

Notes and news

AccorHotels launches cultural transformation

AccorHotels UK and Ireland has launched a cultural transformation empowering more than 7,000 staff throughout its hotels – including ibis, Novotel and Mercure in the UK – with the freedom to go “off-script” to provide spontaneous gestures that transform hotel stays.

Resulting moments to date have included cooking personalized unicorn pancakes for younger guests, walking a guest’s dog, surprising a guest with the latest novel by his favorite writer and even helping guests to concoct a marriage-proposal plan.

The cultural transformation, which has already been introduced in 80 percent of the group’s UK locations, uses the skills and understanding of staff of what really makes a hotel guest happy and how to provide unique, memorable moments. The move bucks increasing trends of automation, placing outstanding guest service at the heart of delivering first-class hospitality.

AccorHotels has reinforced its belief in this initiative by making it central to its new advertising campaign in the UK. The multi-million pound “From The Heart” campaign features real-life spontaneous gestures and acts of service. The campaign was filmed in Novotel London Canary Wharf, ibis London Canning Town and Mercure London Bridge.

Thomas Dubaere, Chief Operating Officer, AccorHotels UK and Ireland, said: “We believe the most important factor to drive our continued success in a competitive environment is how our family of hotel staff make our guests feel. We have transformed the way colleagues can interact freely and directly with guests with the roll-out of our mobility program, removing reception desks in over 100 hotels and running operations via smartphones.”

“We have since invested a lot of energy in creating a culture where staff feel empowered to go ‘off-script’ and are trusted to deliver the personal touch. In addition we are now investing in our new advertising campaign which champions this philosophy and demonstrates the effect it can have to potential new guests.”

Staff have been undergoing a series of workshops and training exercises to make them feel empowered to communicate with guests on a more personal level, so that guests in turn feel valued and welcomed.

TV Psychologist Emma Kenny says: “Many people are leading pressured, stressed or complicated lives. A kind gesture, a caring word or even just a heartfelt smile can transform not only the way that person feels, but also the way you feel. What is remarkable is that the simplest of gestures can have a huge impact on everyone it touches. Approaching life this way puts the delight back into everyday experiences, filling any interaction between two people with positivity and potential.”

General Manager Jacqui MacMillan, recently appointed to Novotel London Canary Wharf, who has been closely involved in developing skill among UK staff, explains: “You can instantly tell in guests’ reactions when you have connected with them. They appreciate actions that come from the heart, however big or small. It has taken my job to another level and given me the freedom to welcome guests like family.”

Technology remains a key area of development alongside this service-focused strategy, but AccorHotels UK and Ireland is only deploying new technology where it enhances customer experience and enables staff to offer a greater level of service.

NM Group builds on apprenticeship success with £500,000 investment

Construction and engineering firm NM Group (North Midland Construction plc) is set to invest £500,000 in training and development over the next 12 months, building on the success of its apprenticeship program.

The company currently employs 100 apprentices – about 7 percent of its workforce – and is recruiting new apprentices throughout 2018.

Bucking the national trend, NM Group has continued to increase the number of employees on apprenticeship-training programs following the introduction of the government's apprenticeship-levy initiative. Figures from the Department for Education show a year-on-year drop in apprenticeships registrations since the levy came into force in April last year. However, the firm, which has 12 UK offices, has adapted quickly to the country's evolving apprenticeship landscape.

NM Group has a well-established academy scheme, which spans entry-level opportunities through to degree apprenticeships and a leadership program.

John Homer, Chief Executive of NM Group, said: "Our people are at the core of everything we do, which is why our ongoing commitment to training and development is so important."

"Investing in new talent and building skills within the existing workforce are crucial for our industry. To build the construction skills of the future, we need to develop quality trade and management skills, as well as upskilling teams for innovation and technology developments."

NM Group operates across the construction, highways, power, telecommunication and water industries. Apprenticeship opportunities include construction, trade specialisms, civil engineering, project management, quantity surveying, design and business support services.

Simon Reeve, aged 27, from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, started his construction career as an apprentice with NM Group. He said: "I heard about the apprenticeship program and type of projects I could be working on; it really sparked my interest. Being able to work on technically challenging projects and see your achievements is a real motivation. I am determined to work my way to the top and that definitely feels achievable with the encouragement I receive from the NM Group team."

Simon Reeve is now a Project Manager for NM Group's NMCNomenca division, working on multi-million-pound water-infrastructure projects. He is also due to graduate this year in construction management from Nottingham Trent University.

A-Plant scoops international training award

Plant, tool and equipment-hire company A-Plant beat off competition from nominees in China, Brazil and the Netherlands, to take home the title of IPAF Training Center of the Year at the International Awards for Powered Access.

Jointly organized by Access International and the International Powered-Access Federation, the awards celebrate best practice and excellence in the powered-access industry.

A-Plant's Director of risk management, Douglas McLuckie, said: "We are thrilled to have won the award for the second time in five years. Huge credit goes to the training team for achieving such high standards. A-Plant Training has become firmly established as one of the leading specialist access-training providers in the UK and we are proud of our growth, innovation and exceptional safety record. Improving industry safety through training is a long-term commitment for A-Plant and we will continue to enhance our training offering in a bid to drive the industry toward a zero accident rate."

To be nominated, A-Plant had to be able to demonstrate exceptional growth in trainee numbers, innovative solutions, raising awareness of safety, promoting its product or services, or moving into new markets over the last 12 months.

Douglas McLuckie believes it was the company's investment in training centers of excellence and the variety of courses on offer that secured the win. He explained: "Over the past 12 months we

have delivered IPAF training to over 1,300 customers, both at A-Plant training centers of excellence and customer sites. We have also continued to invest in our network of training centers of excellence and in the last two years our training network has grown from 16 to 22 across the country, of which 14 are IPAF accredited.”

