



IT Training Proposal

FOCUS OF ATTENTION

1. Recently published international research reports a failure to get real productivity gains from an estimated z80bn being spent every year on information and communications technology (ICT). The research done by iSociety for the Work Foundation thinktank, suggests that when implemented correctly, ICT can deliver a potential five to seven-fold return on investment. Unfortunately, workplaces often get stuck in a “low-tech equilibrium”, where technically illiterate managers deploy ICT in inappropriate ways and employees get no real training. The report suggests various ways out of low-tech equilibrium with compulsory IT literacy tests for the “lost generation of managers” - bosses who know less about technology than employees. See www.theworksfoundation.com/research/isociety for further details.
2. Complementary to this research, a TNA consultancy by StipTrain consultants identified an urgent and widespread need for basic training in Information Technology. This recommendation reflects a common need expressed by most partner organisations, concerned at the lack of employee competence to use personal computers for such common tasks as word processing, data administration and e-mails.

PURPOSE OF PROPOSAL

3. This proposal by StipTrain is therefore to establish a standardised, flexible means by which the staff of partner organisations can be trained to become competent IT operatives. StipTrain proposes to create, sustain and continually develop an effective, high quality IT training programme that is available to all partner organisations, as and when the need arises.
4. A further supplementary proposal is to introduce a policy in all partner organisations that newly appointed staff, at all levels, where IT competence is required, will either demonstrate their competence or be trained within the first 3 months following appointment.

PROBLEMS TO BE TACKLED

5. The TNA consultancy report includes analysis of performance problems and identified training needs, which are associated with common, generic IT tasks. The following is a consolidated list of such problems or deficiencies that occur in most partner organisations:
 - 5.1 Staff are unable to manage or administer files within MS Windows 95, 98, 2000 and XP environments.
 - 5.2 Some staff, especially those in more senior positions, are unable to input directly text and data. They continue to prepare handwritten or dictated drafts for input by PA's, which is often ineffective and time-wasting.
 - 5.3 The poor use of common MS programs, such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Usually, people have learnt by trial and error, without training or access to manuals. By doing so they have low standards of performance and limited ability to realise the full potential of the IT facilities they are using.
 - 5.4 In general, poor use is being made of the potential of the Internet. Although e-mails are sent, often by PA's, there is confused means of communication - between long-established, paper-based systems and their replacement by modern IT systems.
6. The consensus view is that most staff in partner organisations should be competent to use available IT facilities. This should tackle the immediate need for IT training, and to establish provision for long-term, more specialised professional development.

CURRENT TRAINING PROVISION

7. Only a small proportion of the people who need IT training are getting it. The following list illustrates the present situation:
 - 7.1 With commercial training fees of around Rs 2000, few partner organisations can afford to send staff for training.
 - 7.2 Occasionally, low-cost provision is available at state training institutes. Unfortunately, these ATI courses are run infrequently and are primarily intended for gazetted officers in public services.
 - 7.3 ATI courses do not address specific areas of IT competence, nor do they attempt performance-related assessment.
 - 7.4 Typically, within a partner organisation, there is a wide geographical spread of work location. This means that any centrally provided IT course will inevitably necessitate a great deal of wasted time due to travel.
 - 7.5 Partner organisations share a policy that training is available to all who need it, irrespective of their status and location. The present limited provision excludes many valued members of staff, because of their status.

FEATURES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

8. Although the provision of IT training can be costly, the solution recommended by consultants is to use existing IT facilities in partner organisations for training purposes. The aim being recommended is to establish IT training wherever there's a computer. In principle, StipTrain, on behalf of its partner organisations, has accepted this recommendation.
9. **European/International Computer Driving Licence** is an internationally recognised skills qualification that provides tangible, measurable certification of a computer user's competency. It is the strategy recommended by consultants, and unanimously accepted by StipTrain's partner organisations. ECDL/ICDL aims to raise the general level of competence and use of computers; improve productivity at work; reduce IT support costs and to ensure that best practice issues are understood and implemented.
See www.bcs.org/eucip for further details.
10. A partner organisation intent on improving the computer skills of its workforce will want to ensure that their investment is well spent. ECDL/ICDL helps provide proof of computer competency by:
 - 10.1 Establishing computer skills benchmarks
 - 10.2 Ensuring consistent levels of IT ability throughout the organisation
 - 10.3 Helping to reduce IT support costs
 - 10.4 Reducing wasted time through lack of knowledge and ineffective IT working methods
11. The ECDL/ICDL syllabus is designed to cover the key concepts of computing, its practical applications in the workplace and society in general. It is broken down into seven modules; a test for each module before the ECDL/ICDL certificate is awarded. The seven modules are:
 - 11.1 Basic concepts of Information Technology
 - 11.2 Using the computer and managing files
 - 11.3 Word processing
 - 11.4 Spreadsheets
 - 11.5 Database
 - 11.6 Presentation
 - 11.7 Information and Communication
12. ECDL/ICDL training and testing resource materials offers a variety of options including: work books, manuals, CD-ROM / CBT, Internet and auto testing. StipTrain believes that a network of StipTrainers can be set up to provide tutorial support.

See attached appendix of ECDL/ICDL sample test, taken from <http://www.ecdl.com>

BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

13. In the medium to long-term, the ECDL/ICDL material may require adaptation to suit Indian requirements - with the need to develop a Hindi version as a short-term priority. Nevertheless, StipTrain believes this proposal offers the following potential benefits to partner organisations:
 - 13.1 ECDL/ICDL provides an almost immediate solution to a major training need.
 - 13.2 People will be keen to acquire an internationally recognised qualification.
 - 13.3 People can learn at a time and pace that suits them and their organisation.
 - 13.4 ECDL/ICDL training materials are of high quality, and obtainable at reasonable cost.
 - 13.5 StipTrainers will do the training themselves and complete ECDL/ICDL certification.
 - 13.6 Trainees have access to StipTrainers, either internally or via the StipTrain resource centre.
 - 13.7 Trainees will be tested at the end of each module to show evidence of their competency.
 - 13.8 The number of trainees is limited only by access to computers.
14. There are immense potential benefits for both existing partner organisations and the provision of such training by StipTrain. The proposal deals with a serious performance deficiency that needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency. There is the prospect of StipTrain being able to set up and sustain efficient and effective IT training, thus establishing the legitimacy and viability of computer-based training a strategy that can later be extended to other areas of training need.