

Digital Unite

Background

Nearly a third of people in the UK – that's 18m of us - have 'low' or 'very low' digital skills. Half of us, don't have all the Essential Digital Skills for work, and 2.1 million are offline completely.

Digital Unite (DU) believes that part of the solution to this massive social and economic problem lies in empowering other organisations to drive digital inclusion and skills through their own working practices and with their client and customer bases.

They're tackling digital exclusion via a Champions model: they help organisations train staff or volunteers to become Digital Champions. They then have the skills and confidence to help others, whether that's residents, service users, patients or colleagues - with whatever digital skills they need to learn.

At the heart of DU's approach is the Digital Champions Network, offering a complete e-learning product that combines Champions training, project management and community support.

DU launched their first version of the Network in 2013 (built in partnership with Learning Pool and Moodle!), replatformed in 2017 to Drupal, but relaunched on the Learning Pool Platform in January 2023.



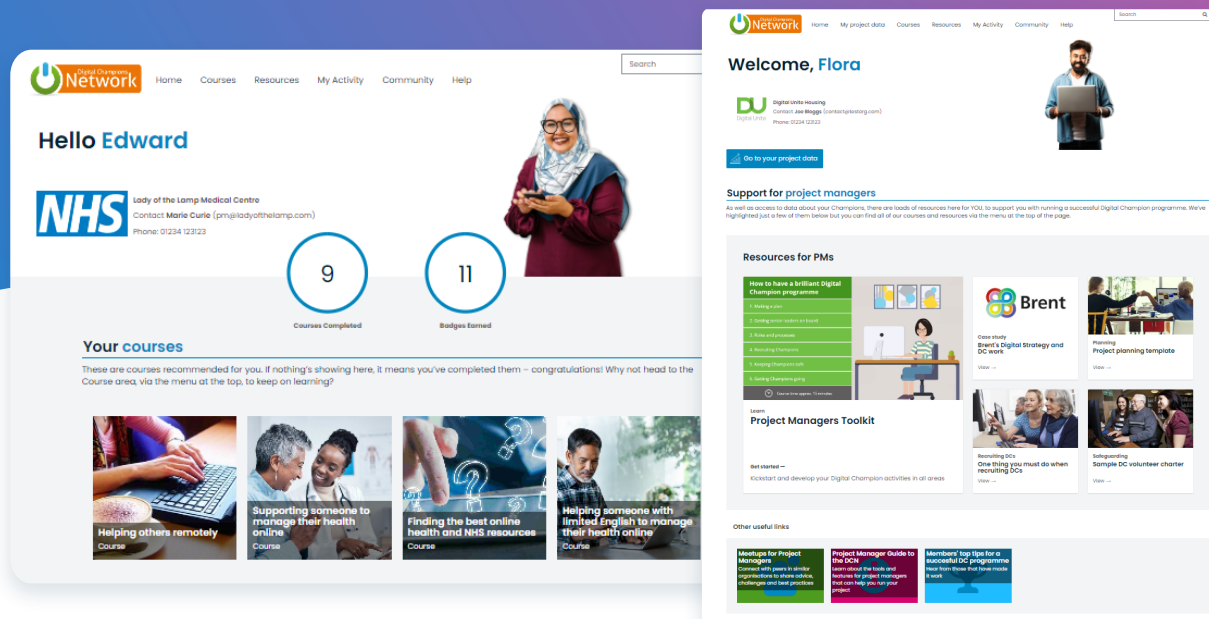
2.1 million

Offline completely



18m

Have low digital skills



Challenges and Solutions

Diverse clients with diverse projects

At the core of every project is a Project Manager running a group of Digital Champions. But clients on the Network vary enormously: sometimes it's a council with 500 employee Champions; sometimes it's a small charity with a handful of volunteers.

The Project Managers have different needs, ways of working, capacity, resources and expertise. As an extra complication, none of these people, managers or champions, are employees of DU, so although they can help and advise they can't mandate how organisations use the Network.