He continued: “We now offer 70 training courses to our customers and a large percentage are related to access training. Traditionally, many of our training customers have been in the construction industry, but we have branched out into other sectors such as the water industry, medical and health, processing and service sectors. New A-Plant training centers have recently been opened in Immingham and Rotherham and our primary training center in Nottingham continues to be the hub from which our training team operates.”

Clearwater launches technical training academy

Clearwater Group has launched a dedicated facility to provide training to apprentices, new recruits and existing employees on the latest practices and technology being used in the water-treatment, hygiene and air-hygiene industries.

The technical training academy is now open to new recruits and existing employees as part of a movement to drive skills training and development in the water and environmental-management sectors.

A recent survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management showed that employers are seeing increased turnover of staff and 70 percent are saying that the skill shortage has resulted in a reduced ability to finish projects. Clearwater believes that in order to tackle this issue more training needs to be available not only to those looking to break into the industry but also for the continued development of its current employees.

The company has invested significantly in the development of the Clearwater technical training academy, and expects 400 employees to benefit from the new facility this year. The training on offer will benefit the entire sector by driving environmental standards to higher levels.

The academy offers courses covering the cleaning and disinfection of water systems, cooling-tower water treatment and remedial work, chemical dosing systems, water-treatment plant, as well as air-handling units, ductwork and kitchen extracts. Trainees will be able to sign up to courses on asbestos awareness, health and safety as well as legionella testing. Many of these courses are City & Guilds accredited.

“We are very excited to open the doors on this facility that is fully equipped with three cooling towers, ventilation systems, domestic-water systems and industrial water-treatment equipment. Trainees get to practise in a safe and clean environment, preparing them for work that can sometimes take place in less comfortable conditions such as on cooling towers located in manufacturing plants or water sumps in basements. The opportunity to learn new skills will ensure that we will continue to have well-trained and competent infield, sales and support teams offering a first-class service to all of our customers,” said Clearwater technical training academy manager Paul Englefield. “The level of investment is a true indication of Clearwater’s commitment to technical expertise and service excellence.”

Skills for Security expands its apprenticeship portfolio

The sector skills body for the private security industry, Skills for Security, is expanding its apprenticeship portfolio to include management and service skills.

According to Peter Sherry, Skills for Security’s Chief Executive, the aim is to help private security organizations to raise their level of professionalism across the board, not just in their main services. “We tend to think of apprenticeships as supporting core skills – engineering skills for engineering companies and so on. The fire, emergency and security systems apprenticeship is our cornerstone offering, but now we want to help organizations with team-leader, supervisor and customer-service skills, too.”

In a competitive, commercial marketplace, this makes sense, believes Peter Sherry. “Quality provision of core services is vital, but to get to those services customers have to talk to sales teams and customer-service teams. The skills in those teams – and the skills of their managers – should be on a par with those in delivery units.”

Skills for Security is immediately offering the level three team-leader/supervisor and the level two customer-services apprenticeships.

“We have programs available right across the UK. New apprentices can join us all through the year,” said Peter Sherry. “The program is also useful for organizations where current employees need additional skills or reskilling if customer service or management is new to them. And there is no age limit.”

Meanwhile, Peter Sherry said that many organizations have not yet embraced changes to apprenticeship funding following the UK Government’s introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017 and changes to apprenticeships themselves.

“Quite a few things changed with the introduction of the levy,” said Peter Sherry. “For example, any restriction on age was removed – a single thing that can transform how organizations use their fund.”

Other factors are also in play. For example, apprenticeships can start all year round, and yet many people think that there are specific annual term-times. And, while organizations cannot use their levy fund to simply pay for training, they can establish their own academy to provide apprenticeships.

“It is something we help certain organizations with,” said Peter Sherry. “It is regulated and has to operate within the law, but it can help either large organizations or those with highly specialized needs to take control of more of their levy fund. They can even provide apprenticeships to a peer company, establishing a new income stream.”

Peter Sherry has written a brief guide for organizations, named 1, 2, 3 – Go! Three Steps to Transforming Your Organization’s Approach to Apprenticeships. The guide is available to download, free, from the Skills for Security website.

“Businesses pay a lot of money into their levy account,” said Peter Sherry, “and some feel they are not getting enough value from it. This does not have to be the case. With help and advice from us, we can help them to make the most of that fund.”

Learning-management system earns new plaudit

Growth Engineering’s Academy LMS, a fully gamified learning-management system, has earned its place in the top 5 of eLearning Industry’s 20 Best Learning Management Systems (LMS) Offering an LMS Demo.

eLearning Industry is the largest online community of e-learning specialists. They have recently published a list containing their top 20 learning-management systems that offer a demo. Out of hundreds of LMS vendors who offer a demo, Growth Engineering’s Academy LMS came in at No. 4. The article notes that LMS demonstrations help organizations to make better choices for their online training programs by empowering them to select more effective or more relevant learning. The companies ranked in the list provide the best demos that guide organizations to make a better decision.

In addition to the LMS demo list, the article contains information to help companies that are purchasing an LMS platform, by suggesting a range of questions they should ask. They include:

1. Can I deploy multiplatform-friendly content?
2. Are the reporting features up to the task?
3. Does it support social/informal learning experiences?
4. Will the LMS meet my evolving needs?

Christopher Pappas, founder of eLearning Industry, said of Growth Engineering: “The Academy LMS is touted as being ‘the engagement engine’, which is due to its emphasis on social, gamified online training experiences that get corporate learners actively involved.”

Company HQ launches new barber academy

Company HQ barbers has launched a barbering academy after years of teaching prisoners to become barbers.

