



Training, Inside and Out

Update: Inside Bank of Ireland's Learningzone programme.

By Eamonn Eaton

Learningzone is the brand name of the partnership between Bank of Ireland and Accenture that delivers a successful holistic learning service to employees in the Bank of Ireland Group.

Bank of Ireland Group was founded in 1783 by Royal Charter and is a diversified financial services organisation that now employs more than 14,000 staff, predominately in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The Group provides a wide range of personal and commercial financial services through its branch network in Ireland, its telephone and online banking service *Banking 365*, and its joint venture with the British Post Office.

The combination of the banks in-house expertise in capability development and learning—combined with the outsourced partnership—brings a unique blend of capability, expertise, scale, and access to an extensive range of resources that have driven a step change in the learning service within the organisation. Learningzone provides a best-in-class learning curriculum distributed through classroom, web-based, mobile, conference call, and social learning channels. It adopts a robust business management approach to training needs identification, programme design and delivery, learning governance, and management information tracking and reporting. It focuses on quality, efficiency, innovation, and emerging technologies to continually drive the service forward.

In 2012 Learningzone counted many achievements:

- 10,711 classroom student course completions
- More than 73,000 web module registrations
- 55 new programmes designed in-house and added to the curriculum of more than 400 programmes

Continuous Improvement

During the course of 2012, the Learningzone team focussed on a number of areas that they believed were of strategic importance to the continuous enhancement and improvement of the range of services available.

The organisation recognised that leadership and management capability were critical enablers of mobilising the workforce to achieve the bank's priorities and strategy. Through the Learningzone service, the bank invested heavily in leadership and management development with more than 1,800 managers attending programmes in a 24-month period. As these programmes were developed and delivered internally by Learningzone, the bank decided to seek external validation of the content through certification. Certification predicated on work-based assignments also supported transfer of learning back to the workplace. The full suite of classroom and web programmes were assessed and certified by a leading university, and participants on these in-house programmes can now obtain qualifications up to post-graduate level. This was the first time that the university had accredited an "in-company" designed and delivered programme to post-grad level.

Further externally recognised qualifications have been achieved for the change curriculum, which is now certified through a leading business school. Both qualification programmes involve a combination of participation in classroom modules, completion of web modules, work based assignments, formal presentations, and online exams.

Learningzone has further enhanced their suite of offerings by delivering learning academies for niche and specialist teams within the organisation. With finance, procurement, and change provided, academies staff in specialist areas have access to best-in-class learning from a specialist skill perspective. The academies are web-based, providing flexibility for staff in these specialist areas to undertake programmes aligned to their

business unit objectives. These academies provide specialist programmes for small numbers of people, allowing the individual control over career development.

The partnership model presented Learningzone with the opportunity to leverage technology and reinvigorate the way employees learn. Emerging technology enabled a shift from a single-distribution method—classroom—to a blended distribution model, using alternative, flexible, technology-based delivery channels that the learner can access at any time, with the minimal amount of effort and quite literally at the touch of a button. Technology has provided new ways to reach and engage with learners that pushes the boundaries of the service and presents opportunities through expanded delivery channels. Learningzone has successfully introduced a Learningzone training app for smartphone users that provides another "just-in-time," anytime-anyplace channel to access learning. The app contains "A Managers Pocket Guide," which includes topics such as management tip sheet, coaching, innovation, and creativity. A pipeline of other topics has been created, which has adapted technology to fit the needs of the business and empowering employees to access their learning remotely, thus providing better individual control over career development.

Learningzone added to the suite of courses with the "Manager Toolkit" (MTK) suite of courses, available via the web and also on the iPhone. These programmes sourced and licensed from a global tier 1 university are aimed primarily at the most senior end of the leadership and management population.

