditional units - this needs to be addressed.
- BU should formulate a cohesive central strategy in the processes of creating and validating E-learning units (information on its E-learning strategy, accessibility, usability etc).
- BU should examine and adopt best practice techniques as used in the private sector:
 - **improved sharing of information across schools.**
 - **a more cohesive communication network.**
 - **'Us and them' - working together rather than in competition with each other.**