



Process Management International

Global IT Distance Learning Programme

Context

A Global IT function which provides services to the whole organisation group. There are 2000 staff, and the function also manages considerable outsourced resources. PMI has provided Business Improvement training since 2003.

Challenge

During 2010 severe restrictions were placed on travelling. However, there remained a world-wide need for training in process and quality improvement; to enable delegates to make easy improvements in their work area. Fourteen delegates were identified in 10 different locations with time zones ranging from -5 to +7 GMT. Discussions were held on how to respond to this need, providing training without travelling, but maintaining as far as possible the opportunity for the delegates to develop the type of capabilities they would have experienced had they participated in a classroom based course.

PMI's Contribution

We explored a number of alternatives with the client, after which we agreed the contents and mechanisms that built on PMI's many years of development and experience in virtual training. The training process consisted of 10 4-hourly sessions hosted by PMI, over a 3 week period and was attended by the 14 delegates in real time. The sessions were held in the afternoon in the UK, to enable as much as possible the attendance by the delegates in normal working hours. The 4 hour sessions consisted of a mix of tutor led instruction, team-work using virtual break-out rooms, online videos and templates, Q&A sessions, and reflection time. In addition delegates also studied PMI's online e-Learning modules, which remained available for self-study after the course.

Achievements

- Delivery of 40-hours of virtual learning to 14 delegates in 10 geographically-dispersed locations.
- Enabled team-working and team-building in a virtual environment
- 100% of delegates rated the course and course tutor 4 or 5 out of 5 (5=extremely satisfied) and would recommend the course to others.
- A state-of-the-art virtual learning environment was created, using proprietary software, enhanced by PMI's award-winning e-learning modules, and library of video material.
- Extremely reliable delivery method, back-up by risk mitigation plans if the online connection dropped out.
- Delegates received a certificate of attendance. Nor project work or follow up was part of this intervention.



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Lessons

Although it is not an equal replacement of physical class-room based training, live consultant-led virtual training is a great solution, when there is no opportunity to have physical classroom based training, as it provides a focus for geographically dispersed delegates to concentrate on their learning in a safe, managed and collaborative environment at a specific time during an agreed period. In this way it is much superior to self-managed study, which can succumb to work pressures, and extend over too long a time, and does not have the all-important collaborative approach to process improvement.

Other key lessons are:

- The process needs expert subject matter coaching, as delegates have less opportunity to interact with tutors than in classroom events.
- The delivery format of virtual training is significantly different from the conventional class-room based delivery, thus necessitating expert learning design, development and testing before a real session is done

Wider Applicability

This process is appropriate for any client that has geographically-dispersed delegates with good on-line connectivity. It should be seen as complementary to a 'normal' intervention, rather than a whole-sale replacement. To ensure maximum benefits from the course, it requires experienced continuous professional coaching on the implementation of the learning, as well as the detailed knowledge of the PMI training components.

Further Reading

A full interview podcast with the the IT Director of Process Improvement is available to download at www.pmi.co.uk.