The Company HQ team has more than 20 years of barbering, hair and beauty experience and is using this background to train the next generation of barbers in the new facility.

The experience of getting involved in training prisoners to become barbers made the Company HQ team realize how lacking the prison education syllabus can be – and it was this realization that led to the decision to share their passion, knowledge and expertise with those wishing to get into the industry.

Based in Southend-on-Sea, the Company HQ academy offers a barbering course that runs over four months full-time or nine months part-time. Those completing the course will obtain a Level 2 NVQ diploma in barbering.

In addition, the academy offers a one- or two-day fading course for those with at least a year’s experience, and a traditional hot-towel and cut-throat wet-shave course suitable for all levels. All three courses require participants to bring their own kit and include work on live models.

Company HQ’s Essex premises also include a barbering salon that is open seven days a week, offering services including haircuts and styling, patterns, beard trims, hot shaves and more.

Says a Company HQ spokesman: “My work in prison education showed that the quality of the barbering syllabus can sometimes be overlooked by the training providers, and the resources provided to the tutors extremely limited which means training could be better. With our new barbering academy, we want to train the high-quality barbers of the future.”

Training expert calls for fast and fundamental change

The global education and training sector has been warned that it is “hurtling towards massive change without a plan.” Astrid Jaeger, Managing Director of OEB Learning Technologies Europe GmbH, which organizes the OEB Global conference on technology-assisted learning and training, said that the education sector will have to change “fundamentally and quickly” to cope with new demands created by rapid technological change.

“Technology is changing society. The way we live now, and the jobs we do, will never be the same again. Artificial intelligence is already allowing machines to replace workers on an unprecedented scale. Education must shape our response to the immense challenge of this new age. But education and training will have to change, too. So will the nature of employment. To date, both educators and employers have been slow to come to terms with the implications of a new world in which the old jobs no longer exist. We need to think this through urgently and start planning for a radically different future. At the moment, we are hurtling towards massive change without a plan.”

Astrid Jaeger was speaking at the launch of OEB Global’s new website, which provides details of the conference. She said: “Learning will no longer be a brief phase in life; it will become a central part of our existence. In an era of constant and increasing change, we will discover a new appreciation of learning and an understanding of its place in the future. We will have to learn to love learning.”

Her concern is that the education sector has so far failed to come to terms with the fundamental shifts that are beginning to take place across society.

“What is happening is going to mean that millions of people have more time on their hands. The world of work will change dramatically during the course of the next two decades. How will we

cope with it? How will we enable people to live lives which are both meaningful and fulfilled? How will we equip them for jobs that require totally new skills, in a world with a completely different pattern of employment?"

Participants in OEB Global considered how institutions, organizations and employers should prepare themselves to meet the challenge of change. They also asked how governments can create flexible, equitable education systems that are capable of adapting quickly to meet new demands. And they looked at how vocational training and further education can keep up with an ever-growing demand for new skills.

Astrid Jaeger continued: "We have to change our whole approach to learning and put it at the heart of life in the future. We have to change the nature of education and inspire a new generation. How we do it is a very exciting subject."

Recruitment a key concern in financial services

Nearly half (49 percent) of senior leaders in the financial services sector see finding skilled candidates as the biggest worry over the next 12 months.

Research from Robert Half Financial Services reveals the key concerns – both external and internal – facing the industry, including the impact of tightened regulation, new business processes and training and development for employees.

The financial services industry faces a number of challenges, from the rise of challenger banks and the need to improve customer service to digital transformation and impact of new regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation. In the face of these challenges, financial services leaders have identified the skills shortage as their greatest fear, demonstrating the importance of attracting and retaining talented employees.

"Process, regulatory and geopolitical change are creating the perfect storm for the financial services sector to develop and grow," said Matt Weston, UK Managing Director at Robert Half. "In a time of uncertainty, banks and other financial services firms need to be confident they can gain access to the skills they need to help them through this period of change and beyond."

Other worries included tightened regulatory controls (cited by 42 percent of respondents), implementing new business processes (35 percent), market instability, bank recapitalization, and training and developing existing employees (all 32 percent). The research revealed that new technologies are less of a worry, with many optimistic about their potential.

"With only a finite number of skilled professionals, providing current staff with the means to grow and develop new skills provides tangible benefits to the business as a whole, including plugging skills gaps. Staff provided with such opportunities are more motivated, productive and loyal, which has a positive impact on any organization. Additionally, while operating in a period of change or market instability, adopting a flexible recruitment strategy can offer great benefits. Where current skill gaps exist, hiring in temporary or contract professionals to fill the gaps allows for added value, greater flexibility and controls," concluded Matt Weston.

One in three London start-ups suffers from shortage in technology talent

A survey among more than 100 founders of London technology start-ups has revealed the main staffing challenges and concerns that are holding back London technology companies.

The research, conducted by Studio Graphene and City Road Communications, found:

- 33 percent believe there is a shortage of skilled technology workers in London; and
- 30 percent also say their growth has been hampered as a result of them not being able to hire the right employees.

Finding people who fit the start-up culture was also cited as a major issue, with 39 percent of founders of London technology businesses saying it is hard to find people who have the right

mind-set and work ethic to be employed in a start-up and 35 percent reporting that it is hard for start-ups to lure the best talent away from larger companies. Some 11 percent of London technology start-ups say UK immigration and visa laws have prevented them from hiring the individuals they wanted.

There are more than 187,000 technology companies in London. They employ 1.2 million people and have a combined turnover of £285 billion. The growth of London's technology sector has largely been driven by an influx of new start-ups. It is reported that, on average, a new technology business is formed every hour in the city.

