

LSIS Leadership in Technology (LIT) grant based intervention Impact study template

Provider name & contact details	Mantra Learning
LIT Project title	Get Skilled –Get Noticed –Get On
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	<p>In 2011 Mantra commissioned a review of the processes associated with our Job Gym employability programmes, focusing on the touch points with learners, the administrative processes and data flows associated with these programmes.</p> <p>This LIT project was a pilot to assess the capabilities Digital Marketing technologies in contributing to improvements in this expanding business area, particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce staff time spent creating and following up invitations to IAG. • Enhance recruitment to PFU by increasing learner numbers and percentage attendance rates at each IAG session. • Reduce non attendance rates of PFU learners booked for skills training sessions thereby increasing delivery efficiencies. • Reduce time staff time spent searching and identifying job opportunities and divert that time to securing actual job outcome. Thus further building on our present 40% job outcome rate
Why did you go for a technology-based solution	<p>Digital marketing technologies were selected for their potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the quality and credibility and timeliness of written and visual communication with learners • Lower the costs of learner communication • Increasing the number of times we are able to communicate with learners during a programme. • Improve access to job vacancy information for learners without increasing the staff spend identifying suitable job vacancies –thus enabling them to focus on supporting the job application and interview process.
What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your organisation's contribution	c.£8,250
Describe what you	Mantra has adapted and developed the use of two key digital

<p>did and what happened</p>	<p>marketing technologies as tools for communicating with learners on PFU programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HTML email-marketing • Text marketing software <p>During a review in 2011 the entire set of processes associated with the employability learner journey were mapped. From initial referral by JCP through to entering sustained employment / passing beyond the scope of support offered by Mantra's employability programmes. The review focused on the various data transfers and the touch points with learners from initial engagement to passing between the various support an intervention stages associated with Job Gym.</p> <p>Following the review it was decided to use this programme to pilot the use of semi-automated text messaging and semi/automated HTML email distribution at the following points in the leaner journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial referral from Job Centre Plus • Confirmation of programme start dates • Maintaining contact with learners as they transfer between each of the 4 stages of Mantra's employability programme. Between stages 2 and 3 in particular there is often a break of 3-4 weeks. • Supporting learners into new employment by providing up to the minute information on job vacancies. <p>Prior to commencing the project Mantra identified the possible contribution of digital marketing tools to these objective, including a stretch target of developing the capacity to automatically generate and circulate daily/weekly emails containing RELEVANT, up to the minute job vacancy data to learners on our employability programmes.</p> <p>On being awarded funding, Mantra identified possible technology solutions, then met with suppliers and a range of internal / external stakeholders to refine the project plan and possible solutions. Full day visits were exchanged with our mentor organisation which proved an excellent means of getting an understanding of each organisations structure and objectives. From this relative strengths were identified and the contribution of the mentor was able to make defined.</p>
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From a wide range of possible, two software solutions were identified for each area of development (text and HTML email). Key considerations included: feature set vs aims of this project and wider future business needs; cost (purchase, ongoing and commissioning); support resources; credibility of companies already using the technologies; ease of adoption (software had to be intuitive); matching sophistication of package to Mantra's capability and internal expertise.

KPI data sets were refined and mechanisms for measurement put in place.

Over a month, the four packages were trialled against relatively small scale models of the indented use, and one text solution and one email solution selected for the pilot project.

Working closely together, Mantra's Job Gym and IT team identified the most time consuming elements of learner communication. Touch points where fail to attend or learner drop of rates were highest were further defined. Electronic templates were then establish to support the rapid and mass production/release of learner communication at these points.

Alongside this project, and to an extent improved by the requirements of this pilot, the IT team and Job Gym team worked together to develop data capture systems that would:

- a) facilitate the transfer and sharing of relevant data fields with text and email solutions
- b) support the automated production of KPI and reporting data from the information gathered during interactions with learners.

Templates for emails and text communication were then developed by the Job Gym team, supported by internal marketing and staff with copy writing skills.

Key team members were trained in the use of software, and the pilot sent live. Communication was refined as the results of early trials became available from the read/open rate data generated automatically by the text/email software.

Alongside the use of email to improve the quality of communication relating to programme overviews and individual start details/directions etc, the stretch objective of generating custom job search updates was pursued. The Job Gym team members were charged with communicating this facility to

	<p>learners whilst IT worked in collaboration with marketing to develop the email templates and technological solution.</p> <p>The result of this was the development of an automated emailer that uses RSS feeds to compile customised job search information personalised to each employability learners job search preferences.</p> <p>Learner job search preferences are captured via a simple online form where a range of text boxes are used to define job sector, location and other criteria. This form is distributed to learners via email, web links or filled in online whilst in centre. This not only give the learner ownership of their job search, but encourages best practice in the form of opt in/ double opt in e-marketing.</p> <p>With templates in place, it has been possible to deliver daily emails to job seekers without the need for any intervention from IT or Job Gym team members unless it is deemed necessary to update the template of refine job search criteria. These daily updates carry up to the minute job vacancies (pertinent to the individual) that draw together posting from over 20 external job websites including Monster and Direct.gov.</p> <p>Following on from the success of this project, the Job Gym team has identified further potential for the use of high quality email in communication with Job Centre advisors and other stakeholders. As each email release automatically generates data showing open, click and other activity the results of the various campaigns are now being used to inform the design, structure and content of future communications. Email has replaced posted updated and is no longer sent into a 'black hole' where one is unsure if communications have been read or acted on and what type of communication is relevant to various stakeholders in our employability programmes.</p>
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The benefits and impact

<p>What benefits/ impact has the project had on:::</p>	<p>a. the work/ effectiveness of your organisation</p> <p>Cost of producing and sending quality communication to learners and other stakeholders has been significantly reduced.</p> <p>It is now possible to distribute personalised daily/weekly job vacancy updates to employability learners and other stakeholders (initial set up aside –with templates in place refinements average</p>
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around a single 20-30mins of human input per refinement / additional job search criteria build).

