



A Microsoft Business Certification Case Study



Department of

**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MANNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydënter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

Customer: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)

Website: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk>

Country or Region: Northern Ireland

Customer Profile

The mission of The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is to improve the health and social well-being of the people of Northern Ireland.

Situation

Before 2006, no employees in the DHSSPS had received any training on how to use the desktop software that was integral to their work and overall productivity.

Solution

The Microsoft Business Certification Programme became the obvious solution as it offered benefits for both the Department and its employees.

Benefits

- Increased productivity among employees and the department
- Staff empowerment – encouraging autonomy
- Increased organisational capability
- Employee recognition for performing to high standards
- Access to Microsoft accredited qualifications
- On-site examination capability
- Microsoft training programme for instructors

For more information on the Microsoft Business Certification Programme please visit www.prodigyuk.co.uk or www.prodigy.ie

Department's training programme realises business goals.

“Employees come looking for accredited skills in software that they use at their desks every day. What they all share is a desire to be more productive with the software.” *Paul Moore, Personnel*

Development unit, The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) was one of 11 Departments created in 1999 as part of the Northern Ireland Executive.

The mission of the DHSSPS is to improve the health and social well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. It ensures the provision of appropriate health and social care services in clinical settings and in the community, as well as running cross-government programmes to improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce health inequalities.

Situation

Across the Northern Ireland public service there is a strategic reform agenda that puts technology centre stage in the process of modernisation.

Wide-ranging eBusiness initiatives and re-engineered electronic processes are transforming the way that civil servants go about their business.

There has been a move to centralised web-based applications, encouraging a self-service approach from employees. People are being asked to work with more autonomy, managing their own services and files with the software tools at their disposal. In the eye of this storm is the IT training department in the DHSSPS.

“Everyone now has to have some IT literacy skills and be comfortable with using computers; it's a trend that is only likely to continue with the modernisation programme,” *said Paul Moore from the Department's Personnel Development unit.*



Why join the Microsoft Business Certification Programme?

As technology became integral to the Government's strategic agenda it made sense for the Department to encourage employees to go along on the journey. The DHSSPS is a Microsoft house where all employees use Office 2003. Joining a Microsoft training scheme became an obvious next step.

The Microsoft Business Certification Programme offered benefits for both the Department and its employees. For the Department the programme helps:

- Increase organisational capability
- Achieve strategic objectives with skilled employees
- Maximise efficiencies in an increasingly tight labour market

Employees benefit by:

- Being properly trained and continuously developed
- Being recognised for performing to a high standard
- Achieving a better balance between their work and personal lives
- Exhibiting increased job satisfaction, which helps them remain fully engaged and more loyal to the Department

Having enrolled in the Microsoft Business Certification Programme, the Personnel Development office offered the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) 2003 certification course to employees throughout the organisation. To earn the MOS certificate, employees must pass one or more exams that demonstrate a reliable measure of technical proficiency, such as the ability to use the software's more advanced features and integrate Office programmes with other software applications. Prodigy facilitates the Microsoft Business Certification Programme and the DHSSPS has worked with them since it enrolled in April 2006.

Moore and a colleague undertook the MOS Master Instructor Programme over a three month period, fitting in the eLearning course between other work duties. It gave them the

necessary skill sets to start the Business Certification Programme and oversee the courses and practice tests that pave the way for the certification exam.

People from the different business units will go on the course with different expectations. What they want to get out of the Microsoft Business Certification Programme depends on what area they work in. People from the finance side, for example, work more with spread sheets and Excel becomes their focus. For people in other business units it's all about drafting policy documents and using Word, while senior management have a vested interest in becoming more proficient in PowerPoint. In the IT unit they want the MOS training to make them better equipped to deal with help desk calls from other employees. It helps them see Office from a less technical perspective.

Course participants are decided at a local level by the individuals and their line managers. Around 100 people at the DHSSPS are typically taking courses at any given time and to date around 300 of the department's 1,000 staff have passed exams and earned a certificate.

Benefits

The Microsoft Business Certification Programme fulfils business and personal requirements, according to Moore, meeting the needs of the wider organisational agenda by increasing IT literacy at the same time as helping staff improve personal standing. Just as important is that caters for all types of learner.

"The beauty of the way it is structured is that it is flexible enough to allow people to go through it at their pace. It accommodates everyone," said Moore. "People are inevitably of mixed ability – somebody will come in and be able to do a practice test within hours while others may take two months. It's not a problem; it meets their needs."

Exams are bought in batches of 100 from Prodigy and administered by the Personnel Development unit who act as proctors (invigilators). They give each participant a voucher that allows them to take the exam which lasts around 50 minutes.

Walking away with accreditation as a Microsoft Office Specialist is not a necessity from a business perspective, but it is a driver for many of the participants. "It's all about personal motivation, and the bonus is that there are built-in productivity benefits for the business units. But it's when employees see something in it for themselves that you have them hooked. It's good for their self-esteem," said Moore.

Because the programme is delivered over a period of time, course participants return to their units and immediately begin to put what they have learnt into practice. Very often, as their expertise grows, they assume the mantle of "IT expert" within their unit and they encourage others to participate in the Academy.

"We have never had to advertise that we're here running the courses. It's all been word of mouth," said Moore.

As well as overall productivity gains and a reduction in calls to the help desk, there has been a gentle culture change as employees grow more competent and proficient with the software tools at their disposal. It provides the perfect platform to help the Department realise its long-term business goals, where IT is positioned at the epicentre of its operations.

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Paul Moore, Personnel Development unit, The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)