Dominic Pollard, Director of City Road Communications, commented: "The exponential growth in the number of technology start-ups emerging across London has made competition for talent extremely high. In particular, the shortage of people who have the right skills and, importantly, work ethic to join fast-growing technology businesses has become a cause for concern. It is clearly something that the public and private sectors must come together to try and address in the coming years."

Ritam Gandhi, Founder and Director of Studio Graphene, added: "Today, London's start-ups face a choice when looking to access the technical skills they need: do they hire or outsource? The answer will depend on the size, culture and finances of each business, but it is vital that entrepreneurs consider both options to find the most practical, efficient and cost-effective solution to help their company grow."

Fareham College wins apprentice initiative award

Fareham College's Civil Engineering Training Centre (CETC) has won the Apprentice Initiative award at the annual Constructing Excellence (SECBE) awards.

CETC is a partnership between Fareham College and Solent Civil Engineering Employers Group (SCEEG). It is a simulated construction site that has been designed to give civil engineering apprentices a realistic training environment to get them site-ready. SCEEG provides governance to the apprenticeship program and comprises employer members, associate members such as CECA, suppliers and construction companies outside civil engineering such as Taylor Wimpey. Day-to-day, the center is managed by a site manager and training is delivered by experienced civil engineers.

The project supports the development of the existing workforce in a practical way that re-engages the workforce with skills that are of value to both the individual and the employer. CETC has attracted national attention and Government interest as an example of an employer led, co-designed apprenticeship. Proposals for a new £4.1 million CETC 2 campus have been awarded preliminary funding of £2.8 million from Fareham College and the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership for an estimated Autumn 2019 completion.

This is a practical scheme that not only addresses the skill shortage but also the lack of suitable apprenticeship standards and low levels of funding available. It has achieved the right staff ratio to deliver training and, at an early stage, apprentices are aware of what is expected of them, especially in the Winter months.

"The Apprenticeship Initiative category, sponsored by CoTrain, seeks forward-thinking employers that actively and innovatively develop a sustainable workforce by equipping young people with skills, knowledge and confidence," explained Darren Birch, regional framework manager, BAM Construction Ltd, and head judge for the award. "The Civil and Engineering Training Centre (CETC) is an exemplary model of an employer-led apprenticeship program that is co-designed to meet skills shortages and productivity issues."

The Constructing Excellence (SECBE) awards recognize some of the best teams and organizations in the region and aim to inspire others to learn and benefit from their stories which are published in the awards brochure.

"The key actions they took, results achieved, and lessons learned make an interesting read," said Derek Rees, regional director for constructing excellence.

Mind the skills-gap after Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI will create as many jobs in the UK as it will displace over the next 20 years, according to a report by PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Its analysis showed that the fourth industrial revolution will favor those with strong digital skills, as well as capabilities like creativity and teamwork which machines find difficult to replicate.

However, there is a large supply gap, with 63 percent of chief executives worried about the lack of talent to stay competitive in the digital age. As firms compete for digital superiority, they must take a grass-roots approach to understanding the skills gap in the existing teams, according to Farida Gibbs, Chief Executive and Founder of professional services firm Gibbs Hybrid.

She commented: "As the demand for people with digital skills increases, many firms make the mistake of hiring information technology experts without first understanding what they need for technological advancement. With so much technology out there, it is difficult for firms navigating change to cut through the noise. Having access to ready-made digital teams as needed allows firms to tap into the right expertise. It is almost like having a menu where they can pick and choose a project team which will be best able to cater to their specific business requirements. Some 45 percent of IT projects go over budget. Having these agile teams will allow firms to deliver successful outcomes when it comes to driving innovation in their business. Firms can stay competitive and keep up with the digital age, taking advantage of on-demand digital teams to cut costs, mitigate risk and accelerate change."

Ten key benefits of e-learning

An internationally known writer on online learning has outlined ten key benefits of e-learning.

In a guest blog post for the e-learning provider, Engage in Learning, Bob Little highlights:

1. **Faster delivery:** online materials are easier and quicker to disseminate than anything delivered via a classroom.
2. **Faster learning results:** unlike learning in a classroom, e-learners can focus purely on the elements they need to learn, and can learn at their own pace. A classroom instructor must cater for the needs of every learner, must cover everything on the agenda regardless of whether the learners already know it and can only progress at the pace of the slowest learner.
3. **Faster application of the learning:** since the learning materials are available online all the time, learners can access them exactly as, when and where they need the learning that these materials contain.
4. **Access to specialists:** e-learning provides a way for anyone to access – relatively cheaply – the knowledge, skills and expertise of the world's best exponents or specialists in a particular field.
5. **Consistency of message:** e-learning materials provide consistency of content and presentation style. This can be particularly valuable to organizations employing a large number of people, perhaps around the globe.
6. **Access to vital data:** many e-learning materials focus on imparting information that learners need to know so they can keep their jobs – and their employers need to know that they know, because of the employers' compliance and regulatory obligations. Making this learning available via e-learning, distributed via a LMS or learning content management system (LCMS), enables the learners' employer to collect the data needed to prove to the authorities that each learner continues to comply with the regulations. This can save employers vast amounts of money and hassle in unlevied fines and court cases that are never brought.
7. **Always up-to-date:** e-learning materials can be updated in one central repository – an LMS or LCMS – as and when necessary. This should provide peace of mind for administrators who must ensure that, for compliance and regulatory purposes, all learners can access the most up-to-date information.

