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Lance Whitworth, organisational development and learning consultant, SBS

Australian broadcaster supports workforce with lynda.com learning

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) occupies a unique place in the Australian media landscape. As described in its charter, the principal function of SBS is to provide multilingual, multicultural and indigenous radio, television and digital media services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and reflect the nation’s diverse society.

SBS carries out this function across an ever-increasing number of distribution platforms including free-to-air television channels, subscription television, analogue and digital radio, the web, and mobile devices and apps. SBS strives to inspire all Australians to explore, appreciate and celebrate a diverse world, and in doing so contributes to a cohesive society.

SBS is a hybrid-funded public broadcaster, receiving the majority of its funding from the Australian government. It also generates commercial revenue through advertising, print and merchandise sales and third-party content distribution. SBS employs 1,100 staff members.

Challenge: shift to employee-centered, just-in-time learning

To streamline and enhance its employee learning and development offering, SBS made a strategic decision to configure a software as a service (SaaS) learning management system (LMS). That solution, MyCareer Online, is comprised of performance and learning management modules. The performance module facilitates employee goal setting, tracking and monitoring as well as the annual review process. The learning module enables individual development planning as well as the hosting and deployment of instructional content.

“The objective is to make employee learning far more targeted and individualised,” said Lance Whitworth, organisational development and learning consultant. “Our workforce is very diverse, so we need to accommodate a wide variety of disciplines. We’re also conscious that a significant number of SBS employees work outside typical business hours, across a 24/7 roster, spanning multiple locations.

BENEFITS

- Offers a wide range of technology and business skills tutorials
- Integrates with an AICC-compliant LMS
- Provides reports that help track and monitor usage

“We want to fundamentally change the way employees, including managers, think about development,” Whitworth said. “For instance, our people should think holistically about learning, seeking out on-the-job experiences combined with targeted coaching and mentoring. Too often development is synonymous with off-site, classroom-based training that results in low return on investment.

“We want our people to instigate and drive their own learning experience, when the need presents itself. I am a big believer in just-in-time learning. People generally value new skills at the time they need to apply them.

“We also want employees to view learning as a benefit, enhancing their employability,” Whitworth added.

SBS needed a high-quality and media-rich instruction solution that facilitates single sign-on access and progress tracking with the organisation’s new LMS. In addition, it needed a wide range of software, creative and business skills courses—available on demand—that map to a broad mix of SBS employee learning goals.

Solution: a transition to lyndaEnterprise

Several SBS departments began using lynda.com training in 2012, subscribing to lyndaPro, a solution ideal for groups, teams or departments. The service became particularly popular with the organisation’s creative and marketing teams, as well as with its online developers.

After SBS decided to roll out online training to all employees, the organisation purchased lyndaEnterprise, significantly expanding its lynda.com license count. lyndaEnterprise can communicate with the AICC-compliant LMS selected by SBS. lyndaEnterprise allows content to be searchable in the LMS catalogue and launched from the LMS. It also reports user activity back to the LMS.

“SBS’s marketing and creative team has been able to build skills in Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign and more. Likewise, developers in the SBS Online team build SBS mobile apps for Android and iOS devices,” Whitworth said. “We’re a multi-platform media organisation, so we design, deploy and maintain content on all media devices. It’s just a part of our DNA. So we certainly have an ongoing need for the latest instruction around that.

“Another big advantage is searchable, time-coded transcripts and the fact that courses are divided into bite-size chapters,” Whitworth said, noting that these features support just-in-time learning. “People can go directly to learning about a specific function within a tool.”

Whitworth said. “And for the sheer number of courses and subjects offered, and the fact they’re constantly updated, it’s very good value for the money. We did take a look at other providers and this was the right decision for us.”

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Looking ahead: training for all staff

"As SBS rolls out lyndaEnterprise, we plan to offer lynda.com access to all employees by implementing an integrated internal communications strategy. Channels of communication will include the SBS intranet, executive blog, marketing emails launched via the LMS, digital monitor displays, collateral, interactive demonstrations, competitions and more," Whitworth said. "We will also visit each of the leadership teams across divisions to spread the word.

"As more and more SBS employees use lynda.com, business skills courses will help SBS expand its new formal leadership development program," Whitworth said. "lynda.com will provide support material, and we'll be looking to integrate its business, transferable and soft skills titles into the program.

"SBS employees increasingly use smartphones and tablets," Whitworth said, adding that the availability of lynda.com content on mobile devices "promotes learning at the point of need."

As online training at SBS evolves, Whitworth expects lynda.com to help drive usage of the new LMS. Employees "will have more of an imperative to return to the system again and again."

SBS plans to use its LMS as well as lyndaEnterprise reporting capabilities to track and monitor lynda.com usage. In addition, feedback from employees participating in goal setting, and the online training supporting that process, will help SBS identify company-wide learning and development gaps that need to be filled.