

CASE STUDY

Transforming Qualification Delivery with DPG

A Virtual College Case Study





“ We found the Virtual College team to be personable and flexible. They gave us the confidence that they cared about the project as much as we did. ”

Executive summary

In October 2016, Virtual College delivered engaging, 100% online content to support the delivery of the Level 5 Human Resources Management qualification to CIPD training experts, DPG.

Bespoke online learning development is a key focus for 'learning technologies supplier of the year', Virtual College.

DPG wanted to find a learning solution which would create genuine value and deliver measurable impact to learners and their organisations.

Virtual College worked in close collaboration with DPG to understand their business needs in detail, employing a consultative approach so that Virtual College could offer specific learning technology solutions to their training and delivery challenges.

In the crucial initial phase, Virtual College's team forged close relationships with the DPG team which have continued and strengthened throughout the project.

Strong relationships are the cornerstone of Virtual College's partnerships with its bespoke customers. Operating as an extension of its customers' teams, Virtual College invests in the success of each of these projects, redefining the client-developer relationship by offering advice, guidance and solutions in the best interests of the project and the customer.



Screenshots from courses

The need for a new approach

DPG help learners develop themselves, helping to support their HR, L&D and Management Development needs.

With 25 years' experience in CIPD courses, its innovative approach and commitment to excellence has helped thousands of people become CIPD qualified. Historically, this course was delivered by DPG through blended learning using online and face to face methods. For some potential learners, the flexibility of being able to learn completely online is a distinct advantage.

To cater for all their customers, DPG wanted to create a completely online and flexible solution so that those who couldn't commit to face to face workshops could still benefit from DPG's expertise and quality.

Mike Collins, Content & Design Manager for DPG, commented: "Online was an obvious option, particularly as it opens up international learner access. But we are renowned for the quality of our training so we needed to ensure that the experience created was excellent for our learners.

"Once face to face training is taken away, you need to find another way of ensuring that knowledge, skills and behaviours are delivered in a meaningful and engaging way for learning from all backgrounds and industries."

Virtual College was on the initial shortlist of 7 e-learning suppliers identified by DPG. This list was based on the E-learning Awards finalists - Virtual College later received the Gold Award for 'E-learning Development Company of the year.'

DPG created a comprehensive and challenging specification for potential suppliers in their tender document to find a provider that could create a full online solution. This included software development for the platform as well as full e-learning design and build services.

The initial tender requirement, issued in January 2016, identified that timescales would be tight with final CIPD accredited online programmes required to be ready for new cohorts starting on 1st October 2016. Some potential suppliers advised that although they were very interested in the project, they could not meet the timescales required.

During the tender process, DPG and Virtual College met at the Learning Technologies Conference. This was important for Virtual College as they were able to learn much more about DPG and its philosophy and craft a relevant solution in their proposal. Virtual College provided a flexible proposal of three different solutions at different price points and emerged as the winner.

"Virtual College's response was head and shoulders above the rest," said Mike.

"They were immediately innovative and creative, coming up with ways to bring our case study concept to life.

"We found the Virtual College team to be personable and flexible. They gave us the confidence that they cared about the project as much as we did."

In late February, DPG's and Virtual College's senior management teams met to discuss the longer term vision for this relationship.

"We liked their openness and flexibility and from our own research we were confident that they had the experience, drive and resources to meet our challenging requirements," continued Mike.

"Importantly, the learners were at the heart of their propositions and we were energised by a longer term vision of the relationship, not just delivering on this project."

Developing a **clear understanding**

Virtual College's Strategic Business Manager, Hayley Khan, who was involved in the project from the outset, explained: "The best way to understand what will suit our partners is to listen and learn. This is important from the moment the tender documentation comes out until long after the project is delivered."

"The team that our potential customers meet in the sales stages is the team that will manage the relationship throughout the contract. Understanding the history and being involved with the project from the beginning means that this team are responsible and accountable throughout the delivery."