8. Lower environmental impact: in climate-conscious times when people and businesses are keen to reduce the harm of any activity to the environment, e-learning offers a green way of imparting knowledge and skills.
9. Lower costs: the costs of developing and delivering e-learning can be extremely competitive because, among other things, e-learning: reduces the cost of learning materials per learner compared with the costs of classroom-delivered learning; saves the costs involved in classroom-delivered learning – including the opportunity costs of the learners' lost productivity from leaving their post to go on a course; and enables materials to be accessed, learned and applied more swiftly than knowledge and skills disseminated by a classroom-delivered course. Learners become more effective, efficient and productive sooner. This lowers the costs associated with rectifying corporate mistakes and satisfying customer complaints.
10. E-learning is popular: today, everyone seems to own or have access to a number of devices – from laptops to tablets to mobile phones. Any, and all, of these technological devices can be used to deliver learning materials, on demand, as and where required. For the learner, e-learning is simpler and cheaper than having to rearrange your commitments so that you can spend time and money attending a classroom-delivered course. E-learning is also likely to be more personalized – that is, relevant to the particular learner's needs. It will be available as, when and where the learner wants to learn.

Bob Little said: "In its (relatively) short history, e-learning has been hailed as both the greatest and the worst advance in learning. That debate rests upon the quality of the learning materials and their suitability to the learning challenge they are intended to meet but, quality and suitability issues aside, e-learning has much to recommend it."

Kate Carter, Engage in Learning's operations and marketing manager, commented: "Bob's article is the first in a series we hope to publish on our blog to help learning and development practitioners to grasp the concepts of their sector and promote their activities to the senior executives in their organizations."

"Bob is right about e-learning," Kate Carter added. "As a learning delivery mechanism, it has a great deal to recommend it – provided that the e-learning materials are of a high quality and are suitable for their intended audience. That is certainly the message that Engage in Learning is hearing from its growing list of customers."

Docebo teams up with Competentum in Russia

Cloud-based enterprise learning platform Docebo will offer powerful mobile learning experiences to organizations in Russia through its new partnership with Russian digital education technology provider Competentum.

The partnership will add Docebo's learning platform, complete with a LMS, social and informal learning modalities and the ability to track learners' performance to Competentum's portfolio.

Competentum has been providing employee development technology in the Russian market for 25 years. Docebo's platform fills a gap in the Russian marketplace where there is currently a lack of effective social and informal learning modalities.

"Russian digital learning and HR-technology markets are changing dramatically," said Evgeniy Sandomirskiy, Director, Competentum Russia. "Our customers now want to see a full range of up-to-date scalable solutions and not just separate software products. Our range of solutions, including talent management software and e-learning content, is now complemented with next-generation technology offered with the Docebo learning platform."

"In addition, Docebo's learning platform will provide a scalable pricing model, robust set of integrations and application programming interfaces (APIs), fully Russian interface, reliable support in Russia and is in complete compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation."

Docebo's expert partners like Competentum provide localized understanding of the e-learning landscape and how it relates to their regions.

“Competentum’s reputation in the industry makes it our ideal partner to respond to the demand and facilitate the distribution of our platform throughout Russia,” said James Moncarz, Vice-President of channels and partnerships at Docebo.

In partnership with Docebo, Competentum will continue to expand its suite of offerings to the Russian market.

New product launched for the age of the self-directed learner

Lumesse Learning has announced a new product for the self-directed learner, designed to help organizations to succeed in today’s business environment.

Me:time was created and conceived by the Lumesse Learning team following consultation and research into the needs of learners and learning specialists. Employees are increasingly taking control of their own learning. At the same time organizations are discovering that nurturing and supporting a culture of self-directed learning increases their ability to survive and thrive. Early findings from the first 300 learning leaders in the Towards Maturity learning and development health check highlighted that 94 percent are looking to improve self-directed learning.

The rise of the digital learner has also led to a transformation in learning. Learners are digital consumers and it is not unreasonable for them to expect the same level of maturity offered in all their digital experiences, be it shopping, sharing or learning new skills. Many organizations are going through digital transformation programs which require them to nurture more self-directed learning behaviors. Offering a consumer-style experience, me:time gives instant, anywhere access to curated learning supported by AI-driven recommendations. A system of credits allocated by the organization gives learners full control over their personal me:time budget.

Me:time opens up a world of learning from a network of content partners which includes Filtered, Good Practice, Culture Wizard, Skill Pill, Speexx and Practice Labs. Me:time allows employees to access wide-ranging curated content on business skills, personal development, leisure and lifestyle.

Mehdi Tounsi, Vice-President, Americas and Global Alliances for Speexx, said: “We are very excited about working with Lumesse which has been a key player in the talent management and learning space. With the launch of the me:time platform, Lumesse is truly disrupting the industry and putting the power back in the hands of the learners.”

Andrea Miles, General Manager for Lumesse Learning, said: “Me:time represents a radical rethink in learning control and choice, freeing the learner to self-serve. We are passionate about this new approach because we think it can contribute massively to the well-being of employees.”

“Organizations too will benefit as they know they need to encourage continuous learning in the face of increasing demands to be nimble and smart, and meeting the challenges of talent retention, management of emerging talent and mobility.”

Rhod gets work experience – at 39,000 ft

Stand up comedian Rhod Gilbert learned how to put out fires, deliver a baby and evacuate an aircraft after an emergency landing as he trained to become British Airways cabin crew for his BBC2 show, Rhod Gilbert’s Work Experience.

The TV presenter was put through his paces at the airline’s Global Learning Academy on the edge of Heathrow Airport, where each year more than 2,000 cabin crew train before taking to the skies for the first time.

In his five days at the Global Learning Academy, Rhod got to grips with the job he describes as being “a human Swiss Army knife,” having to become a safety expert, paramedic, chef, waiter, fireman, police officer and agony aunt all at the same time.

