



CASE STUDY

The Entertainer

The Entertainer was founded by husband and wife team Catherine and Gary Grant in 1981 and now employs over 1,600 staff at more than 160 shops across the UK and their Amersham, Bucks headquarters. The company is expanding rapidly overseas with a vision to fill every childhood with wonder and a mission to be the Best-Loved Toyshop; one child, one community at a time.



Challenge

For over 20 years, The Entertainer provided a modular training system (known as Modules) for Retail Sales Assistants and Supervisors in their store estate. With content covering a variety of topics across company policy, service, processes and soft skills, the Modules were designed to support and enhance on-the-job sales team learning as advisors progressed through their careers with The Entertainer.

The Modules were a core element of the learning culture within the business and helped to support the long-held passion to invest in staff and promote from within wherever possible.

However, up to the Autumn of 2017, the Modules were paper-based and comprised a checklist in booklet form with supporting documents.

Print costs were high, curating change was difficult and completion success relied upon the knowledge, coaching and observation skills of each individual's Line Manager which made it difficult to ensure consistent delivery and measurement. Learner engagement suffered as a result.



As one of The Entertainer's store managers said:



The paper modules were hard work, took a long time to complete and went out of date so quickly. As a Store Manager, and past Module Assessor, the paper Modules were a tale of two halves; you had staff who flew through them because they liked to write but at least half of the staff just couldn't bear the thought of feeling like they were back at school.

Solution

In 2016, The Entertainer realised that there needed to be a more efficient and effective approach taken to learning across the business to continue to grow both the company and their colleague's careers. Following a full market review, they selected Learning Pool on the basis of our track record in providing blended learning solutions which would meet their current needs but which also offered plenty of scope to expand into additional learning opportunities in the future.

As well as choosing Learning Pool's Totara Learn as the company's new Learning Management System (LMS), The Entertainer's evaluation team invested in Learning Pool's Foundation Skills Catalogue to pre-populate the LMS with more than a hundred pre-built workplace learning titles. Adding access to Learning Pool's Adapt Builder tool allows the L&D department to simply and cost-effectively build their own learning content from scratch and enhance the standard catalogue titles as needed.

Branding the new platform internally as "The EnterTrainer", the L&D team designed an award-winning launch plan; including a teaser campaign in which each store received an Entertainer goody-box containing postcards with login details and treats for the staff ensured that a sense of both awareness and anticipation was created across the store estate. The resulting engagement levels are impressive with around 30,000 mandatory and 70,000 discretionary course completions recorded in the first 18 months of platform availability.



Ongoing engagement tactics deployed by the team include regular new content promotions, L&D campaigns on specific topics of interest, hidden badge awards and a special training advent calendar during the Christmas period. Their efforts result in the learning platform achieving around 95% engagement with the total available audience. Even The Entertainer's suppliers are being offered sponsorships to re-brand the LMS for a limited period to significantly raises awareness of their product range across the store estate.

Using online learning for the first time, the team were able to move away from purely verbal testing and increase user engagement with a series of fun picture quizzes and high-graphic content. For example, a short verbal test on which products should typically be located at the counter became a 30-second speed quiz using the standard Yes / No component in the Adapt Builder.

The quality of learning and assessment across all levels is now fully consistent and measurable and, once completed, ongoing access to the courses provides a permanent reference tool for the learner as and when they need it.

The Entertainer have further used the new solution to create and distribute step-by-step process guides for core business processes. For example, using the Narrative component in Adapt Builder to train out the stages of cashing up at each store at the end of the day. The company is finally able to ensure that the same process is fully communicated to all staff and that process changes can be quickly and consistently re-trained on demand.

Finally, to drive engagement and achievement, eight of the eleven available Modules continue to come with an hourly pay increase upon a pass being achieved along with a Certificate of Retail Excellence personally signed by the company Founder & Executive Chairman. These incentives have the effect of both rewarding those who engage in their own personal development and encourages teams to be ambitious – one of the company's core values.





I've worked with The Entertainer since 1999. Switching to an online blended solution with Learning Pool has been the single biggest step forward we've taken in helping our colleagues to maximise their careers with us and serve our growing customer base to the best of our ability.

The LMS gives us the full range of L&D-related functionality we need, including online course distribution by role and audience, electronic booking of face-to-face training and centralised reporting which makes managing our learning journey efficient and effective. Adding the Foundation Skills catalogue of pre-built learning brought immediate value across the whole workforce. Whilst the Adapt Builder makes updating these courses with our own look and feel super-easy. We've had lots of fun working with the Learning Pool team and the support we get is fantastic – I'd recommend them as a partner to any company wanting an industry-leading learning solution that's backed by a customer-first provider.

Pete Young,
Learning & Development Manager, The Entertainer



Results

The Entertainer, delivered 100,000-course completions in the first 18 months whilst saving £8,000 in annual assessment costs and £1,500 in printed materials costs.

As well as the 100,000-course completions since launch, an extra 56% of eligible staff completed their initial two Modules vs the prior year. Modules are also being successfully completed more quickly due to ease of access to the online version at a time and on a device that's convenient for the learner.

During Customer Service Week 2018, customers who received in-store assistance (which is a key driver of additional spend) went up from 48% to 51% and the quarterly measure of overall customer satisfaction increased from 79% to 81%. Ongoing incremental improvements in these metrics are key to the success of the brand; both in the UK and globally.

Future Developments

The Entertainer's platform is now being opened up to the company's international partners, including their recent acquisition of Spanish toy retailer Poly. The Entertainer is keen to make sure that their good L&D practice is available across the group to ensure that their core values around customer service and product knowledge are entirely consistent at the point of retail.

Further refinements to the existing solution continue to be made, including the reintroduction of a slightly different store manager assessment to establish that performance is objectively measured across a range of metrics and that managers retain a strong understanding of their team's development. This will include the ability to complete appraisals through the platform; providing further performance visibility.

Peta and the team also plan to move access to the Onboarding Hub further forward in the hiring process to offer new starters the chance to engage with the Entertainer brand before actually joining the company. This will build engagement during the critical first few weeks of employment and enhance understanding of the product portfolio to drive customer satisfaction and retail performance.

The Entertainer's L&D journey continues!





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