CASE STUDY

Workers Educational Association

Digital Diversity

Producing ELearning resources using Adapt

PROJECT LEAD

JAN BALL

Regional Education Manager and VLE Manager

Contents

CASE STUDY	Producing ELearning resources using Adapt
WEA	

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY

The WEA has been developing eLearning modules using the new Adapt authoring tool. One of the main reasons for moving to Adapt is because the eLearning content displays well on tablets and smart phone devices. This is really important to us, as we have a large number of sessional tutors, volunteers and people in governance roles, who will be just as likely to access content on a tablet or smart phone, than on a desktop or laptop.

As Learning Pool members, we also have access to the Learning Pool hosted Adapt Builder, academy training modules and technical support.

This case study is designed to guide you through our journey with Adapt so far, the approaches we have taken to development, and the ways we are building authoring skills across the organisation.

1. WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS CASE STUDY AND WHY

- ELearning developers.
- Tutors with an interest in producing eLearning resources.
- Education organisations interested in developing online resources that adapt to tablet and smartphone devices.

2. ABOUT WEA

Founded in 1903, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a charity and the UK's largest voluntary sector provider of adult education. In 2013/14 we delivered 9,700 part-time courses for over 70,000 students in England and Scotland with classes in almost every local authority area and our work in England was assessed in 2014 as 'Good' by Ofsted. With the support of nearly 400 local branches, 3,000 volunteers, 2,000 part-time tutors and our active membership, the WEA provides

high quality, student-centred and tutor-led education for adults from all walks of life. We bring education into the heart of communities, helping people learn whatever they want – from maths, English and skills for employment, through health and wellbeing courses, to cultural studies that help students broaden their horizons and community engagement programmes that encourage active citizenship. We also have a special mission to reach those who want to improve their lives and communities. Education is a beautiful and powerful tool for tackling economic and social disadvantage because it raises aspirations and helps people create their own change.
http://www.wea.org.uk/home

3. WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO AND WHY

Our starting point:

The WEA has been a Learning Pool customer for a year now. We have launched our VLE (called WEAVE) and developed some modules to put on the site. These were a mixture of modules developed from scratch and modules repurposed from the Learning Pool shared module area. This really enabled us to kick start our VLE and ensure content was available from the launch date, but we knew we wanted to develop more eLearning modules with a stronger WEA voice.

WEAVE is a learning and development site for WEA staff, tutors, volunteers and governance roles. We were aware, from when we started, that we wanted to develop modules that would model the online learning pedagogy that we would want to see used by our tutors, in the development of online and blended course provision. The Digital Diversity and FIT Governance projects have supported us in doing this, by allowing us time and space to try things out, collaborate across different parts of the organisation, and to develop a set of principles and resources to take this work forward.

CASE STUDY	Producing ELearning resources using Adapt
WEA	

One of the emerging principles from the projects is for online learning pedagogy within the WEA to mirror WEA approaches used in our face-to-face courses. The key tenants of this are:

- Encouraging independent thought;
- Developing critical thinking skills;
- Students actively involved in the learning;
- Communication and collaboration between students;
- Students and tutors as equal partners in the learning;
- Equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of course delivery.

These principles and approaches have guided the way we have introduced the Adapt authoring tool to WEA staff and tutors.

Developing a team of authors and subject matter experts

The WEA hasn't made a strong distinction between authors and subject matter experts. Instead, we have encouraged subject leads to develop authoring skills wherever this is possible. Our first attempt at doing this, before the launch, was not successful as the staff members we trained as authors did not have the capacity to take this work on as part of their existing job roles. They wanted to see the modules developed and had the subject knowledge, but didn't get to grips with the old authoring software.

So with the launch of Adapt, we wanted a different approach. One of the keys to success has been embedding module development within externally funded projects to provide a purpose and focus to the types of modules we are developing, to create some really interesting and bespoke WEA modules, and to provide a lasting legacy from each project.

The launch of Adapt coincided with the WEA being successful with three different projects, all of which had eLearning modules as one of the outputs:

- Intersectionality Project – funded through ECU – developing 10 eLearning modules focused on different aspects of Intersectionality.
- Digital Diversity and FIT Governance Projects – funded through Learning Futures – eLearning module development is both an output and an aspect of the

action research as we develop our approaches to the use of technology in learning.

We also had a number of core staff with module ideas they wanted to develop, who were keen to get their hands on the new Adapt Builder.

The first step in our journey was a day's authoring training led by Learning Pool that introduced us to the building blocks of Adapt – known as ABC, Articles, Blocks and Components. This day provided us with a foundation on the functionality of the software, with participants becoming familiar with adding the blocks and components, uploading images and previewing to see the results. This proved to be a Launchpad for some authors, who immediately returned to their computers and designed their first modules. For others, however, there was a big difference between uploading content that had already been designed by someone else, and planning out a module from scratch. We also had some potential authors who couldn't attend the training day.

Adapt Authoring Training Day with Chris Allan from Learning Pool, 20/3/15
Staff and tutors from the WEA learning about the new Adapt Authoring Tool

Other Resources
Check out

Interaction
Thinking about which components promote active learning and which can be used as assessment tools.

Looking forward to getting started with my own modules!

Feeling a bit more confident
... and it is becoming clear how valuable the storyboarding element is.

No more eyebags then?
Happy days!

ABC
Articles, Blocks, Components. Easy!

Welcome

Next steps
Template courses

Story boarding guides

Teaching and learning techniques

How do we apply different learning styles?

Visualisation
These exercises are helping me visualise how my module might look, just got to work on the content now ...

