

case study

Supporting a growing membership with online CPD

The Institute of Physics (IOP) provides a diverse CPD programme to support its growing membership – currently over 36,000 members worldwide – at every stage in their careers. In 2005 they started working with Nelson Croom to provide online CPD to develop members' professional and business skills. Since then, we have worked with the IOP to develop programmes based on their needs and most recently the IOP has started to roll out a full suite of programmes on a freely-available basis to members.

The problem

One of the IOP's main objectives is to provide career development for members and to be responsive to their needs. Members had been requesting the provision of online professional development but with around half of members working in academia and half working in business their challenge was to provide relevant and tailored content that would suit the needs of a diverse membership and would encourage a change in behaviours and raise skill levels.

The solution

To address the objectives of providing career development and being responsive to members' needs, the IOP decided to pilot three courses from our Professional Development Portfolio: *Negotiation Skills*, *Coaching Skills* and *Managing Workload*. Each page of the courses was reviewed and changes were made to specific examples, graphics, language and terminology to create a contextual relevance that would engage the audience.

The results

The Institute of Physics Learning Online resource was launched with a target to achieve 200 registrations, with each learner spending at least 20 minutes in a course. At the beginning of 2006 there were nearly 1000 learners registered across the three courses with an average of 51 minutes spent learning. Due to the success of the pilot the IOP selected a further five courses including *Networking Skills*, *Employment Law for Managers* and *Conversations with Customers*. These courses underwent the same tailoring process and were launched in Spring 2007.

Continuing to meet members' needs

As the online learning resource continued to be successful the IOP wanted to tackle another challenge: to help members make the transition from talented scientists to effective managers. Too many physicists were taking on management roles reluctantly and few were succeeding sufficiently to achieve senior positions of influence and control in their organisations. We worked with the IOP to develop the *Manager's Starter PAC*, which helps reluctant managers to create their own Personal Development Plan, and then supports them in its application by providing online courses to improve their skills in key areas. The *Manager's Starter PAC* was shortlisted for an Elearning Age Award in 2007.

Nelson Croom's Professional Development Portfolio continues to evolve to meet the needs of professionals and the associations that we work with. We often commission new courses on the request of our partners to help them to continue to meet the needs of their members. In July 2009 we published *Communicating Complex Ideas* to help professionals better communicate their expertise to lay people, commissioned on the request of the IOP.

The IOP online learning continues to go from strength to strength. As the Institute's CPD policies and support continues to develop, the online learning resources adapt to reflect this. In Summer 2009, the Institute decided to roll out further online learning courses and make these freely available to members. Over the course of nine months, the online CPD resource will increase to include 28 tailored and in-depth professional development courses.

IOP Institute of Physics

Nelson Croom Ltd

N307 Westminster Business Square • 1-45 Durham Street • London • SE11 5JH

t: 020 7582 3309 • e: info@nelsoncroom.co.uk • www.nelsoncroom.co.uk

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