

Cabinet Office National School of Government

'Protecting Information' - a pan-government success story

"We cannot afford to be complacent about the importance of keeping personal and sensitive data secure...making sure everyone understands their responsibilities is vital...this e-learning package helps departments, agencies and the wider public sector to do just that."

Sir Gus O'Donnell

Cabinet Secretary & Head of the Home Civil Service



Institute of IT Training

Silver Award

External Training Project of
the Year 2010



Finalist

e-Government
National Awards

The challenge

In 2008 there were several high profile cases concerning sensitive data loss attributed to government departments. The subsequent media coverage highlighted the potentially serious implications of these mistakes.

The government had to respond quickly to allay public fears and instigated a series of reviews, including the IPCC report and the Poynter Review.

These reports highlighted "systemic, rather than individual failures",

due to "woefully inadequate systems". In parallel, the Cabinet Office undertook a review of data handling procedures (Data Handling Review report) across government and concluded that all staff, regardless of grade or department, required 'Protecting Information' training and an annual refresher.

E-learning was the obvious choice given such a large audience. But implementing e-learning on this scale presented several challenges:

- *Diverse target audience* - the programme had to be suitable for all civil servants - soldiers, those in specialist, administrative and ancillary roles and senior staff alike
- *Widespread resistance to change* - to achieve its objectives, the programme had to deliver a behavioural shift
- *Inconsistent technical infrastructures* across over 300 government departments and agencies
- *The need for a standardised approach* to data handling despite each department having their own procedures



The solution

We delivered a two level solution:

- Level 1 - core, mandatory content for all learners
- Level 2 - advanced add-ons for personnel with additional responsibilities in sharing information and dealing with projects/external contractors

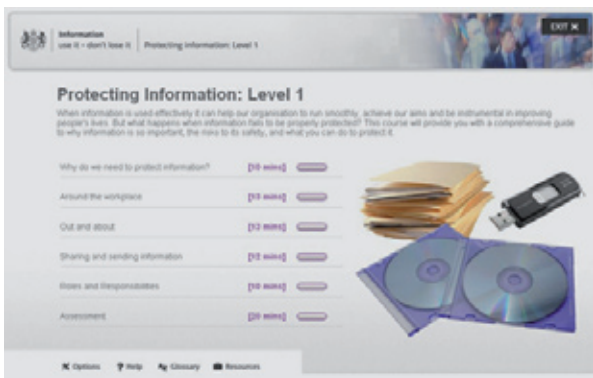


Each topic is succinct, allowing users to complete the course flexibly to suit their circumstances. The whole Level 1 course is less than 1.5 hours.



Content is relevant, engaging and set within the context of 'real life scenarios' to:

- Highlight the positive aspects of information protection
- Outline the benefits of security/protection procedures to individuals, departments and the public
- Check ongoing understanding with exploratory and 'crunch' questions



Delivery

Universal access was achieved as follows:

1. An initial version delivered via NSG's Moodle LMS - a low bandwidth and hardware/software specification ensured it operated on the widest range of kit
2. 1000s of CDs for those without online access
3. Specific versions for individual department LMSs, including the Home Office, COI, Rural Payments Agency and Crown Prosecution Service

This approach meant as many civil servants as possible could access the e-learning, with each department able to track usage and produce compliance reports.

"You have produced an excellent package."

Group Security Unit, HM Treasury

Unprecedented levels of take-up

The statistics speak for themselves! Within a year of launch:

- Over 250,000 users had completed the training and passed the test
- 8 times the take-up achieved by any previous pan-government e-learning programme
- 3,000 new users every week
- Over 300 government departments and agencies using the programme

The cost per user is less than 20p, and falling. The Cabinet Office estimates cost savings of £20,000,000 compared to individual departments producing their own solution!

Marketing and implementation

A key element of the programme's success has been the extensive marketing strategy, including links from the NSG website, brochures, email campaigns and support from the Cabinet Secretary. This has been supported by extensive networking:

- Regular communication to training/information security contacts across government
- Promotion at regular meetings of the information risk community
- HMG Chief Information Officer addressing IT specialists at numerous conferences
- Personal support from Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell

The outcome

The e-learning has been an outstanding success, promoting a common language and approach to information protection. It has also brought about a positive, demonstrable change in staff behaviour in relation to information protection practices.

And it doesn't end there. The programme has set a blueprint for future pan-government initiatives and sharing resource across government, showing what can be done with the right planning and commitment.

For more information on our work in this area, call +44 (0) 1273 728686.