

case study

Ongoing support and communication is key to learner retention at The Institute of Sales Promotion

The Institute of Sales Promotion (ISP) is the main association representing promoters, agencies and service partners engaged in promotional marketing. Their aim is to raise the profile of sales promotion and ensure the highest standards of self-regulation across the industry. As part of their education programme for individual members, they run a range of qualifications including the Diploma in Promotional Marketing.

The problem

The ISP has around 170 enrolments a year on its Diploma in Promotional Marketing. This is a self study programme completed over a four and a half month period and supported by seminars and lectures.

The ISP believes that the key to minimising drop out rates is to provide ongoing support and communication with students and is always looking for new and convenient ways of doing this.

They also wanted a way for students to measure their understanding of a topic that would encourage learners to study regularly and not leave all the work until the last few weeks of the programme.

The solution

The ISP commissioned Nelson Croom to develop a series of tests that students could use to assess their progress. A new test is released every fortnight and a scheduled email alert is sent out to every learner.

This helps the learner to keep track of where they should be in the course so they can plan their work better and not fall behind schedule. It also helps generate more of a dialogue with the Institute so learners feel supported and are therefore more likely to complete the course.

Learners are able to attempt each test several times to see if they have achieved the required pass rate. They can identify which areas they need to focus on and can maximise their chance of passing by using this facility to check progress.

The tests are part of an online programme that each student registers for at the outset of the course.

As well as the tests there is a parallel resource centre which includes all relevant documentation for the course. The study notes, course manual and course papers are

incorporated here. This facility has enabled ISP to save substantial administration time and printing costs because they no longer need to produce and mail out, hard copy materials.

"Working in partnership with Nelson Croom we hope to maximise our retention rates on the course. Students have a clear set of reminders to help them get organised. The additional savings we made with the resource centre have been an unexpected bonus," says Chris Bestley, Director of Education for the ISP.

"The process has been wholly collaborative and handled smoothly. The team at Nelson Croom have made it very straight-forward. We have also managed to identify a range of exciting possibilities for enhancing the learning experience on the Diploma including a Motivation Diploma and Alumni resources for those who have already passed. I am looking forward to working with Nelson Croom on building a sustainable relationship in the future" he concludes.

The results

2006 saw the successful launch of the ISP Diploma online resource and an important change in the way the course is run. Candidates now have 24/7 access to the papers, case studies and other resources which is essential when studying in their own time, at home and at work.

The ISP now have enhanced functionality to improve the learner experience and they have been able to offset some of the development costs with the savings made from moving printed course materials online.