"This project enabled us to work with qualification experts to understand how technology can support a diverse audience group to not only learn information, but also improve their skills and develop their behaviours."

"We use different technology approaches to meet different learning needs. There is no 'single best approach' for everyone - we'll combine and adapt learning design creatively to suit the content and achieve the required outcomes."

"It was great to work with educationalists that agreed that learner experience and attainment is much more important than the 'next big thing' in the learning technology world. Together we created an effective solution rather than focusing on unnecessary gimmicks which can put the project budget at risk."

"The bottom line is results. We are in this together so if the customer wins, we win."

Mike Collins agreed: "We were able to build trust very quickly as they have worked very closely with us in the true sense of a partnership."

The **creation process**

The programme is not just about e-learning content. It starts with live facilitated virtual classrooms, followed by bite-sized learning elements, with formative scenario based assessments to apply the knowledge learned. There are then summative assessments to complete, where the learner works with the support of their tutors to submit assignments.

Whilst flexibility is built into each stage, content development follows a rigorous process of analysis and specification, research and authoring, creative design and prototyping, production, finishing and evaluation. Based on Virtual College's years of experience, this process has been established as the most rapid and effective method of developing high quality bespoke e-learning content.

DPG's Mike Collins commented: "Virtual College has been fantastic in the way they have approached the project."

As the CIPD level 5 HR Management qualification is at foundation degree level, the knowledge content required is quite complex and very comprehensive. Virtual College worked closely with the subject matter experts from DPG throughout to ensure the content was at the right level and contextualised.

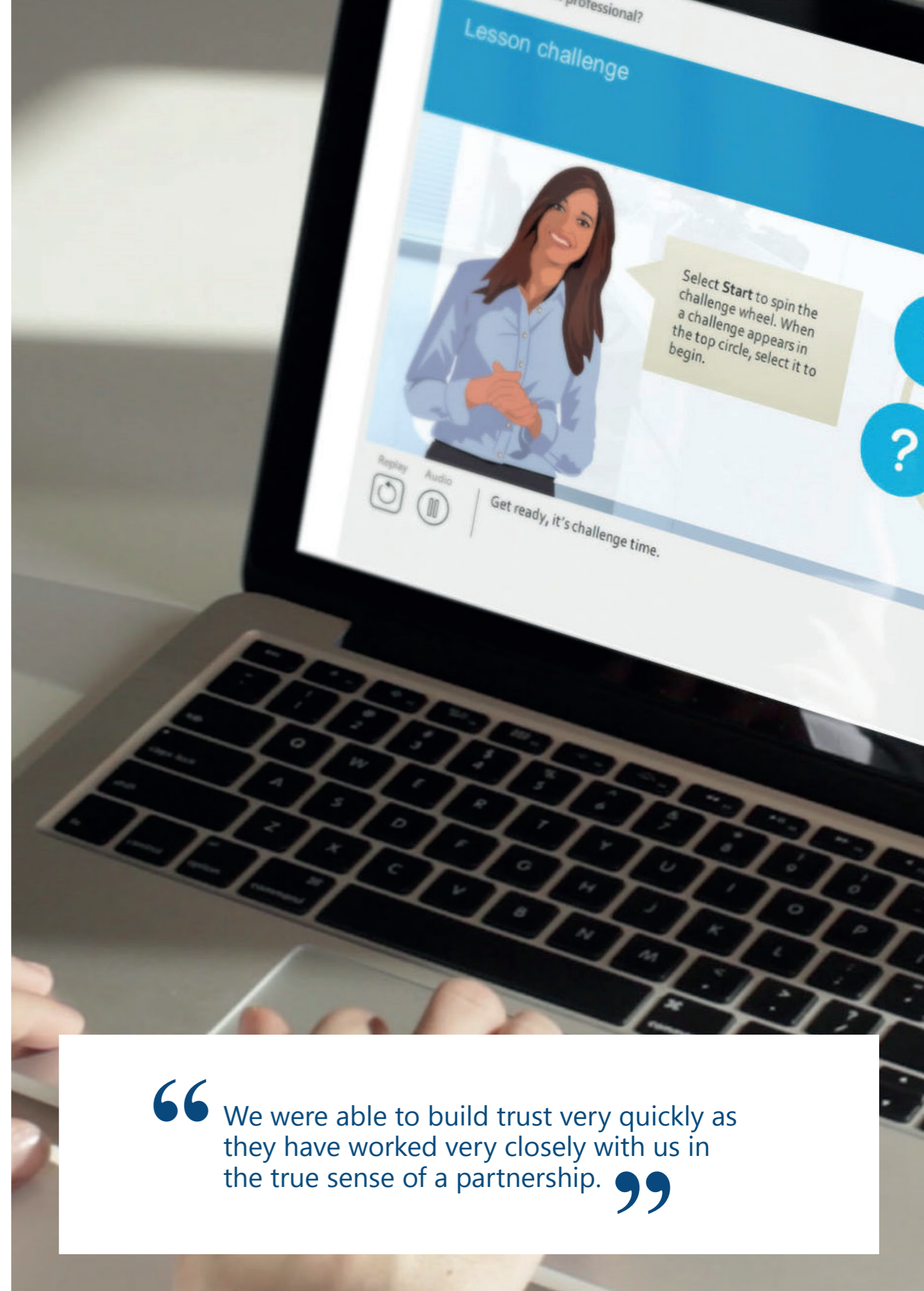
Sarah Baker, Content Development Manager for Virtual College, commented: "We used Kolb as an influence for the learning design, and genuine authentic scenarios are important to help learners to apply their knowledge. In initial scoping, we quickly realised that one of the key creative challenges was to ensure that we found an online solution which would have real life examples but would not alienate learners who were not in that sector."

