

CASE STUDY

Creating accessible training for electrical contractors

A Virtual College Case Study





“ Online training gives people an alternative way to gain new knowledge and understanding. ”

The background

NICEIC is the UK electrical contracting industry’s largest independent voluntary body which has been assessing the electrical competence of electricians for over fifty years.

Working with over 26,000 electrical contractors nationwide, NICEIC’s aim is to drive up the standards of compliance, electrical safety and training in the industry.

Asad Majid, National Training Manager, said: “Training needs are always emerging within the electrical industry; whether it is an update or change in current legislation or simply sharing knowledge to promote best practice. NICEIC is committed to developing resources and training which enables electricians to continue their professional development.”

Traditionally, NICEIC training took learning. NICEIC began working with Virtual College in the summer of 2009 in order to provide those working in the construction industry with an alternative method of training; e-learning. By December 2009, NICEIC and Virtual College had launched the first e-learning course in the 17th Edition Wiring Regulations – a course still popular today.

The solution

NICEIC and Virtual College met in the summer of 2009 to discuss the development of electrical e-learning courses.

Rod Knox, CEO at Virtual College, said: “We wanted to provide individuals with a way to gain qualifications and additional knowledge in their chosen specialism without having to take time off work to accommodate study.

“As a respected body with a reputable face to face training programme already in place, we recognised that the NICEIC would be able to bring the technical expertise we required.”

Asad explained: “As an established e-learning provider, Virtual College was an obvious choice for us. The LMS allows us to store, track and monitor training and is branded in line with our partnership.”

The relationship between NICEIC and Virtual College rapidly evolved and by December that year the Construction Services e-Academy was set up to manage the sale of courses.

Asad continued: “NICEIC provide the sector expertise and content for the courses and Virtual College provide the e-learning expertise; developing the product and providing the help and support to learners.”

The challenge

As a high risk industry, it is essential that those working in construction have the necessary qualifications and knowledge required to work safely. Being a very project driven industry with strict deadlines, it can be hard for employees to attend training sessions during working hours.

Asad commented: “There was a definite need to provide individuals and organisations with an alternative method of training where they wouldn’t have to spend time away from work. We needed something accessible which would allow individuals to complete training around their busy work schedule.”

NICEIC recognised that they did not have the internal skills and knowledge to develop a full e-learning solution.

Asad continued: “Obviously we had the internal expertise in terms of delivering the technical course content, but our knowledge of e-learning platforms was lacking. We realised that, in order to develop a product of value to our customers, we had to draw on external expertise.”



The results

Since its launch in December 2009, over 2000 people have completed 17th Edition online training.

The first e-learning course, 17th Edition, was launched in December 2009. By the time the NICEIC returned to work after the Christmas break, it had already seen a return on the investment.

Since January 2010, over 2000 individuals have completed the 17th Edition course. Asad said; "The success of the 17th Edition course resulted in the development of seven additional e-learning courses, ranging from inspection and testing to environmental technologies. We continually update our courses in line with changes to legislation. For example, the 17th Edition course now incorporates material covering amendment one introduced in July 2011.

"Where qualifications require individuals to complete practical training and assessment, we have developed blended learning solutions; a combination of computer and classroom based training, allowing us to reduce the amount of time individuals have to spend away from their workplace."

The online solution has brought significant benefits to individuals and organisations.

Tony Cable, Senior Marketing & Events Engineer at NICEIC, commented: "Online training gives people an alternative way to gain new knowledge and understanding in order to continue to develop within their chosen career."

Online training can also provide individuals and organisations with significant cost benefits. Asad continued: "There are many ways in which e-learning can bring cost savings – both directly in terms of travel and accommodation costs, and indirectly due to the fact that you don't have to take time off work or reschedule jobs to accommodate training.

"As a company, NICEIC has managed to develop high quality cost effective solutions for its customers. Before the partnership between NICEIC and Virtual College, e-learning was a relatively new training platform for the construction industry. Today, it is possible to see a significant shift in the culture of the industry as e-learning has become a highly regarded method of study.

What next?

Asad concluded: "Our partnership with Virtual College has never been stronger and we look forward to continuing this partnership in 2013 through the joint promotion of products and the alignment of our sales and marketing strategies.

"With the recent launch of a number of blended courses, our focus will now turn to our customer journey; how can we make it as simple as possible for people to book and complete each element of their training and assessment?

The intelligence of Virtual College's LMS will be instrumental in this."

Hayley Rutter, Partnership Manager at Virtual College, said: "The construction sector lends itself perfectly to e-learning due to the nature of the industry. Over the coming months, we look forward to expanding the range of courses we offer to incorporate additional specialisms."



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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.

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