Case study Tesco Pharmacy

using bite-sized eLearning to improve product knowledge among pharmacy staff
When SkillSet started working with Tesco Pharmacy mid-way through 2011 it was delivering training to its pharmacy staff using paper-based ‘fact files’. As well as being non eco-friendly and expensive to produce, these fact files were not being used properly by staff and, as a result, knowledge transfer and retention were poor. Tesco also lacked an effective way of assessing knowledge uptake and tracking who had attended the training. SkillSet worked with Tesco to revolutionise the fact files through the introduction of bite-sized eLearning that can be run in the store and tracked through the Tesco Learning Management System (LMS). Working in partnership with Tesco Pharmacy and a range of pharmaceutical companies, the eLearning content helped Tesco increase completion rates from 16% to over 80%.

About Tesco Pharmacy

Tesco is one of the world's largest retailers, with more than 500,000 staff in 14 countries across Europe, Asia and the US. It serves tens of millions of customers each week and generated sales revenues in excess of £72 billion in the financial year ending February 2012.

Tesco employs over 3,000 pharmacists, dispensers and pharmacy assistants across its 2,979 UK stores. To be able to offer customers with the best possible advice, it is important that all pharmacy staff are trained and are kept up-to-date with changes in the pharmacy market.

Tesco values

Tesco’s values underpin everything that the company does. Put in place in 1997, the values describe what Tesco stands for and how it does business.
The challenge

Tesco needs to ensure that its pharmacy staff receive regular training on the products that it sells. The training must provide information relating to a particular condition, typical symptoms, the product, and the benefits of using that particular product. The purpose is to refresh employee knowledge regarding specific conditions and to educate them on new products.

Before working with SkillSet, this training was delivered to pharmacy staff via paper-based fact files. The paper-based training materials were sent to each of Tesco’s in-store pharmacies where they were available for staff to access as and when needed. All too often, however, the fact files ended up being filed away ‘somewhere safe’ and were often forgotten about. As well as being expensive to produce and distribute, the fact files were failing to engage staff and, as a result, knowledge transfer and retention was poor.

To check that staff had attended the training and to assess uptake of knowledge, each employee was provided with a unique PIN. The in-store pharmacies were phoned at random intervals and staff would then need to input their four-digit PIN and answer a series of questions relating to the training. This was a manually-intensive process and was presenting Tesco Pharmacy with a range of challenges. For example, PINs were often forgotten by employees or, in some cases, were not received. This meant that it became increasingly difficult for Tesco to accurately track who had attended the training and whether they had passed the end-of-training assessment.

Tesco engaged SkillSet to help it address these challenges and to improve the way it delivered training to its 3000-plus UK-based pharmacy staff. As well as providing a more accurate method of tracking who had attended the training, SkillSet helped Tesco to create more interactive content to improve knowledge transfer and retention among staff.

Samantha Sullivan, healthcare training manager, Tesco
A dose of eLearning

Taking on board feedback from staff across Tesco Pharmacy, SkillSet designed bite-sized eLearning modules to replace the paper-based training materials. Our training needs analysis showed that many of the staff who worked in Tesco’s in-store pharmacies had little or no experience of eLearning and some had only basic PC skills. As such, it was important that the eLearning content was simple and easy to navigate.

It was also important that any materials produced were user-friendly and that staff actually wanted to use them. It was clear that the existing paper-based training materials were not providing staff with an exciting or effective way of learning and this was something that Tesco Pharmacy was very keen to address. We started by producing very simple eLearning content which was specifically designed to encourage effective and long-lasting knowledge transfer. As the pharmacy staff became more familiar with the new fact files, we started to add more exciting features and functionality.

Many of the pharmacy assistants had never eLearning before and we were very mindful of this when we were creating content. We didn’t want to intimidate staff by producing eLearning content that had all the bells and whistles straight away – this approach just wouldn’t have worked here. Instead, we adopted a ‘walk before we run’ approach and focussed on solid instructional design. As staff in the in-store pharmacies became more familiar with eLearning we started to vary our approach and add more exciting and interactive elements. We’re continuing to come up with new and exciting ideas that go into each of the courses. This means that the eLearning materials are constantly evolving and the pharmacy assistants keep on learning.

Jonathan Jowett, instructional designer, SkillSet

The SkillSet team worked directly with the pharmaceutical companies to ensure that products were positioned correctly and that branding and messaging were correct. The team then worked with Tesco to ensure that the training was delivered in a ‘Tesco way’. This included mapping the content to Tesco values. Content was designed and structured in a way that was easy to navigate. The aim was to provide bite-sized learning modules that could be accessed from the pharmacy PC. The pharmacy PC is used to print scripts and labels for medications. It was, therefore, important that modules were designed in such a way that employees could dip in and out of the training materials as and when they needed to.
Results

Since the pharmacy eLearning programme was launched in June 2011, completion rates have risen from 16% to over 80%. Knowledge update has improved significantly and the new training materials have been well received by staff, who now have the confidence to recommend products to customers based on their symptoms. This helps Tesco to provide its customers with the best service possible and helps to ensure that they will return to the in-store pharmacy.

The feedback we have received by the pharmacy staff has been very positive and we are now getting requests for more and more functionality. Given that many of the staff had never used eLearning before, this is a fantastic achievement. As well as adding value to our customers, we’re delivering some positive benefits to our pharmaceutical providers. We’re providing staff with the skills and knowledge they need to help our customers make informed decisions. They are now more confident in explaining the features and benefits of products and are able to use this information to recommend products to customers. By using this information properly, the pharmacy staff are helping to communicate key product messages to consumers and to drive product sales.

Philip Banks, pharmacy operations manager, Tesco
A quick word about SkillSet

We’ve been designing, developing and delivering training programmes since 1991, so it’s fair to say that we know a thing or two about training!

- We provide a full range of training services, including training needs analysis, design and delivery of blended training programmes, and post ‘go-live’ support.
- We also work with several software vendors to help them improve end-user adoption within their client bases.
- Working in partnership with our friends at TTS, we provide software and solutions to enable our customers to rapidly create documentation, eLearning and support materials.

Recognised as one of the UK’s leading providers of IT training, SkillSet works with clients from across the oil & gas, pharmaceutical, financial services, retail, healthcare and public sectors. Our growing customer list includes organisations such as BP, Tesco, Lloyds Banking Group, EDF Energy and GlaxoSmithKline.