Tales from our E-learning journey

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The Project

- To develop an E-learning unit of study at Masters level focusing on organisational culture in the NHS and the effects on the workforce of the increasing use of immigrant professional labour.
Background

- Increasing multicultural society.
- Shortage, maldistribution and misutilisation of nurses (ICN 1999).
- Migration of qualified nurses who have ‘portable’ skills.
- Ageing workforce.
- Increased workload.
- Diversification of nurses’ work.
- Government target of 330,000 nurses by 2004 (Buchan 2002).
- International recruitment.
Why Go E-Based?

- E-Based learning is a way of meeting some of these challenges (Hanson, 2002):
  - widening access and increasing flexibility.
  - dealing with more diverse students.
  - funding stretch.
  - globalisation.
  - threat from competitors.
  - greater demand for accountability.

- A grant in 2002 / 2003 allowed us to start developing an E-Based unit.
The Journey

- August - September 2002.
  - Research Phase.
  - Programme Development.
  - Validation/Revisions.
- February - May 2005.
  - Pilot Internally.
  - Evaluate and Report.
Journey Obstacles

Some of the problems were:

- availability of staff with relevant expertise.
- external recruitment partially successful but late.
- staff sickness; project halted to search for new project manager.
- lack of defined dates for completion.
- demands on time and resources of developers and academics.
- considerable enthusiasm and subject knowledge within school but lack of expertise in learning technology.
Where we were last year…..

- New project manager and project plan.
- Study guide and first section of unit complete as e-learning material.
Where we are now…..

- School commitment to complete project remains very strong.
- All seven topics and the study guide have now been completed and rewritten.
- Validation is being planned for Summer 2004.
- Feedback and reflections from the evaluation of the Managing Low Back Pain E-learning unit will be used to refine the unit.
- Pilot and detailed evaluation is planned for Winter/Spring 2005.
What have we learned: Design

- Best practice method identified so far has been to follow the three stage process (Jones, 1992) of Divergence, Transformation and Convergence:
  - **Divergence** - brainstorming ideas - including what we wanted to include and what could be achieved within a specific timeframe.
  - **Transformation** - focusing on one area to develop and the objectives required to produce it.
  - **Convergence** - finalising objectives and identifying the risks and possible solutions before proceeding with the production of content and design.
What have we learned: IHCS

- The mistakes of this project (e.g. timescales being under-estimated) have proved valuable in highlighting how future developments could be improved.
- The experience has benefited IHCS in terms of an increased insight into academic and technical staff roles in e-learning.
- Parts of the unit have been able to be taken forward by other units enabling them to be developed faster (e.g. Study Guide, initial look and feel).
- Developing directly onto screen rather than by paper first is a much smarter way of working.
What have we learned: BU

- The procedures for validating E-learning units are not on a par with traditional units - this needs to be addressed.
- BU should formulate a cohesive central strategy in the processes of creating and validating E-learning units (information on its E-learning strategy, accessibility, usability etc).
- BU should examine and adopt best practice techniques as used in the private sector:
  - improved sharing of information across schools.
  - a more cohesive communication network.
  - ‘Us and them’ - working together rather than in competition with each other.