Lots of Potential
This is coming together well, and it is great to experiment with all the different tools

Easy to use so far
Just need internet to catch up

WEA module developments
Great to get so many WEA staff and tutors together to develop new content for WEAVE.

Brand new authoring tool

Been really good to get from complete novice to being able to produce something,
looking forward to experimenting at home

working hard

Extended story board template
Previous discussions about developing an extended story board template to encourage consideration of different learning styles, differentiation, etc

Lots of positive comments
Chatting over lunch - people very positive about ease and possibilities.

Jan keeping us on track

Final stretch!
The last lap will be underway

Jan taking tips

Preparation is going to be key
having a storyboard and thinking carefully about the content before embarking on putting the module together is going to be really important

Top Tips
Remember to save!

Adapt is open source
Great to hear - lots of potential to collaborate with partners and colleagues from across the association

Actions and next steps
Reporting within WEAVE

What happens to modules when they are created?

Quality checking, review and testing

Resources in the Learning Pool academy to consolidate learning - tutorials on using Adapt

Have a play with components we haven't used today

Needs lots of pictures - look at stock images or take new pictures (make sure got permission to use)

Go away and practice :)

Have all the information in one story board/script

Modules in the Academy on designing online learning - Instructional Design Training

Developing authoring skills beyond the initial training day

We needed to find a range of ways of building on the foundation skills gained through the Learning Pool training day, to consolidate the learning and support our authors to put these skills into practice. We did this in a number of different ways:

CASE STUDY	Producing ELearning resources using Adapt
WEA	

- We developed a set of planning and story boarding documents, and produced a quick guide to the different component types within WEAVE and when these might be used.
- We directed authors to the Learning Pool academy Adapt module, where they could learn more about the different aspects of producing a module in Adapt.
- We used a train the trainer model whereby authors who had got to grips with Adapt more quickly, provided further training/support sessions to other authors
- We delivered one to one tutorials for new authors, either face-to-face or via Zoom calls.
- We provided trouble shooting support to authors on specific questions around design, layout and functionality of the different components, by email and Zoom calls.

Zoom has been particularly effective in helping to develop a network of authors across different regions of the WEA. As part of Zoom tutorials we have been able to access the shared area of the Adapt Builder, enabling us to locate the module that an author is working on and share it on the screen. We have therefore been able to demonstrate how to add a particular component, share tips for how to present information in different ways, and showcase the components and approaches used by other authors in their modules. Zoom calls can also be recorded, enabling others to view the tutorials at a later date.

The shared area of the Adapt Builder, where all WEA modules in development can be viewed, provides a great overview of what everyone is working on, and as the WEAVE manager, I can get a sense of who is progressing quickly and maybe able to take on additional work, and who may need some support.
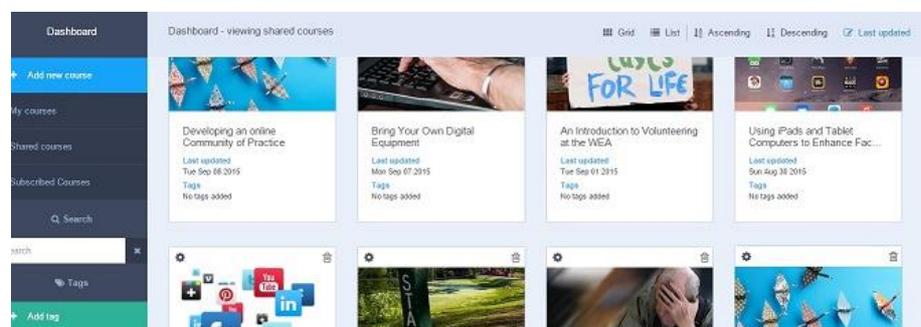
4. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Since the Adapt builder was introduced, and Learning Pool provided the training, we have:

- Developed a network of 25 module authors and growing;
- 25 modules in development with more in the pipeline;
- Delivered 9 training and support sessions.

Feedback from authors shows that Adapt is fairly intuitive and easy to use, once you get the hang of it. Some of our authors were completely new to online learning and were nervous about using the tool, but were pleased with what they could produce. Feedback from some of our authors below:

- "The training we received was great – peer support is probably the best way to support new authors."
- "The output looks professional."
- "The finished product looks really good!"
- "Ultimately rewarding but quite a slog to get there!"
- "Using Adapt Builder forces you to think through your content before actually building it in the tool, therefore storyboarding becomes essential and the storyboard document(s) become a useful review and learning tool….Another great time saver is that its mobile responsive so you only have to develop eLearning modules once."

5. LESSONS LEARNED

The Adapt authoring tool is still relatively new, which has presented us with some issues in our development of modules. Some of the issues are relatively small, but can have a big impact on the process. As Adapt is an open source product, there is real potential for future development and improvement, not just by the original developers but also by the wider community of users. WEA staff have participated in forums and discussions to feedback glitches and bugs within the system and suggest improvements, and have also benefited from advice given within the forums by users in other organisations.

The finished product looks good and the feedback from end users reflects this – particularly being able to view the content on tablet devices and smart phones.

6. TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- Have some key contacts in the organization who can help to address issues as they arise and talk people through problems
- Review forums, updates and new developments related to the software, to overcome glitches and get the most out of the product
- Train people to be authors who have an interest in learning technologies but also understand pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, and use videoconferencing software to allow sharing of screens for effective online tutorials

7. CONTACT DETAILS

Jan Ball

Regional Education Manager and VLE Manager

WEA

jball@wea.org.uk

0115 962 8400