Case Study
Aiding commercial provider with delivering distance learning
Moodle LMS supports professional development training provider in delivering distance learning courses

Background

IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy, part of Informa PLC, deliver public and client specific education and training solutions to the maritime, logistics, energy and security sectors.

The company had been running public distance learning courses for over 17 years, originally mailing printed modules around the world before changing to PDF documents hosted on a password protected website. However the company was finding that there were inherent limitations, and knew that to continue to expand and develop their courses they needed something much more cost effective and flexible that would grow as they did.

Louise Hawkins, Training Delivery Manager at IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy comments;

“We wanted to have an outward-facing LMS that was user friendly for students, tutors and administrators, but also which had the capability for us to expand our course resources - in both the number of courses and the students, and the content we wanted to deliver”.

“A lot of Learning Management Systems are designed to be inward-facing for companies training their employees, whereas we needed a system that could be outward-facing for a commercial provider, as well as offering simplicity in its use for all users.”

Moodle LMS was chosen by IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy for the following reasons:

- The solution was more cost-effective than alternative options owing to the open-source licensing model.
- Scalability: As Moodle is developed for organisations of all sizes, the company knew that this platform could grow and develop with them
- Customisable: The company was able to customise the look and feel of the site and display different branding within the course pages – a valuable benefit when delivering education and training solutions for different organisations
- Ease of use and control: The system allowed them to make changes themselves, quickly and efficiently
• Familiarity: Moodle is a system that many universities and their students are familiar with. IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy work with a number of university and college partners to assist them in running distance learning courses, so adopting a recognisable system helped engage clients and users from the start.

On deciding to use Moodle towards the end of 2011, key team members attended both Course Creator Essential and Moodle Administrator courses run by HowToMoodle. Louise comments on the training they received;

“It helped a lot in understanding Moodle’s terminology and how they relate to each other – for example courses, groups and groupings.”

A team at IBC Academy was charged with investigating options for new LMS choice, which included initial investment costs plus on-going running costs, functionality (particularly around student forum engagement), ease of use for course administrators, simplicity for students and that it would run straight out of the box with minimum need to offer users technical support.

Attending the course put the distance learning team on the right path from the beginning of their project and significantly reduced the amount of time they may have otherwise used in independent research and experimentation.

In 2012 the company launched its first course using the Moodle platform. The initial course began by using simple functionality including PDF, online assessments and discussion forums.

As each course began its new intake of learners it was rolled out onto the Moodle platform; the company taking a gradual and staged approach in implementing the system, but with over 80 distance learning courses ranging from 12 week professional development certificates to 24 month duration Masters level courses with Universities, this was still a rapid deployment.

Challenges

As a commercial provider, IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy required Moodle to be outward-facing, but also be easy to use for students through to administrators. This meant that a great deal of testing was undertaken. For example, role permissions were tested to ensure that the correct content was available to the correct role levels - students were only able to see courses that they were enrolled onto, rather than them being able to self-enrol onto any course.

Reflecting on the challenges at the time, Louise says;

“We were glad that we didn’t rush with implementing the system. We spent time testing and trying different ways of doing things – often one decision affects another outcome, so it was good to have time to get to know Moodle and learn how it works”.

Solution

Over the last 3 years HowToMoodle have provided IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy with their hosting requirements for their Moodle site with a branded theme. The company has also taken advantage of HowToMoodle’s administrator support service, enabling them to get in touch whenever they have a query or need assistance with their site.

Whilst Louise and her team try to resolve as many issues as they can, HowToMoodle’s support is there as backup if they need it. Louise comments;

“When we are completely stuck we know we can contact HowToMoodle’s support team who have been really supportive in helping us resolve our queries”.

Over the years a mixture of changing learner requirements, along with growing team confidence, meant that the company advanced their Moodle site to take advantage of additional functionality that is available within the platform. This has included embedding videos, webinars, assignment submission and adding required plugins. Adopting a managed approach to using new functionality enabled them to test each Moodle option, and effectively manage change whilst maintaining a smooth student experience.

In 2014, due to the success of their Moodle site, the company moved from a shared hosting solution to a dedicated hosting server, again hosted by HowToMoodle. This gave the company the benefits of an exclusive server which is optimised specifically for their requirements, as well as the flexibility of being able to increase their server specification at the touch of a button.

Now and the Future

The company’s Moodle site now runs over 100 courses across several brands and over 8,500 users to date.
Currently, while Louise is the site administrator, there is a team of course managers who are able to set up course pages and manage course resources directly, saving considerable time.

Recently the site was integrated with the ‘Turnitin’ plagiarism and marking service that enables tutors to quickly detect potential issues in submissions.

The company now uses Moodle exclusively and continues to expand its portfolio.

“**When we are completely stuck we know we can contact HowToMoodle’s support team who have been really supportive in helping us resolve our queries**”

*Louise Hawkins*, Training Delivery Manager

### Benefits of Moodle LMS for the Training Provider:

- **Time savings**: The company has experienced significant time savings as a result of using Moodle. Enabling course managers to update their own courses themselves cuts crucial time.

- **Cost effectiveness**: Taking advantage of Moodle’s open source licensing enables the organisation to have a scalable, high quality eLearning system, but without the ongoing licence costs associated with proprietary alternatives.
  - **Improved experience for students**: Since implementing Moodle the company has had a great deal of positive feedback that the site is clear and easy to use.
  - **Positive impact on administrators**: The Moodle system makes it quick and easy for administrators to upload and update learning content.
  - **Increased interaction**: Moodle has allowed more direct interaction between tutors and students via the discussion forums. Course tutors have welcomed these forums, which allow them to post attachments of interest to students for timely discussions, plus the daily digest emails that are emailed out every day.

For more information on IBC Academy and Lloyd’s Maritime Academy visit [www.ibc-academy.com](http://www.ibc-academy.com) or [www.lloydsmaritimeacademy.com](http://www.lloydsmaritimeacademy.com)

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### Moodle advice

Louise offers the following advice for those starting out with Moodle:

- **‘Allow and spend as much time as possible testing’** – from role permissions to how content displays on the screen – everything can behave differently. I always enrol myself as a student with separate login – it’s essential to check the student will only see what you want them to see.

- **‘Attend training!’** Attending a training course from HowToMoodle helped a lot in understanding Moodle’s language/terminology and how they relate, and saved us a lot of time as a result.

- **‘Take a step back’** and think about how things could be simplified on your site. Moodle offers a lot of options, but we decided to turn off anything that we were not going to use so it looked cleaner and easier to navigate.

- **‘Choose a credible company’** that offers support. It’s good for when we are completely stuck we know we can contact HowToMoodle’s support team, who have been really supportive in helping us resolve our queries.

### We look forward to working with you...

HowToMoodle is a client focused Moodle and Totara LMS specialist, supplying a range of organisations with the complete package of consultancy, training, branding, hosting and support for those who are implementing for the first time or already using Moodle or Totara LMS.

HowToMoodle was founded in 2004 and was the first company in the world set up to exclusively offer training and Moodle consultancy.

HowToMoodle is a UK Moodle Partner and Totara Partner, and has a team of practitioner consultants across the UK delivering quality training and pragmatic consultancy solutions for clients across academic, commercial, charitable and government sectors.

For information and more case studies please visit [www.howtomoodle.com/case-studies](http://www.howtomoodle.com/case-studies)

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