ROYAL YACHTING ASSOCIATION NATIONAL TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PLATFORM SERVES 230 UK CENTRES

RYA

The Challenge

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) is the national body for all forms of boating, and provides a wide range of training courses and professional qualifications, some of which are legal requirements. Their Short Range Certificate (SRC) course is governed by international and European regulations, which were changing. These changes had repercussions for RYA, including:

- An increase in learner hours - up to 10 hours, including up to 3 hours of pre-reading
- Separation of training and assessment, ie there would no longer be continual assessment during training

Implementation of these changes risked creating a large barrier to entry for students with increased costs and time spent on the course. The RYA needed something new.

The Solution

The RYA's need was simple – they required a digital version of their classroom-based SRC course, which is a legal requirement for anyone operating a marine radio at sea. This was a unique challenge as the RYA has many students at sea or in other remote locations where internet access could not be guaranteed. A flexible solution with offline access was essential. They also wanted to provide learners an opportunity to record voice calls in private as learning and practicing how to send a voice message in a very particular format that sounds strange to the untrained ear is a potentially embarrassing process.

This new digital course needed:

- To be equivalent to approximately 7 hours of face to face learning
- A mix of e-learning and practical exercises
- To provide voice recording and best practice feedback
- To provide online/offline progress tracking

The RYA also needed a Learning Management System (LMS) on which to host this and other courses. This LMS would be the learning portal for over 230 training centres around the world and so needed to be branded individually for each one

"First impressions count for the student, and Totara instantly gives the right impression that the training centre's got an instantly branded area that's clean, modern, fresh and actually fairly straight forward to navigate through."

— Craig Burton, Training and Resource Manager, RYA

"Different training centres all have their own students and they need an area of the site where they can offer training purely to those students. We can brand their site to look like their own and they can also add some of their own content to the site as well"

— Jane Hall, eLearning Manager, RYA

Using Totara Learn

The RYA were already using Moodle as their Learning Management System, but found its functionality restrictive and were looking to upgrade to another system. Totara Learn enabled them to make the changes they needed and give the correct branding for the various training centres associated with the RYA.

With a large volume of training centres using the site and potentially up to 18,000 students belonging to these centres for this course alone (around 30,000 students in total across all courses), it was essential for the RYA that Totara managed the overall processes and organised the centres, students and reports.

Digitising the Short Range Certificate course

The SRC course is traditionally taught in the classroom by RYA approved instructors. Learning Pool™'s designers attended the face to face course to gain a deep understanding of the subject matter before considering how to treat the content and design.

In the course, the learner is given ample opportunities to listen to a range of different radio communications, helping them recognise types of messages and developing their understanding of the very specific radio language.

We created graphical storyboards to build up a picture of various scenarios, allowing us to show the interactions between the distinct parts of the maritime safety systems.

Practicing communication skills is an essential part of this course. We used innovative voice recording to allow learners to practice sending and receiving voice messages and digital alerts. This includes allowing them to listen back to their recordings and compare them with model answers.

The Solution - Offline Access to eLearning

Offline access as a prerequisite for the success of this course. Constant connectivity could not be guaranteed for the audience so enforcing the requirement to take the course in a training environment would significantly limit its potential.

To cater for this, an innovative approach was taken to allow offline access. The course was designed as an installed product for PC, Mac and iPad. After installation, the learner runs the course which requests that they logon to the Totara Learn. This validates them as a learner on the system.

After the initial logon, the learner can complete the course either offline or online. If they complete sections offline, their progress is stored locally until they are next online. When connected again, their progress is synchronised with Totara Learn.

This flexible access to course content significantly increased the demographic reach of the course.

As using a radio is a skill which requires both learning and doing, our focus was to bring a working radio to the learner. We created a marine radio simulator that allows learners to practice using its functions such as volume and squelch and the channel selector, and to use the radio's menu to select the various options available to them.

All feedback is given visually and via audio, giving learners constant access to the language and format of spoken radio communications.

"We've got a really good working relationship with Learning Pool both in terms of the e-learning design and the ongoing support for Totara."

— Craig Burton, Training and Resource Manager, RYA

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