



Sustainable learning and development on a global scale

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Bruce Cornford
BSS Professional Community Lead
BT Global Services

BT Global Services shares best practice and increases skills, knowledge, and abilities using BT Conferencing technology

Client

BT Global Services helps multi-sited multinational organisations master the complexity of business communications, serving corporate and government customers in over 170 countries worldwide. It has more than 24,000 highly skilled people in 53 countries across all continents. The BT Global Services Learning and Development team has the stretching task of meeting the training and development needs of that global workforce in cost effective and sustainable ways.

in terms of travel costs and ineffective time. That’s notwithstanding its impact on the environment, which makes it an unpopular choice in any case. Julie continues: “Downward pressure on budgets, and the quest for more sustainable business practice, focused our minds on developing alternative models. We engaged with BT Conferencing to find a technology-based solution for remotely supporting professional communities.”

Challenge

Professional communities are a key focus. Julie Doyle, Head of Engagement in the BT Global Services Learning and Development team, explains: “Professional communities group together people across the company who face similar daily challenges. By identifying common personal development needs we can assure process consistency and promote best practice.”

However, transporting globally dispersed people into traditional face-to-face learning environments is prohibitively expensive

Solution

The Business Support Specialists (BSS) professional community was one of the first to trial the new approach. This 2,000-strong group – which includes programme office managers, project co-ordinators, and billing analysts – supports customer implementation projects and business operations. Bruce Cornford, the BT-wide lead for the BSS professional community, says: “BSS people within BT provide essential data to aid effective decision-making, but they have not always enjoyed the same personal development investment as other professional communities. Our aim is to raise the skills and self-esteem of this vital group.”

BT Conferencing differentiators

- Market leading fully hosted platform requiring no hardware or software deployment by the client organisation
- Cost effective pay-as-you-go service with no capital outlay or fixed charges
- Global reach with local representation and support
- Professional services to help maximise value add

A BT Conferencing case study

BT Professional Communities

“The powerful virtual learning environment we created in co-operation with BT Conferencing will be hugely significant in years to come. It provides the means for our people to learn and collaborate in sustainable ways.”

Julie Doyle
Head of Engagement
BT Global Services

The BT Global Services Learning and Development team, working closely with BT Conferencing and Bruce Cornford, developed a distance-learning programme using Web 2.0 technology. In particular, briefing was provided by BT Conferencing professional services consultants on best practice in virtual collaboration – for example, ways to encourage delegate interaction to make the sessions more engaging, memorable, and fun.

The BSS high-touch pilot programme was focused on Microsoft Excel (a survey had revealed the application is used regularly by 93 per cent of the BSS community). Featuring the use of BT Conferencing-hosted Microsoft Live Meeting services, a collaborative global learning environment was created.

Led by subject matter experts the programme involved 26 candidates in six virtual master classes. Supplemented by individual distance learning assignments, a Microsoft-certified accreditation was attainable. Presenters could choose to have their sessions in broadcast mode for focused briefing, or interactive so that delegates could pose questions in real time.

Offices worldwide

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Angie Cartwright, Learning and Development Engagement Partner for the BSS professional community in BT Global Services, comments: “The BT Conferencing facilities were key to the success of the programme. As well as having white board and text capability there was an anonymous voting feature to help us check understanding. The technology also enabled us to hold breakout sessions, to allow sub-groups of delegates to tackle assignments, before bringing the whole virtual group back together for report back.”

A second high-touch pilot involved Service Operations – a professional community comprising 6,300 people spread across 28 countries. Thirty community members joined a ten-week training programme that included master classes delivered via Microsoft Live Meeting focusing on a range of topics to aid more effective business decision-making. These sessions involved participants from China, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, the UK and the USA.

Value

Delegate feedback has been very positive. Ninety per cent found the BSS high touch programme to be of value and there were no reported issues with the medium. Significantly, all delegates agreed that participation in the programme had helped them improve client delivery.

Aside from reduced ineffective time and the sustainability benefits of travel avoidance, there is a significant reduction in direct costs. Angie Cartwright comments: “We calculated an average saving of over 40 per cent – that’s more than £300 per delegate – compared to traditional face-to-face media. That means that we can provide learning opportunities for twice the number of people for the same investment, without loss in quality of delivery.”

There are productivity improvements too. A survey revealed an average 12.5 per cent personal efficiency improvement in a delegate’s use of Excel. With each using the application around 10 hours weekly this equated to 1.25 hours saved each week.

The Service Operations high touch programme has been equally well received. Carla Thomas, the BT-wide lead for the Service Operations professional community, observes: “Although there were cultural differences among participants the pilot demonstrated that the essence of the programme is common to all. The fluent exchange of information and the positive engagement of participants, enabled by BT collaboration technologies, coupled with the delegate feedback, is proof of a common interest and enthusiasm.”

There are 19 different professional communities within BT and each has its own unique development needs. “The potential for the extension of this approach is enormous,” adds Julie Doyle. “The powerful virtual learning environment we created in co-operation with BT Conferencing will be hugely significant in years to come. It provides the means for our people to learn and collaborate in sustainable ways.”

For BSS a priority is to enhance skills around other business support tools. The success of the initial pilot will see the scheduling of similar sessions around Microsoft Project and Microsoft PowerPoint.

Bruce Cornford sums up: “Conferencing is a cost effective way for BT to invest in the skills of its people. This will undoubtedly improve job satisfaction and deliver improvements that will benefit the business through enhanced effectiveness and better customer service.”

Core BT Conferencing services

- Microsoft Office Live Meeting
- Professional Services for implementation and best practice

For further information visit: www.btconferencing.com