Social learning has also been identified as a new and progressive delivery method of instruction that would appeal to a segment of the bank's target market and also provide an infrastructure and environment for the participation in, and engagement of, a learner's pre- and post-formal learning events. By developing a learning portal, Learningzone provides pre-reading and resources to familiarise the learner with a range of programme topics and allows them to discuss these topics with peers and trainers alike. After their learning course, it also provides the infrastructure to discuss key items, current issues, and further learning, and it formally establishes a network of experts. The outsourcing partnership provided Learningzone access to resources and expertise that were required to

Learning Materials, Tools and Aids

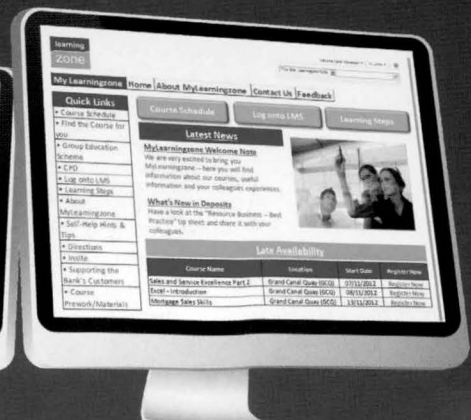
Diagram 1:
Screenshot of Mobile Learning App



Diagram 2:
SharePoint Portal



Diagram 3:
'My Learningzone' Portal Page



leverage the potential of the IT infrastructure available to support social learning. Learningzone are one of the first units in the bank who have built a portal, providing another channel to distribute content and engage individuals in the continuous learning as part of their role.

Still Further

Learningzone have now expanded its service to include delivering training for customers and strategic partners of the bank. A range of business, personal development, and management programmes are offered to small and medium enterprise customers of the bank as part of the organisations commitment to helping and supporting customers. These programmes are offered free of charge and have made a significant impact on the reputation and brand of the bank with its customers. Learningzone also trains employees of the bank’s strategic partners to ensure that they meet the competency levels that the bank requires from its strategic partners. As part of the bank’s corporate social responsibility agenda, Learningzone trains representatives from hundreds of charitable organisations on a range of programmes. Outside the classroom, Learningzone provides a range of in-house built and externally sourced web-based training (WBT) programmes for bank customers via the bank of Ireland Group web site.

Additionally, the senior executive population are a group of people that Learningzone identified as key champions for capability development and Learningzone. They are a group that have development requirements but are time-poor, so engaging them in traditional learning programmes proved difficult. Learningzone introduced a range of initiatives targeting this group in order to market the function and increase brand awareness, while providing short, sharp capability uplift opportunities.

For the iPhone world, launching the Learningzone app and also the management modules via the iPhone was specifically aimed at this population, as iPhones are supplied on a top down approach in the organisation.

Meanwhile, Learningzone have access to a pool of external experts who provide master class sessions on a variety of topics aligned to business strategies and challenges. Learningzone adapt and tailor the content and audience as required and use this flexible training delivery method to

ensure just in time training for key topics and challenges that business units face on an ongoing basis. These master class sessions are delivered around a conference table or in a theatre style setting, providing flexibility in terms of participant numbers.

For broad communications, Learningzone write and publish a targeted email campaign to executives and senior management on a regular basis. This email focusses on current business and leadership topics and includes links to recognised leadership and industry resources. It also directs the reader to internal training resources and includes links to training supports or interesting and relevant article

A Holistic Success

Learningzone are committed to delivering a holistic range of services that deliver a wide range of development programmes to staff meeting business and individual development requirements. Learning in Bank of Ireland has been transformed by combining delivery of a high quality curriculum with effective IT systems, measurement, evaluation, recording, and reporting. A major uplift in quality, consistency, rigor, governance, design, development, delivery, and evaluation of programmes has been achieved, while realising a 30 percent reduction in annual cost. Through use of new technologies and methodologies, a shift from 99 percent classroom to 40 percent web and 60 percent information and learning technology (ILT) has been achieved that meets the changing needs and expectations of employees.

The introduction of new approaches, methodologies, technologies, and a change in mindset has increased usage of the learning service and placed it on a business partnership footing within the organization. The Learningzone model has proven that a continuous focus on innovation and delivery of a best in class service to employees with a strong focus on return on investment will ensure Bank of Ireland continues to deliver a world-class learning service to their workforce, equipping the organization with the skills and capabilities that it needs to succeed in the future.

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Diagram 4:
Hosted on Bank of Ireland Website for Customers



Diagram 5:
'All About Business' – Customer Training