"The solution the team came up with was a Business District with a HR Consultancy at its heart. The Consultancy's reputation within the district relies on each learner successfully supporting the six businesses with their HR challenges."

"The 'business district' concept was a great vehicle for relevant case study material and scenario learning activities which would have relevance to all learners."

Mike explained: "The use of these simulations and scenarios make up the formative assessment and they help prepare HR professionals for the real world and the challenges they will face."

"Our programme offers learners interactivity and a sense of achievement. It is not just face to face material put into an online format."



“ We were able to build trust very quickly as they have worked very closely with us in the true sense of a partnership. ”



Managing **the project**

Virtual College took the lead on the project management ensuring all parties were involved, committed to the project goal and knew what was in and out of bounds.

Recognising that we are all busy, clear roles were established at the outset with regular reporting to an agreed, concise and consolidated format and a dedicated project manager.

"We use the most appropriate project tool for the job but recognise that, in the end, it's not the tool so much as the project relationships and management that count for project success," said Chloe Weatherhead from Virtual College, who managed this project.

"Working closely with the creative teams at the outset helps the project team to understand the scope of the task which prevents mission creep and keeps the project focussed on the end goal.

"Creating a scope of work and learning strategy helps to keep us focused on the end goal. Our experience of bespoke development means we know what success looks like. We set clear targets and key performance indicators throughout the development to ensure the project progress can be monitored and measured."

The final product needed to have CIPD accreditation and with such tight timescales, Virtual College supported DPG through the CIPD accreditation process whilst the product was still in development. Working in close partnership, the detailed learning strategy helped CIPD to understand how the learners would interact with the learning management system and newly developed courseware, leading to successful accreditation of the materials.

With such challenging delivery timescales and with quality at the heart of DPG's training approach, it was important to recognise that cost, time, and quality are co-dependent. "Recognising that these elements work in equilibrium is important as once a project has started, changing any one of these elements will directly affect the other," said Chloe.

