

The Entertainer

Migrating paper-based training to blended learning using Learning Pool Platform

Background

Founded by husband and wife team, Catherine and Gary Grant, in 1981, The Entertainer is now the UK's largest independent toy retailer employing over 1,600 staff at more than 170 stores. Expanding rapidly overseas, the company has the vision to fill every childhood with wonder and a mission to be the 'Best Loved' toyshop - starting with one child, one community at a time.

The Challenge

For over 20 years, The Entertainer provided a modular training system (known as Modules) for Retail Sales Assistants and Supervisors in its 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

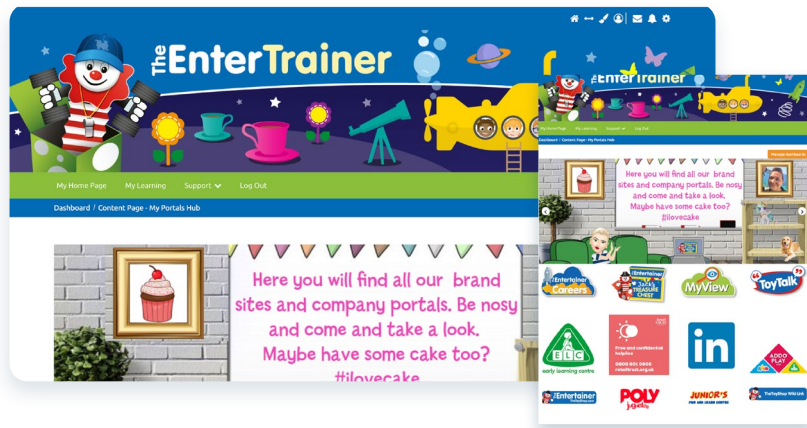
wherever possible. However, up to the Autumn of 2017, the Modules were paper-based and comprised a checklist in booklet form with supporting documents.

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.



“The paper Modules were hard work, took a long time to complete and went out of date so quickly.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.”

Store Manager,
The Entertainer



The Solution

The Entertainer realized 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 its employees' careers. Following a full market review, The Entertainer partnered with Learning Pool because of its long track record in facilitating blended learning solutions. The Entertainer knew this approach would meet its current need but would also offer plenty of scope to expand on the learning opportunities available in the future.

As well as implementing Learning Pool Platform,

The Entertainer invested in the Foundation Skills collection from Learning Pool Library Content to pre-populate the platform with more than a hundred off-the-shelf workplace learning lessons. Adding access to Learning Pool Authoring enabled the L&D department to simply and cost-effectively produce their own learning content from scratch as well as enhance the off-the-shelf lessons as needed.



30000

Mandatory course completions



70000

Discretionary course completions



95%

Available audience engagement

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 The Entertainer goody-box containing postcards with login details and treats for the staff. This ensured that a sense of both awareness and anticipation was created across the store estate. The resulting engagement levels were 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 platform for a limited period to significantly raise awareness of their product.

The Response



“Switching to an online blended solution with Learning Pool has been the single biggest step forward we’ve taken in helping our colleagues to maximize 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 centralized reporting which makes managing our learning journey efficient and effective. Adding the Foundation Skills collection of pre-built learning brought immediate value across the whole workforce. Whilst Learning Pool Authoring 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.”

Store Manager,
The Entertainer

Outcomes

The previous Module offering has evolved significantly. New starters are given access to an Onboarding Hub with specific induction courses, then auto-enrolled onto their first learning experience and subsequently allocated specific Foundation Skills lessons to make sure they achieve competence by role type as quickly as possible. The lessons have also been copied and quickly converted into non-assessed versions which continue to engage longer-serving employees and Line Managers responsible for driving engagement in their respective stores.

Using online learning for the first time, the team has been 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 Learning Pool Authoring.

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 has 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 lessons 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’s Founder & Executive Chairman. These incentives have the effect of both rewarding those who engage in their own personal development and encouraging teams to be ambitious – one of the company’s core values.

Results Realized



100000

Course completions in the first 18 months



81%

Overall customer satisfaction



£8000

Saved in annual assessment costs

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.

