City&Guilds

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TECHNO-LOGIC – USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

A SURVEY OF OPERATIONAL STAFF AT TRAINING PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS
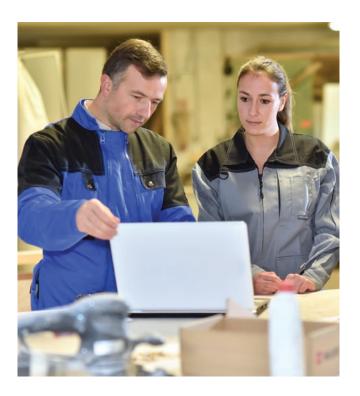
MARCH 2015

INTRODUCTION

City & Guilds conducted a survey with 118 operational staff at independent training providers and work-based-learning units within FE Colleges, also referred to in this report as training provider organisations, to try to understand more about three key areas:

- The current issues faced by operational staff
- The extent to which existing digital support is helping to overcome some of those issues
- How that support is perceived by those who use it

The research is intended to help training provider organisations develop effective digital strategies and to inform the development of City & Guilds' Grow Your Business offer.

DAY-TO-DAY ISSUES

The most common issues faced day-to-day by staff were identified as:

46% The pressure to make financial savings in the way teaching, learning and assessment is delivered

46% Finding time for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

37% Having access to digital resources

36% Having access to the latest resources

Out of all of these, financial pressures were recognised as having the biggest impact, but the collective impact of all of these issues was on the ability of staff to deliver quality to their students.

It is clear from the survey that time is very squeezed across the week, and staff can struggle to find time to prepare fully for lessons by researching the latest resources, and for CPD.

As such, it was felt that having better access to digital resources would be the biggest advantage of external digital support, as this would reduce the amount of time staff were forced to make or look for their own, and just help them feel they can focus on what is important.

This is something that can be addressed by platforms such as e-portfolios and e-learning tools. Furthermore they could also help tackle some of the other issues identified.

E-PORTFOLIOS

Overall, e-portfolios were viewed very positively by those who had used them. The key benefits were seen as:

80% Allowing greater visibility of student progress

69% Allowing tutors to work in more places, including offline

62% Improving quality assurance

63% Receiving real-time feedback

60% Encouraging greater learner participation

Those who used an e-portfolio also demonstrated a greater appetite for more digital support, being almost twice as likely to request this. Significantly, they were also far less likely to feel that financial pressures were the most important issue they faced, suggesting that introducing an e-portfolio system could go some way to alleviate this pressure within departments.

The drawbacks to using e-portfolios were identified as:

83% Being reliant on the internet/network connection

51% Time needed for training on how to use it effectively

34% Inconsistent usage across staff/ departments

This underlines the already known issue around ensuring consistent access to digital resources – including internet connection – across the sector. Although, interestingly, 69% of respondents argued that one of the benefits of an e-portfolio was that it allows tutors to work in more places, including offline. This may not be so surprising though when you consider the rise in popularity of mobile apps. It also highlights an opportunity to offer packages with full training to help staff implement usage effectively.

E-LEARNING

Like e-portfolios, e-learning was also viewed very positively and the key benefits were seen to be:

88% Makes training more accessible to students

72% Encourages independent learning

72% Encourages learner participation

72% Helps bring training to life

Those who used e-learning tools were also less likely to highlight lack of access to the latest resources and financial pressures as key day-to-day issues, indicating that these tools may go some way to alleviate these issues.

However, there were some areas where e-learning tools were polarising, notably in relation to improving communication with students and improving creativity through online sharing. This indicates that the context to usage is important here, and underlines the significance of making sure that e-learning tools are used as a complement to other forms of learning, such as face-to-face.

The key drawbacks identified were:

75% Being reliant on the internet/network connection

50% Not enough contact with students

38% Time needed for training on how to use it effectively

This again highlights the ongoing issue of ensuring consistent access to digital resources and namely the internet across the sector.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a recognised issue with the consistency of access to technology across departments within the sector, often relating to funding, and this research acts as a reminder of this. However, it also highlights that there are tools that exist that may go some significant way to alleviate many of the key pressures felt by staff at training provider organisations, and contribute to a higher quality of delivery at the same time. As long as correct training can be provided, these tools could make a significant impact.

Download the full report from **www.cityandguilds.com/growyourbusiness**