"Considering and analysing project risks is therefore vital to keep the project on track, particularly where we required third party accreditation in order to launch the project."

Virtual College collaborated with DPG on each aspect of the solution and so understood what events might derail and jeopardise the project and found solutions to mitigate any risks.

With such a large programme to develop, Virtual College split the project into small and manageable sequential activities. Roles and responsibilities were then assigned based on relevant skills, experience and interest.

"We have a supportive culture, ensuring team members have sound knowledge and background experience but are also provided with guidance, support and the right resources and tools to do the job," explained Chloe.

To ensure rapid development, a design and storyboard was created for each element and signed off before the rest of the resources were created.

The **results**

This quality programme delivered is ideal for individuals and teams who are looking to advance their careers and develop human resources capability.

As it is totally online, learners can now work at their own pace to fit around their busy lives. Seventy learners are already working through the programme with great feedback and pass rates.

Gail Power, Head of Operations at DPG plc, commented:

"Thanks to the way the project was managed, this was the least stressful project launch we have ever had."

Mike added: "We set out to find a strategic e-learning partner with whom we can work with over the next 3 to 10 years to develop our programmes into cutting edge and market leading learning experiences. Our relationship with Virtual College is already proving to have positive outcomes.

"The way we have structured the programme means that it delivers so much more than the qualification.

"The resources are flexible and so can be marketed separately in 'bite-sized' chunks for line managers and HR professionals within organisations who just want access to specific knowledge, such as 'Managing Change and Reorganisation Lawfully' or 'The Lawful Management of Disciplinary Matters.'

This opens up additional revenue streams for DPG.

"We are already achieving our initial sales goals and can scale the project quickly to meet the response to the international marketing campaigns we are initiating.

"We could have opted for a much more basic online solution via a different provider but it was important to us that we compete with a solution which really is different to anything else available in the market.

"It not only stands apart in terms of the quality, the immersive learning resources delivers a programme which is inspiring and adds real value to the learners and their career aspirations.

"Communication has been great and the focus is always on finding solutions and meeting the objectives of the project in an innovative way.

"Virtual College has helped us achieve our objectives in pushing the boundaries of what online learning can do."

“ Thanks to the way the project was managed, this was the least stressful project launch we have ever had. ”



Learner **feedback**

The content is exceeding learners' expectations, was considered to be easy to use and learners would definitely recommend the programme to colleagues.

"Fantastic module."

"It was a great learning experience."

"Great – nice visuals and interaction."

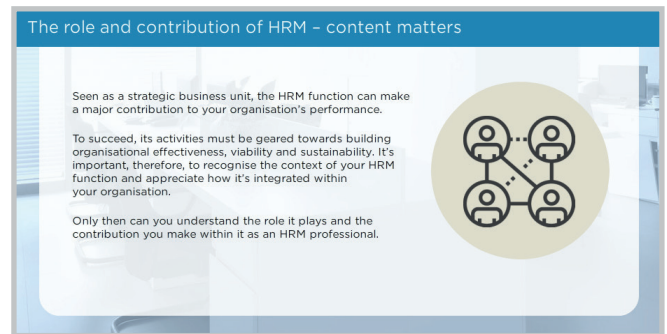
"Has helped me a lot on having a clearer view of my dream HR role and the development areas I should focus on."

"The scenarios within the Business District are very realistic and can be related to my role within HR reflecting issues often found within the workplace."

"It makes you analyse the situation in depth, thinking of the wider context and how it could affect the wider business."

"The scenarios help you to begin breaking down a particular issue and think of what steps are needed to resolve it, preparing you to put this in writing when it comes to your assessment."

Screenshots from courses



Phone
01943 605976



Email
info@virtual-college.co.uk



Web
www.virtual-college.co.uk

About Virtual College

With over 2 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

Marsel House, Stephenson's Way
Ilkley, West Yorkshire
LS29 8DD, England