Digital Unite have worked hard to ensure the platform is:

- **Ready-to-go:** It's super easy to get projects set-up and running, and there's training and tools on the platform to get the most from the platform. Issues like permissions and which project managers can see what data are already carefully tuned so there's no space for human error.
- **Easy-to-run:** once the project is up and running, DU ensure that the platform does as much heavy lifting as possible. For example, reporting dashboards are already set up, and they make creative use of the automated "Waves" functionality to communicate regularly with learners and drive higher levels of engagement.
- **Easy to onboard:** Signing-up new Champions needs to be simple and self-served. But it can be complex, as users have to be onboarded safely and connected to the right organisations and learning. This is done via a bespoke registration module on the LPP.
- **Straightforward-to-scale:** Projects can start small and expand adding more Champions and Managers as projects grow, or setting up new projects under an umbrella structure.

A huge range of learners with different needs and interests

There are currently (25+) CPD accredited courses on the Network ranging from getting to grips with the Champion role, to identifying and dealing with accessibility needs and helping others remotely.

Some Champions work in specific sectors (like a GP surgery) or with specific clients (like adults with a learning disability). Other Champions have a broader remit helping whoever attends a drop-in with whatever digital skills they need.

Some Champions work through all the courses, others dip in and out of the ones they need, when they need them.

To cater to these different needs, DU created three learning pathways that were flexible, but guided, so that users weren't overwhelmed with

unnecessary choice, but could easily find the most appropriate learning. Clients can choose a pathway, but can also recommend or mandate specific pieces of learning for their Champions.

The Network has two main types of learning: CPD accredited courses, which on completion are awarded with certificates and badges: and resources which complement the courses, providing further support, such as lesson plans and worksheets.

As their knowledge of how learners want to use the platform grows, DU is adding more types of learning. For example they've just introduced "Skills Boosts" which aren't part of Champions' core learning but add to their skills - the latest release is about unconscious bias and how recognising it can make you a better trainer.

Evidencing impact

It's crucial for client organisations to be able to understand and evidence the impact that their digital inclusion action is having. This means more than just monitoring what learners are doing on the platform. They need to know what their Champions are doing in the real world and what training they're delivering.

To do this, DU created a Digital Champion Record platform connected to the Learning Pool Platform via an API. With a single sign-on, users seamlessly enter the recording platform and note their activity. This information is fed

back to Learning Pool Platform via the API. Champions can be recognised and rewarded with badges for helping set numbers of learners. And the organisation can report on activity and impact more accurately.

Measuring activity

Like their clients, Digital Unite are data-driven. They want to deep dive into how their users behave and how the platform is performing. This means going beyond standard measurement tools, and finding innovative ways of using the Learning Locker data within external business intelligence tools: for example, they've just created a visualisation to chart and understand the learning life cycle of an average Digital Champion by following their activity through their first year on the platform.

Outcomes

Happy organisations and a growing sales sheet across all types of organisations

Since adopting the new platform, DU have consolidated and diversified their public sector client base, increased client retention rates both by volume and length of membership, and added 44 new member organisations to their roll.

They moved nearly 2,500 Digital Champions onto the new platform. And since then, they've onboarded nearly 1,500 new ones with minimal problems, as well as set up 155 new Project Managers.



44

New member organisations



1500

New Digital Champions



155

New Project Managers



“The Digital Champion Network has massively helped with training volunteers to upskill people’s digital skills.”

Manager at NHS England

Happy Digital Champions managed by happy project managers

Since moving to the new platform, page views (courses and resources), course completions, Champions submitting records, and the number of records submitted are on all on the rise.

And 97% of people completing courses would recommend them.

“It’s wonderful to see the people we support become more digitally confident, and to see the positive impact that joining the digital world has on their lives.”

DC on the DCN



Happy Company

DU has successfully developed a robust, dynamic learning environment, future-proofing and enhancing operational efficiency. They are constantly exploring new ways to enhance their platform, not just internally, but bringing in Champions and clients too. Everyone now has a stake in the platform, is invested in product evolution and performance in a way they weren't before.



“Learning Pool Platform has exceeded expectations, heightened user and client engagement and enhanced overall business performance. It challenged us to test our assumptions and our practice, both as a delivery team and with our clients and users. We’ve achieved a better product, better data about how the product is being used, a more streamlined onboarding and delivery process. And a very engaged team who all feel part of the product’s success and evolution.”

Emma Weston, CEO

More about the Digital Champion Network:

<https://www.digitalunite.com/products/digital-champions-network>

About work Champions do:

<https://www.digitalunite.com/about/about-digital-champion-programmes/digital-champion-stories>