British Airways mentor Katharine Nimmo said: “While Rhod was a natural at the safety drills, he couldn’t get his head around what he called the ‘first-class fiddle-faff’ needed for premium service. But after he had had the session on learning fine wine and cheese pairings, he seemed to get more into the spirit of it, and even nailed how to make the perfect first-class bed.”

He eventually received his wings at a graduation ceremony and was assigned a real flight, with real customers: the BA184 to Newark.

With more than 250 customers to look after on the 787-9 Dreamliner flight, he demonstrated the safety routine, served food and drinks, and across the seven-hour flight became what he called a “whim-slayer” for the World Traveller Plus cabin as he manned the trolley up and down the aisle. He wore a distinctive silver gilet to make sure customers knew he had not had the full six weeks’ training.

British Airways Cabin Crew Simon Scaparo, who flew with Rhod to New York, said: “I had to crack the whip to keep him hard at work, but he was really getting into it, and he charmed the socks off the customers and kept the crew laughing.”

On landing, he complimented the British Airways cabin crew, saying: “Hats off to you [...] Fair play, it’s exhausting; it is really hard work and there is a lot more to it than anyone would ever realize. Once you see it in this environment, you realize the training has got to be perfect. I haven’t been this tired in a really long time.”

Renishaw’s graduate scheme earns national recognition

At the 2018 JobCrowd Awards, global engineering company Renishaw was named first in the UK engineering and manufacturing sector for companies taking over 30 graduates a year. The company was also placed 42nd overall in the top 100 graduate schemes for all sectors. Renishaw offers eight graduate pathways, which can lead to global career prospects at all levels.

The JobCrowd Awards are based on anonymous reviews from graduate employees across the UK. The high ranking recognizes the two-year Renishaw program, which includes four rotations around different divisions of the company. During this time, graduate employees are trained and mentored before taking on a permanent position at the end of the scheme.

Renishaw also offers a graduate employee benefits package, which was highly commended by JobCrowd in 2017. Graduates at Renishaw benefit from a 9 percent non-contributory pension, annual pay rises, discretionary bonuses, private healthcare and an on-site gym. They also benefit from membership of a professional body and are supported in working toward chartered status.

“Renishaw’s graduate scheme is a challenging, rewarding opportunity that offers the potential for rapid progression,” explained Sam Bishop, learning and development advisor at Renishaw. “The company’s chief executive, Will Lee, joined Renishaw as a graduate in 1997. A position at Renishaw can take you almost anywhere in the world, working in industries as diverse as neurosurgery and additive manufacturing.”

“We provide our graduates with a deep understanding of the business, its international operations and experience across different divisions,” added Sam Bishop. “Alongside this, graduates join a company with a real community atmosphere and excellent benefits. The JobCrowd Awards provide recognition for the work we have done to ensure our graduate program is one of the best in the country.”

“Being part of the Renishaw graduate scheme has given me the opportunity to work on exciting projects and develop my engineering skills in lots of areas,” explained Julia Fletcher, Graduate Engineer at Renishaw. “I have really enjoyed being able to work with so many people, both on and off the scheme, and seeing how my work can be applied to real-world problems.”

In 2018, Renishaw is taking on 60 graduates across its eight schemes, which recruit for software engineers, commercial graduates, mechanical design engineers, applications engineers, electronic engineers, manufacturing engineers, physics and scientific roles and project coordinators.

Crest Nicholson wins Princess Royal training award

Crest Nicholson is commended in the 2018 Princess Royal training awards, in recognition of its internal training aimed at tackling the building industry skills gap.

The award, for tackling a sector skills gap, was granted for the housebuilder's delivering professional excellence training initiative. As part of this umbrella initiative, 19 percent of team members at Crest Nicholson are on a formal learning and development plan. A further 88 percent of employees have also carried out an annual skills review with their line manager to support their career progression.

The training initiative has enjoyed success since its inception in 2014, with a number of organizational improvements including a reduction in staff turnover. The initiative has also been instrumental in increasing the number of female hires across career development programs, including the graduate and apprenticeship schemes.

The Princess Royal training awards are an accolade for UK employers that have created lasting impact, by successfully linking their skills and development needs to business performance. Almost 50 UK businesses, from a wide range of sectors, have achieved the awards' standard of excellence in training in 2018.

Anthony Wilkinson, head of talent development at Crest Nicholson, commented: "As a responsible employer we are committed to supporting our team members in their career development. This award embodies our commitment. We decided to launch the delivering professional excellence initiative to ensure everyone at Crest Nicholson could access appropriate career development opportunities.

"Learning and development in the housebuilding industry is more important than ever as we are facing the biggest skills gap we ever had in the industry. As a housebuilder we have a duty to help in solving this gap. One key short-term solution is ensuring those already in the industry are able to have the opportunities to discuss how they can upskill in their current role. We must also continue to attract new talent for our graduate, apprenticeship, trainee and work placement programs, showcasing the diversity and inclusivity that a career in new homebuilding can bring."

Chris Jones, group Chief Executive at the Princess Royal training awards, said: "Congratulations to all 48 organizations who have achieved the Princess Royal training awards standard of excellence this year. Once again, it is evidence of the very real benefits that investing in staff development can bring to employers, large and small, private, public and not-for-profit. At a time of increasing economic uncertainty and reduced investment in workforce development it is great to see critical business issues being addressed through learning and development investments. Through the awards we highlight excellent examples of training that have already proved to be effective and we encourage others to build on their success."

RAF embraces digital learning in centenary year

The Royal Air Force has partnered digital transformation expert Avado and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development to announce a new learning initiative for RAF service personnel.

Formed in 1918, the RAF is the oldest independent airforce in the world, employing 32,000 military service personnel globally. Since its inception, the organization has paved the way for technological advancements and now it is announcing a new way to use digital learning to support its employees.