Job coaches are kept informed of the latest job vacancies and can focus more on supporting learners in the job application process rather than job search.

Employability learners are kept motivated by the fact that there are jobs out there despite recession. They are also able to shift their efforts away from job search and into improving the quality of their application.

Use of text software has helped reduce the number of no-shows on Mantra programmes and quickly communicate session availability to other learners in the event of cancellations.

b. the cost/ efficiency of activities

1) One of the key objectives associated with this project was to reduce the percentage of JCP referrals to Job Gym that fail to attend whilst also coping with an increase in referrals.

For the 3 months to December '11 of 577 learners referred 45% failed to attend.

For the 3 months to July '12 of 834 learners referred a much lower 41.2% of learners failed to attend.

Although other factors have contributed to this figure the team feel that the use of text and email, along with other efficiencies in learner communication and tracking that have spun out of this project are a significant factor in this dramatic reduction.

2) The number of learner communication templates has been increase from 2 to 10. This has not only improved the quality of communication with learners, but the consistency of communication with learners.

3) Our range of communication media has expanded from post and basic email to encompass automated/semi automated HTML email and text messaging.

4) Still expanding, the number of communications we send to each employability learner has increase by at least 30% and in

	<p>the cases of learners taking automated job updates by over 800%, without increasing staff costs and at the same time reducing send overall send costs.</p> <p>5) Customised, daily jobs updates distributed to learners via email essentially free of charge. Each refinement costs approx £15 in labour, but can be distributed free of charge and run automatically 365 days per year, for as long as the learner wishes to receive that particular job search.</p> <p>6) Joining instructions for employability programme are now generated automatically via a mail merge process rather than being customised to each individual. A saving of at least 8 hours labour a week. Those 8 hours have been directed to higher level tasks associated with delivery and support of employability programmes.</p> <p>7) Although difficult to measure and attribute directly to this pilot alone, the Job Gym team have been able to sustain job outcome rates well above national averages.</p>	
	<p>c. any other aspect of your work</p> <p>Running this project alongside a wider project to refine the working practices of Mantra’s Job Gym (employability) team has spurred further innovation in the way the Microsoft SharePoint (another free software resource) is used to improve resource sharing, communication and data capture across 4 learning centres and a rapidly expanding team, dispersed throughout Greater Manchester and Cheshire/Warrington.</p> <p>In turn the IT team have identified and implemented low cost solutions to sharing data sets between SharePoint and our text/email communication systems. It has also become possible to leverage SharePoint as a system from which KPI reports and be both generated and shared across the organisation.</p>	
<p>What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:</p>	<p>LSIS funding</p> <p>Your mentor</p> <p>LSIS Associate</p>	<p>a lot</p> <p>a little</p> <p>some</p>

<p>Do you have any comments on the funding, mentor or LSIS Associate.</p>	<p>Our LSIS Associate provided some great support for the project and proved an excellent sounding board for the refinement of the initial project plan. Having an external stakeholder act as a critical friend also helped test and establish the validity of the project and the quality of the solution.</p> <p>Our mentor organisation were very open and supportive of the project. They shared valuable information on their own approaches and experience in the use of text and email marketing technologies with PFU learners early on in the project. However, ultimately the expertise of the mentor in our selected area did not prove to be as advanced and strong as that available within Mantra and our technology supplier partners. Unfortunately, their impact on the overall direction and development of this pilot project was rather limited. On this occasion it was felt that having greater freedom in selection of mentor to encompass expertise from a range of organisations including experts in the use of digital marketing from the commercial arena may have been more beneficial.</p>
<p>What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers</p>	<p>Early on in the project we experienced the scenario of having our e-marketing account suspended. This not only re-iterated the need to follow a tightly structured approach to e-marketing, but also identified some key weaknesses in administrative process and the quality of our keyed data.</p> <p>Selection of the right software /software provider was important. Our selection of Mail Chimp for e-marketing provided access to effective software that came backed with a wealth of support resources that provided expert guidance on not just the technical aspects of the software, but some excellent (and free!) resources on how to develop effective e-marketing campaigns.</p> <p>Selection of a project that is directly mapped to business needs, not only makes it much easier to engage staff from across the organisation. In turn the engagement of a range of staff and learners in a live project supports the development and refinement of technological solutions.</p>
<p>Telling others</p>	

<p>What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered a seminar based on the project at the LSIS – Technology for Success event in March '08. • Shared the strategies and outcomes of this project with the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network for dissemination to their 55 member organisations.
<p>Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project.</p>	<p>“An exciting project which enabled Mantra to find a pathway to delivering against some key business objectives by exploring some innovative uses of effective software at very low cost. Feedback from internal and external stakeholders has been very positive. This pilot has provided the impetus and encouragement for a number of staff to start exploring the use of digital marketing technologies to achieve departmental goals and achieve personal targets.”</p>
<p>Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Contact details for further information</p>	<p>Antony Fearn 07783 414995</p>

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