

CASE STUDY

# The Tech Partnership- Raising the quality of digital skills training

A Virtual College Case Study



## The background

### The Tech Partnership is the network of employers collaborating to create the skills for the UK digital economy.

Its ambition is to deliver the skills required for a million digital jobs by 2025. As no one organisation can achieve this alone, employers are working together, acting for the good of all.

The Tech Partnership works in 3 critical areas to reach its goal:

- Inspiring new and diverse talent into digital careers working in schools, colleges and universities across the UK
- Raising the quality of digital skills training and education by setting apprenticeship standards and developing degree and degree apprenticeship programmes to meet employers' needs
- Enabling everyone to gain the basic digital skills they need by promoting a common digital skills framework and championing basic digital skills initiatives

## The challenge

### Shaping the desired outcomes from a collaborative venture

The Tech Partnership needed a way to underpin their face to face delivery with a range of online resources to support the Digital Business Certificate at Level 3.

Virtual College, as experts in developing online resources that map into qualifications, responded to an open tender to develop these resources in collaboration with the Tech Partnership, their appointed training providers and employers.

This pilot project was a collaborative venture between a number of stakeholders within central government, IT/Digital Skills employers and the further education sector.

The overall objectives were to enable:

- Training providers who do not currently have the ability to deliver online learning in this area to quickly and cost-effectively get to market with a blended-learning-based course
- Learners to benefit from the opportunity to learn and apply the learning away from the training providers' facilities
- Employers and learners to be confident in the high quality of the online training because it has been developed by an industry leader, with input from training providers, learners and employers.

## The solution

### Creating the platform for success

Employers, through the Tech Partnership, collaborated to set the standards and to accredit high quality training, designed to support small businesses that have little or no online presence and may lack digital skills.

Following their success in the tendering process, Virtual College was contracted with the Tech Partnership to custom-build online competency based resources to support the Digital Business Certificate at Level 3.

With a diverse range of stakeholders, including central government funders, it was important to develop a product which would meet a wide variety of needs. To help the team decide on the approach, Virtual College fast tracked a module.

Mark Heholt, Project Manager for the Tech Partnership, explained how this helped the project to progress: "Virtual College delivered a 'spike' project which meant we had early sight of the first module which helped us to sharpen our own specification and gave us confidence in their ability to move quickly."

With the content being shaped collaboratively by an employer group and with tight funding deadlines to meet, Virtual College identified and appointed a local, appropriately experienced and qualified subject matter expert to support the development on a day to day basis.

"We work in an agile way and so feedback is important to make the product the best it can be. We worked closely with the Tech Partnership throughout the development to ensure we were on track and could adapt as we progressed in response to their feedback," explained Sarah Baker, Content Development Manager.

Mark at the Tech Partnership agreed that this agile way of working produced the best possible results: "We were particularly pleased with the way in which they responded to our comments on draft modules and their ability to amend those drafts to meet our requirements."

In order to meet the needs of different training providers, Virtual College's instructional designers were invited to face to face sessions to see how the content was delivered in that environment.

"It is really useful when we are creating blended training programmes to see first-hand how the face to face training is run," explained lead instructional design John Hinchliffe.

"This collaborative approach helps us to complement the style and delivery of classroom sessions. It also gives us unique insight into the learners; the questions they ask, the way they engage and any areas they are finding particularly tricky.

"This experience helped us shape the solution which included a range of different resources to cater to different learning styles including video resources.

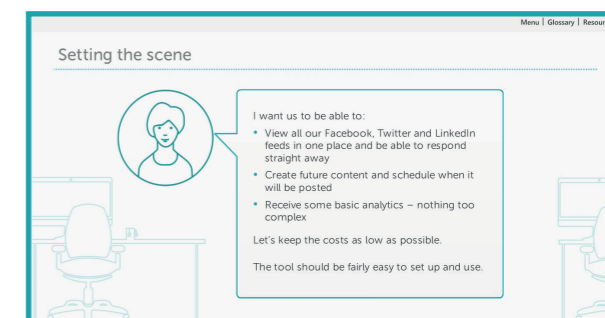
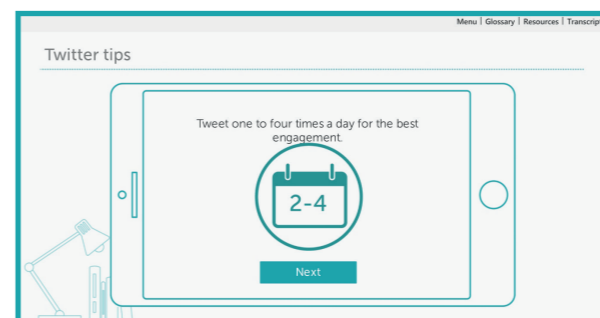
"The learner demographic was very diverse in age, qualification background and profession. We therefore chose a contextualised, practical approach to the content development."

The resources take a scenario based approach. For example, the 'An Introduction to Twitter for Business' module places the learner in the position of an employee at an outdoor adventure centre who is looking to use Twitter to enhance the business.

Throughout the delivery a formative assessment approach was used to help adult learners contextualise the information and learn from their mistakes in a safe environment.

Video content is employed to give the learning objectives some real world context, using 'talking-head' pieces where the subject speaks about his experience of using Twitter as a business tool.

These pilot programmes provide an innovative approach to delivery. Fast-paced, intensive and modular, they offer individuals focused, flexible training that quickly develops their skills.



# The results

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## Delivering with passion and commitment

Virtual College has delivered online interactive resources in storyline (25 resources initially plus another 2 more in-depth resources afterwards) which are used as knowledge content as well as part of the formative assessment.

This project demonstrates Virtual College's ability to use the appropriate level of interactivity to create an engaging resource and makes great use of video and animation to help bring the vocational aspects of the content to life.

Mark added: "Even where we were a bit uncertain about certain aspects of our requirements, they offered innovative and workable solutions. In short, they acted as a genuine partner, rather than just a provider."

Virtual College has been commissioned to complete further work with the Tech Partnership on monetising the online courses and Digital Skills certificate materials and is currently exploring different commercial opportunities.

As digital now has to be included on all of the new apprenticeship frameworks, these online resources are very appropriate.

Mark concluded: "We were extremely pleased both with the end product and with the service we received during the development.

"Virtual College put a strong and highly professional team on this work, and they displayed a real passion and commitment to the work, beyond meeting projects' deliverables and milestones. They had excellent project management skills and a high level of technical expertise.

"The course is now being taken up by training providers in the public and private sectors and we fully expect it to be making a substantial contribution to up-skilling sizeable cohorts of students in digital marketing in the coming years."

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## About Virtual College

With over 2.5 million online learners, Virtual College is one of the leading providers of e-learning in the UK. For over twenty years, we have provided online courses to individuals and companies across the world, breaking down the boundaries of traditional learning to deliver cost reducing, time efficient training. Unlike many other e-learning providers, our training extends to actual programme and qualification creation and delivery - resulting in a unique blended solution. The knowledge, experience and feedback that this delivery provides helps ensure that we strive to continually improve our solutions.

### Virtual College Ltd

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