This new learning partnership is part of the Royal Air Force's ongoing commitment to enhancing career development for those currently serving, as well as extending the post-service qualifications for those who are moving, or have moved on to new employment.

Alongside Avado and the CIPD, the Royal Air Force will be supporting the opportunity for service personnel, both regular and reserves of the personnel-support branch, to study with Avado for the online HR qualifications (level 5 diploma in HR and level 3 certificate in HR) in order to gain accreditation to CIPD. The courses are delivered entirely online by experts and not only offer 24-h access, but provide a supportive career development hub which allows for study anywhere in the world, which is essential in today's military.

The CIPD level 3 qualification is open to both those with experience and those who are new to the field as it covers everything from understanding the role of an HR specialist to resourcing talent, performance and reward management.

For existing, experienced HR specialists looking to progress to management level, the CIPD level 5 diploma will provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the specialism.

RAF employees can benefit from the enhanced learning credits scheme which can help toward the cost of the courses.

“Working with the RAF is a huge honor for Avado, especially given that 2018 marks its 100th anniversary. This year, the RAF is reflecting on its legacy while looking toward the future for its employees. Through online learning, RAF employees have a great opportunity to hone their skills and work towards a qualification which can support their move into civilian careers. At Avado, we are all about creating inspiring learning that has a lasting impact, so we are very excited to work with the RAF to achieve this goal,” said Amy Crawford, Managing Director – professional, Avado.

Steve Parkes, of the Royal Air Force, commented: “Throughout its 100 years, the RAF has always been at the leading edge of technological advancement. The digital age provides a unique opportunity for learning and, by maximizing the effective use of modern technology and IT delivery platforms, our personnel can access quality HR qualifications at every stage of their career. Importantly it provides the flexibility for our personnel to manage when, where and how quickly they complete the work.”

Warren Howlett, Head of HR content at the CIPD, said: “Studying these qualifications will not only support the service personnel’s professional qualifications and hence ability to better deliver while serving in the military, but also prepares them for work for when they leave and move into the private sector.”

“We are excited to be working with the RAF to professionalize its HR team through our digital level 5 HR qualification run in partnership with Avado, which will give them the skills, knowledge and tools to support their organization. Once completed, the qualification will enable practitioners to become CIPD members at associate level, which will help to set them apart and improve their career prospects and earning potential in the future.”

Emotional intelligence grows in importance

One in four UK business leaders say that emotional intelligence (EQ) is undervalued in the hiring process, despite the majority of businesses (60 percent) reporting it as a very important skill for their employees.

Research by recruitment specialist Robert Half UK reinforces the findings of a World Economic Forum report, which predicts that emotional intelligence will become one of the top ten skills for employees by 2020. Business leaders are increasingly looking for employees who have more than just technical skills. They are placing greater emphasis on those with the soft skills to cope with the rapidly changing corporate environment.

The Robert Half UK study also identified the benefits of hiring employees with high emotional intelligence. Business leaders cited increased motivation and morale (46 percent), improved leadership (45 percent) and better collaboration between teams (37 percent) as the primary benefits. Only 4 percent of UK businesses say that a high EQ offers no additional benefits to the business at all.

Despite these advantages, managers still believe there is too little importance attached to emotional intelligence during the hiring process. Over half of managers claim that minimal importance is placed on EQ during the hiring process, with 54 percent saying they place just enough importance on EQ but more could be done.

“Identifying skills gaps and securing the right talent are crucial for long-term success in today’s competitive recruitment environment. Businesses must prioritize the skills and qualities they expect from potential candidates,” said Matt Weston, UK Managing Director at Robert Half. “In the current war for talent, employers must find the right balance between skills and personality – evaluating what characteristics are required within the team and what skills can be taught [...] It has become hugely important that business leaders are aware and mindful of employees’ needs and desires. This will effectively expand their candidate pool and help to identify, secure and retain top talent, long-term.”

Apprenticeship programs to address cyber-skills shortage in the UK

Bletchley Park Qufaro and GK Apprenticeships (GKA) have signed an agreement to jointly develop and deliver cyber-security apprenticeships, designed to address the significant cyber-skills shortage in the UK and, in due course, internationally.

According to the latest global information security workforce study from (ISC)², there could be up to 1.8 million information security-related roles unfilled worldwide by 2022. In Europe, the shortage is projected to be about 350,000, with the UK's share of unfilled cyber security jobs expected to be around 100,000.

The partnership between GKA and Qufaro will provide training to be delivered to the full spectrum of employers, from large corporates to small and medium-size enterprises.

Qufaro brings its experience of delivering online vocational cyber education as well as hosting specific training at its offices at Bletchley Park. Qufaro already delivers an extended project qualification, accredited by City & Guilds and recognized by the Institute of Information Security Professions, which can be a feeder into the apprenticeship program. Qufaro will also draw on its industry network and partners to ensure the qualification is designed to meet the needs of a wide range of employers seeking cyber specialists.

GKA delivers bespoke apprenticeship programs that are facilitated by its sister company, Global Knowledge, a worldwide IT and professional training specialist. GKA can deliver soft skills training to ensure all apprentices have the best content and pathway for their respective roles. It is also a Pearson, City & Guilds, BCS and EAL accredited center.

Paul Freeman, director of education and talent at GKA, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to work with one of the world's most iconic brands. Together we can make a valuable difference, not only within the UK industry but also to expand internationally [...] We see continuous examples of cyber-security threats to both the businesses we work in as well as our personal lives so to be in a position to help to develop cyber-security skills for the future generation is extremely rewarding."

Qufaro will be launching the National College of Cyber Security at Bletchley Park, which will be the base for launching and delivering new qualifications in cyber security.

