

# Case Study

## University of Ulster - Virtual Classroom



### Background

In these economically challenging times the need to work smarter, better and more efficiently is essential. These were all factors for BT Training Solutions when planning a tailored training approach for the University of Ulster. The University underwent a major network infrastructure and desktop upgrade prior to their new academic year in September 2010. Over 1100 users would be impacted by the upgrade which included a migration from their desktop applications, Microsoft Office 97 to Microsoft Office 2007. Up to 80 percent of the user base is already reasonably proficient users of both Microsoft Windows XP and Office 2007.

### Challenge

The challenge was to up skill and realign the users with new features of Microsoft Office 2007, whilst having the minimum impact on the day to day business of the University. Timing was critical as the migration will need to be completed just before the busy September period. Therefore it is important that the training solution considered the constraints that this would place due to the busy staff schedule at this time.

### The Training Solution

Traditional instructor led classroom based training methods were considered and due to the timing, volume of migrating users, costs of delivery and the impact on the University led to an alternative innovative approach proposed - BT Virtual Classroom. BT Training Solution's flagship Virtual Classroom offering ticked all the boxes. Instructor led training could indeed be maintained as a delivery method but with a difference - it will be VIRTUAL. University staff could be trained without leaving their desks, therefore saving time, costs and ultimately having a minimum impact on the business.

### Virtual Technology

To virtualise the traditional physical classroom, BT uses the CISCO based WebEx platform to host training events via an internet connection. None of the principles of the traditional delivery are lost; there is an instructor, a student, delivery materials, start time, end time, topics and interactivity during class. The difference is that

the physical classroom has now been 'virtualised' into an online environment.

In its simplest format, training delegates will log in to scheduled instructor led Virtual Classroom live event via their web browser. Delegates will only require an up to date browser and a minimum of 256kbps internet connection in order to join the event. Once participating in an event, high quality streamed video and audio will ensure that the trainees experience full interactivity with the instructor. The real winner is time and cost savings, considering that the delegate can access the training from the comfort of their desktop or even home PC.

BT Training Solutions have been developing their Virtual Classroom approach for over two years. In this period BT has invested in re-training their instructors, re-working and redesigning much of their traditional delivery content to suit the Virtual environment. As a result much of the content has modularised into 'bite size chunks' for the Virtual Classroom sessions. University of Ulster's migration training consists of a tailored Virtual Classroom session covering Microsoft Office 2007 New Features. The vast majority of the 1100 delegates have attended the new features session and a smaller number of more experienced or advanced delegates may avail of the more specialised topics on offer, e.g. MS Excel Pivot Tables, MS Word Mail Merge or MS Outlook Calendar to name a few.

To date this approach has been favoured by the Education, Health and Central Government as a cost effective method of delivering training. Migrating large groups of users to any new system via traditional training methods would prove costly and time consuming for both the client. Virtual Classroom delivery removes much of the cost and the physicality of scheduling delegates.

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As with any major roll out training event scheduling is required and this also benefits from virtualisation. Delegates are invited to their respective events via an email notification. Full event joining instructions are included in the email invite including; login details, course outlines, training materials and direct link to the BT Virtual Classroom event.

A comprehensive training schedule was developed that consisted of up to 3 x 1.5 hour sessions per day. This ensured that the all users could avail of the training at their convenience.

#### What the Customer Said

“The Virtual Classroom training solution provided by BT ticks all the boxes. From the early stages in our MS Office Migration project, we have worked closely with BT staff to provide this new approach to training delivery resulting in positive feedback throughout the University.”

“A challenge was our aim to provide staff with their training as close as possible to

their software migration, good communication with BT allowed this to happen. Also, we expected peaks in our University calendar to temporarily slow down our rollout, but BT’s flexibility meant this was never an issue.”

“So why choose this type of training solution with BT? Its flexible, convenient, cost effective, no travel involved and you have access to a ‘live’ trainer for the duration. The training was exceptional in quality and attendees came away from the course both more knowledgeable and more highly motivated to use the new skills in their work. The ability to tailor to our requirements meant we could focus on specific training objectives. I look forward to further opportunities and collaboration with BT.”

Ann McSherry  
Campus ICT Manager University of Ulster

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