

Experiential Learning and Responding to COVID

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In many respects, COVID has arguably been a significant catalyst for change in the area of learning and development. As John F Kennedy stated, "Crisis presents a choice" and perhaps now has never been a better time for organisations seeking to provide meaningful training or continued professional development to their displaced workforce, to make a choice and implement alternative longer-term learning delivery strategies.

Traditionally, organisations training people in practitioner related skills, have been required to incur expensive costs for hiring training venues and paying staff travel and accommodation. Managing employee abstraction in the process has also often been challenging. Opportunities for experiential learning using technology also historically came at a high cost and were limited to a fortunate few, and whilst LMS platforms have their place, they are no substitute for the personal transition of knowledge and experience from Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), when passing on essential skills required in order for transformational change.

Many organisations and individuals have inevitably been forced to change their delivery and business models to adapt to COVID and arguably no one could have anticipated how the future was being shaped, with travel limited or prohibited, in person training impossible and training plans, strategies and budgets, all given less priority as companies rationalised their operations and faced the tasks of furlough and redundancy.

An interim response has been online delivery in various formats, some well thought out and others perhaps not. I am sure like me, you have participated in many interesting webinars and CPD events during COVID, but how many of us are starting to find that the anonymous presenter or contributor hidden behind the camera or the single presenter sitting in front of some interesting virtual backgrounds deprives us of that more interactive experience and personal connection that we crave, and that we miss from previously attending learning events in person. This feeling can be often exacerbated by the presenter keen on getting through all their material in the short time available, having given little thought to the experience they should be giving to the listener and often where structure of the learning day and aims and objective are consequentially compromised.

OUR RESPONSE

We at the AML Consulting (Global) Group (incorporating Cognitas Global Ltd), took our 'choice' by learning from these experiences in recent months and established a fully equipped virtual training suite at our Head Offices in Kent to complement the delivery of our national and international training programmes, using our own immersive platform, View360 Global™. Feedback from Clients has already proven that the presence of presenters or SMEs in the same location (where possible), affords more cohesion, provides more interactivity and imparts a more personal and engaging approach as close to an in-person delivery as possible. Our SMEs also enjoy the engagement with each other and the ability to debrief the training with each other on a daily basis, remaining agile to the needs of the participants during an ongoing course.

Our ability to respond with agility to the needs of our global clients as if delivering in person using our immersive platform, View360 Global™, has also enabled us to reach the stakeholders, participants and other learners that we had been engaged with on many projects prior to COVID that were not able to progress key workplan activities due to the travel restrictions. This has particularly addressed the requirement for the continued training of people in many countries who had planned to assemble in one environment for a shared experience. One such example is our online immersive training of representatives from 20 countries for the Balkan Asset Management Interagency Network (BAMIN) later this month.

MULTI-AGENCY PARTICIPATION

This style of multi-agency training also brings together people with different skill sets providing an insight into the unique experience of others, including trainers, other learners and colleagues from around the world.



As an organisation that has delivered technical assistance and training for the UK Government, Policing organisations and the international donor community in the criminal justice sector in over 54 countries since 2011, the AML Consulting (Global) Group has evidenced the true benefits of this. For example, in the criminal justice sector, the commendable successes of countries emerging from conflict or political transition with no experience or limited capacity of investigating financial crime and who have learned through knowledge sharing, is now regularly reported in the news media and shared on LinkedIn. Successful international co-operation has exponentially increased and the establishment of regional Asset Recovery Interagency Networks (ARINs) and their training programmes have been a key factor in this success. In other words, we always have much to learn from each other.

should have the appropriate training credentials, sadly this isn't always the case. Many SMEs with long careers as practitioners who have undertaken L&D training, will provide testimony as to the value of these important points. As a CEO who has two companies within the Group that are accredited Skills for Justice (SFJ) Training Centres and are 'Kirkpatrick New World Model' practitioners, it is important to me that our clients know that the AML Consulting (Global) Group will approach all of our L&D projects and practitioner training by applying high academic standards and principles to achieve the outcomes. This has never been more important when value for money and a return on investment is even more critical in COVID times where training budgets are under pressure.