Dr Budgie Dhanda, Qufaro Chief Executive, said: "Qufaro is delighted to be working with GKA, a partner with global reach and an established excellent reputation for delivering apprenticeships. Together, we will accelerate the delivery of Qufaro's mission and support many more people into the cyber profession."

Learning Live 2018: a round-up

Fuse Universal presented case studies on learning engagement at the Learning Live 2018 event.

The company's workshop divulged how global organizations are increasing learning engagement by up to 7,000 percent by analyzing data and highlighting correlations between learning engagement and improved business performance.

Using real-life examples, the workshop explored how digital learning and development departments have been transformed by modernizing their content strategy, using new techniques to improve employee business performance and using new learning technologies in a consumer-grade experience that significantly increases user engagement.

The session, entitled "How to Create and Foster an Organizational Learning Culture Through Digital Learning Experience," was presented by Steve Dineen, Fuse Universal Chief Executive.

Intrepid by VitalSource conducted a business solution workshop at Learning Live. The session explored how learning and development teams can evolve processes and leverage technologies and ecosystems to drive digital transformation.

During the session, Intrepid by VitalSource presented real-world examples where learning and development organizations have transformed themselves while leading strategic digital

transformation across their organizations. VitalSource also shared how it was able to help innovative learning and development organizations to incorporate world-class content and expertise from INSEAD to launch custom digital programs at scale on the Intrepid Learn platform.

The session, entitled “Learning and Development’s Role in Leading Digital Transformation at Scale,” was presented by Chengyi Lin, global director of online programs and innovation at INSEAD, and Sanjay Advani, senior Director at Alliances.

A business workshop session at Learning Live explored the concepts of resilience, endurance and vulnerability in the modern workplace and their relationship to effective learning.

Learning provider Interaction Learning and Development explored the idea of resilience in the modern workplace and whether organizations are creating an environment that promotes resilient behavior or if they are simply demanding that people endure. The workshop looked further to understanding vulnerability and encouraging this in the workplace and if this is the key to promoting resilient behavior.

Presented by Dan Symonds, Training Consultant at Interaction Learning and Development, the session was entitled “Are We Creating Resilience or Demanding Endurance?”

Saffron Interactive showed how organizations can implement emerging technology such as artificial intelligence and chatbots, and develop an agile high-impact roadmap to defeat the digital disruption skills gap.

The session looked to explore how to create actionable ways to implement modern learning technologies such as chatbots, artificial intelligence and personalization tools into an organizational learning strategy and then harness these to drive measurable return on investment.

The session also examined implementation through pinpointing the key use cases for each new technology and how it would fit within an organization and additionally through developing an agile high-impact roadmap to defeat the digital disruption skills gap.

Presented by Noorie Sazen, Saffron Interactive Chief Executive, the session was entitled “Don’t Get Left Behind – Create a Learning Strategy that Deals with Digital Disruption.”

Business-writing experts Emphasis revealed a comprehensive business-writing e-learning program at the Learning Live event in London.

The Complete Business Writer is a collection of more than 50 interactive modules that cover every aspect of business writing, from composing a tricky e-mail right up to producing a proposal for a million-pound contract. The launch marks the culmination of more than three years’ development by specialist business-writing trainers emphasis.

The collection features practical exercises, video and graphics. Each module is designed to be completed in less than ten minutes, making the program ideal for a micro-learning approach to transforming written communication.

“The written word has become the main way we communicate with our colleagues and customers,” said Rob Ashton, Emphasis Founder and author of many of the modules in the collection. “As well as writing documents, we are far more likely to use e-mail or instant-message tools like Slack or Yammer than we are to speak to or call someone. Yet often we stumble our way through these critical communications, so we are at constant risk of alienating our colleagues or even losing customers altogether.”

“Independent research revealed the annual cost of employee miscommunication to be at least £28 billion in the UK and US alone. And the problem is only getting worse as we rely more and more on the written word.”

“The program bridges this skills gap by engaging employees in enjoyable, easy-to-digest learning content. It is a proven approach based on the company’s 20 years’ experience of improving business-writing skills.”

Many of the modules are designed as stand-alone content. This allows organizations to mix and match lessons to cover the topics required – whether that is as broad as effective report writing or as focused as how to structure a sentence for maximum engagement. It also means users can

focus first on the subjects they feel they most need help with. The program complies with the SCORM e-learning standard, making it suitable for most in-house learning-management systems.

O'Reilly, a provider of insight-driven learning on technology and business, has announced a new white paper which explores the evolution of performance-adjacent learning and the tools that enable it. The contents were made available for download in conjunction with Learning Live, where O'Reilly was an exhibitor.

The pace of technological change in the workplace has made it more important than ever for today's workers to upskill and reskill on the job. Additionally, more employees are motivated by the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge than by perks, informal work environments and money. The confluence of these trends has made performance-adjacent learning – learning within the process of work – a variant of performance support.

O'Reilly's white paper sheds light on why performance-adjacent learning is vital to the success of modern business and how organizations can start to integrate support for it into their learning ecosystems. Some of the topics the white paper covers include: what defines performance-adjacent learning behavior; why performance-adjacent learning is important; how performance-adjacent learning tools enable this valuable way of learning; and how to measure the efficacy of performance-adjacent learning activity.

"Time spent learning is a common metric for measuring knowledge gained and learning return on investment. However, this metric assumes learning and working are mutually exclusive, and an employee cannot learn and produce at the same time," said Karen Hebert-Maccaro, Chief Content Officer at O'Reilly. "In reality, employees often learn in short bursts in concert with their workflows, which is why arming workers with performance-adjacent learning support is crucial for the next wave of enterprise learning."