

KLITRA: Case Study

Introduction to KLITRA

KLITRA is the training organisation for the knitting, lace and narrow fabrics industry. An employer led organisation, they specifically look after the training interests of these three sectors.

'Our drive is to promote best practice in training for the whole of the sector'

Joan Long is the Chief Executive of KLITRA, whilst Ray Chlopas is her main contact in the Scottish Borders.

Project Description



About 85% of the Scottish Borders Knitwear industry is based in the small town of Hawick. This industry is facing many challenges to its sustainability including an ageing work force and a lack of local training providers. In order to combat this problem and help train new entrants KLITRA developed a CD-ROM that provides employer based training.

- **Key best practice emerging**
- **Key lessons learned**

The CD-ROM

KLITRA have produced:

'Four interactive CD-ROMs that will take people through all the basic principals of what's needed to be a knitting technician or complementary jobs in the industry.'

The CD-ROM is designed to help students' train towards their SVQ level 3 in Manufacturing Textiles.

The CD-ROM works on a split screen principal. One side has objectives whilst the other side is split again, half is an animation and the other half is a video of a machine running. Participants have to answer questions to progress through to the next level.

Responding to demand?

The CD-ROM was designed in Collaboration with the University of Leeds. The University of Leeds had already produced a basic package that covers the whole of textiles called 'An introduction to textiles'. The aim was to make this CD-ROM specific to what local employers needed.

'If you don't involve them (employers) you can forget it' Barry Turnbull, Engineering Manager, Pringle

KLITRA involved the employers in the design of the CD-ROM from the beginning. A steering group was formed that was made up of senior engineers from local companies. They were shown the basic CD-ROM and asked what was needed to make it specific to their job in the industry. KLITRA were then able to go back to the University of Leeds with a 'Shopping list' of requirements.

'We had seen the package and we had tested it with other groups of technicians. Very cynical people came into the room and left smiling saying this was for us.'

Once the CD-ROM was developed it was piloted by technicians and on-going changes were made to it.

How effective the Network was in engaging employers and technicians

To date approximately eight companies and 17 technicians have been involved in using the CD-ROMs to undertake training. KLITRA found getting employers to use the CD-ROM relatively easy as they had already been involved in the design of the package.

In terms of getting technicians involved, many were asked if they would like to participate by their employer. Although they were asked to participate the technicians were generally very keen to try out the CD-ROM as they could see the long-term benefits of participating in training.

KLITRA also felt that marketing of the CD-ROM was helped by the geography of the area. It is a very small area and word soon spread around the companies about the development of a CD-ROM.

Business Benefits

There were many identifiable benefits of using the CD-ROM. In the past employers were generally unable to send employees on training courses because the colleges were either too far away, or the courses required full-time attendance over a long period which they were unable to fund. Therefore many of the technicians had never attended any kind of formal training, learning their trade on the job. The CD-ROM allowed technicians to train towards a qualifications learning at their own pace whilst fitting in with work commitments.

There was also the recognition that a more highly trained work force in a more productive workforce:

'In this area they work with very expensive yarn like cashmere, and anything that helps the business get better use of the raw material is a positive bottom line benefit.' Joan Long, Chief Executive, KLITRA



Neil Walker, a sample and production administrator from N. Peal Cashmere was aware of what benefits the business would gain from him participating in training:

'It allows me to understand the job more and do it better which kind of helps everyone in the company.'

Allowing staff to train and recognising and rewarding their skills was also considered a good way to motivate staff.

Sustainability

The steering group that helped to develop the software has continued to meet on a regular basis and has formed a Training group. The group meets every six weeks. The aim of the group is to address the skill and training needs in the Borders.

'There is a recognition that there is a problem to be resolved and finding the best way forward. It won't be easy but the group want to stay together.' Joan Long, Chief Executive, KLITRA

It is recognised that the key to making the training group a success will be to sustain the commitment of employers.

Additionally, KLITRA are thinking about setting up a Centre for Vocational Excellence that would specialise in developing the people the Knitwear requires at all levels, they are also looking for funding to produce more CD-ROMs.

SME example 1: Pringle



Pringle employs over 200 staff at its factory in Hawick and produces high quality knitwear.

The staff at Pringle were involved in helping KLITRA to develop the CD-ROM and many of their technicians helped to pilot the software.

Engineering manager, Barry Turnbull, has been involved in developing the CD-ROM since the beginning.

He feels that KLITRA marketed the software well, giving all companies a chance to have a look at it and give their input:

'It's been marketed pretty well.' 'Everybody has had the chance to look at it.'

Barry emphasised the importance of getting employers and technicians involved from the outset and asking for their input. Stating that if you do not get them on board the project will fail.

Many of the technicians at Pringle that looked at the CD-ROM were already at an advanced level and knew most of the information contained on programme. They indicated that they would welcome a CD-ROM at a more advanced level.

SME example 2: Lyle and Scott

Technicians from Knitwear manufacturer Lyle and Scott were very enthusiastic about the CD-ROMs.



Jean Graham, Technical team leader, spent two or three days working through the CD-ROM:

'It's pretty user friendly. One little session and you know exactly what you're doing.'

They were also very enthusiastic about the format:

'I liked the format I found it quite interesting...I never really felt I was losing interest.'

Many of the technicians mentioned how it was easier to learn on the screen than at the machine because you could see things in more detail and repeat things as many times as you like. They also liked the fact that they could work at your own pace.

'It's a lot easier to use the computer than going on the frame for half an hour'

'You can go back and forward on the CD-ROM at your own pace.'

'It's very comprehensive.'

They also liked the alternative approach to learning:

'It's not just sitting in front of a lecturer or tutor, it's a bit more interesting, hands on.'

'You can get up when you feel you've had enough, you can go back to it when you feel you want to.'

The only criticism one technician had was:

'The only thing I didn't like was that I had to go through the sections that weren't relevant to me.'

In terms of future recommendations, they suggested producing a CD-ROM on 'Make up'.