“ The View360 Global™ platform allows a user to create bespoke learning solutions, deliverable in one location or remotely through the integrated video conferencing facility, in over 90 languages ”

Of course, the concept of delivering learning for a single or multi agency, or an organisation wishing to train its staff across different countries, presents a number of challenges. Fortunately, the technical challenges have largely been overcome through reliable internet and computer & tablet technology. Training in one language is easily achieved, but what if we wish to train simultaneously in a multilingual environment? The AML Consulting (Global) Group has also achieved this. Underpinning all of these aspirations is of course the absolute requirement for the learning to be built on the fundamental principles of learning and development. There is little argument that training designers and the deliverers should be qualified, and an organisation seeking to offer and deliver meaningful and transformational training

View360 Global™

Tomorrow's Learning for Today

As a former career Detective and Accredited Financial Investigator, I relished the opportunity to transfer my skills and experience into the international arena when I retired in 2010. However, in 2017, after working in over 30 countries as an SME, I realised that I was perpetually meeting the challenges and legacy of training fatigue amongst international beneficiaries caused by poor training, often delivered by unqualified people extending beyond their skill sets who provided death by PowerPoint, outdated content and training that was not relevant to the country or its laws or regulations, and did not meet their operational needs. I could go on. I should add an important caveat by highlighting that there was (and is still remains) of course, a considerable amount of excellent training delivered by passionate and caring SMEs, supported by previous and current in-post effective mentoring regimes.

In late 2017, the View360 Global™ immersive platform was born out of all that I had experienced throughout my earlier years of participating in many training events. This was my vision of how I could take this engaging learning concept to the international community, in an attempt to re-engage many and transform the way in which we delivered our global services, thereby adding value to our training.



Although the concept of immersive learning is not new (and often exemplified by virtual reality), the idea of making experiential learning available globally, and at low cost to multilingual participants, was a challenge that I and my co designer, James Robinson, set out to achieve. Moving forward to the end of September 2020 the AML Consulting (Global) Group will have used the platform in 20 countries to deliver SFJ accredited and non-accredited training for clients such as,, Network Rail, EXPOL (IOM), the UK National Crime Agency & National Economic Crime Centre, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Organisation for Security & Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Council of Europe, Interpol and many others. The HMRC Counter Fraud Academy and a global international consultancy are our most recent clients who will be using it as a day to day training tool.



The View360 Global™ platform (<https://cognitasglobal.com/>) allows a user to create bespoke learning solutions, deliverable in one location or remotely through the integrated video conferencing facility, in over 90 languages. Whilst the platform is an excellent tool that has been used extensively throughout the world for training in financial crime and countering organised crime and corruption, it continues to be used for crisis management, compliance training, business continuity, Human Resource related training, safeguarding & education, and many other areas.

BROWSER BASED ACCESSIBILITY

Its user-friendly interface and functionality is accessible through an internet browser and most importantly for many organisations that have security concerns, it requires no installation of software. The cloud-based delivery and video conferencing functionality makes

it possible for facilitator led learning to take place in a local environment or remotely, with participants located globally. Breakout room functionality means that multiple participants can participate as a team and can communicate and receive responses in their own language, which is translated using an advanced Google API. Amazon Web Space and our VPN encryption systems ensure security of data.

So how does this relate to training in the UK where people have never routinely had access to this style of learning, but may now significantly benefit from this in the future? Imagine the knowledge and skills delivered on a training course being transposed into a simulated exercise, so that by blending real world with authentic digital content, learners experience true reality. The ability to engage remotely with other agencies on a national or international basis, where language is no longer necessarily a barrier to learning also provides unique opportunities, and without the associated costs that traditional training events generated. Most importantly, it just requires access to an internet browser and a suitable environment in the home or office in which to participate.

The benefits of this style of collaborative immersive learning are well documented as it has been proven that information presented in mixed reality is retained more efficiently and reflected in improved learning outcomes and results. The opportunity to learn in a safe environment enables this and, as feedback shows, this provides a much more enjoyable style of learning from the participants perspective.

For any organisation, this now presents an innovative cost-effective means of reaching staff, nationally or globally, to deliver training and is why the AML Consulting (Global) Group are pleased to be collaborating with organisations such as the Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance System (CIFAS), UK Government Agencies and other private and public sector organisations to design immersive training across all areas and skill sets for the regulated, private and public sectors in the UK and around the world.

For more information or a demonstration as to how your organisation can make the choice to adapt your learning programmes in COVID times, please contact us at enquiries@cognitasglobal.com.