

TfL Takes the iTrain

A Practice Manager with iTrain Consulting, Andrew Davies, gives an insight into how this growing IT consultancy company has contributed in the delivery of SAP based application systems at Transport for London (TfL).

It is 9 am on a cold December morning, six of my colleagues and I turned up at our pre-designated location and sorted out our entry passes. Thirty minutes later we were greeted by a member of the project team to a hail of “At last, the trainers have arrived; now we can focus on delivering customers the product”. Only it’s not just about delivering a product is it?

At iTrain we pride ourselves on our ability to consult and guide customers through the learning process in line with organisational priorities and give individuals the best possible learning experience.

The project I was involved with was a SAP Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme which was to replace legacy systems throughout Transport for London. With the rest of my team, we were to train all customer service agents from different parts of the business.

Two of us were charged with getting the staff at the London Underground (LU) Customer Call Centre ready for their “Go Live” date. The staff at the centre vary in age, gender, ethnicity, ability and are a true testament to the diversity at the TfL. The initial issue was to tackle change management which was done by the rest of the project team.

Glen Hargate, a fellow iTrain consultant, and I made ourselves at home and started about putting everyone’s mind at ease. We wanted the agents to see that we were not there as a threat but as a resource to help in their learning and development.

Investing in your Greatest Asset

Before the first training session began we became well known to the people we were going to train which put them all at ease. We also gave a series of short briefs to senior LU management on the proposed learning processes and application functionality. At iTrain, we promote learning activity as an investment in employees rather than a cost.

The learning experience was split over three days (two days learning the new application and one “Day in the Life” training). However, getting adults to attend a course does not mean they learn. People have a nasty habit of remembering the “bad old days” of school; so we took this into account with the introduction of entertaining activities at regular intervals to help vary the pace of the sessions. The activities were well received by everyone and helped to inject a little fun and competition whilst reinforcing intended learning objectives.

The training of the customer service agents did not stop there. They continued to receive online help and a friendly iTrain presence in the call centres before and after “Go Live”. iTrain have also provided coaching and mentoring in the workplace to help facilitate the learning experience. (Harrison, 2005, p. 19) states that, greater attention is now being paid to workplace learning and on the job training and mentoring is seen as one of the most popular processes in business.

iTrain supporting the entire life cycle of TfL projects:

Boroughs Portal Project: Continued development of an easy to use 'one-stop shop' for online information exchange between TfL and the London Boroughs, based at the core of TfL-provided Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding.

Via an internet connection and a standard web browser, the SAP Portal is now the electronic gateway into TfL for all its partners and replaces a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet-based system with information passed as email attachments. Much like online banking systems, all parties will see exactly the same information.

iTrain's current involvement includes the development of six training programmes for a user group of 500 as well as authoring e-learning materials and online help using EP (Enterprise Portal), BI (Business Intelligence), and PI (XI) for the application and approval of funding schemes; claims, accruals and retentions, funding allocations and progress reporting, as well as report generation and document management (KM).

Training, scheduled in 3 phases, saw 200+ people trained in Phase 1. Phase 2 estimates 300+ people to be trained, with Phase 3 yet to be confirmed.

Customer Services Integration Programme (CSIP): Further to the initial Phase 1 of the CRM project outlined earlier, a team of iTrain consultants have developed training presentations, step by step instructions, online simulations and quick reference guides to upgrade 200+ end users. All materials have been tailored according to the different business areas and the team have delivered according to the customers' requirements.

iTrain consultants have been involved with the project across the two separate releases and it has been interesting to see how the system has been maintained by the support teams and evolved based on recommendations from the end users. This has presented further challenges delivering the end product.

Business Explorer (BEx) Upgrade Project: An initial Training Needs Analysis was completed to scope the use of the older SAP BEx application. As a result, 800+ users across TfL were earmarked for upgrade training over a 3 month period to utilise the application through the company's web portal and Microsoft Excel.

iTrain provided a SAP consultant as the User Acceptance Test (UAT) lead and as an assistant trainer. A complete library of Excel and Web UAT scripts were published exceeding the previous TfL standards. The TfL BEx upgrade scripts include a full suite of online end user manuals, quick reference guides, and assessments have been produced and widely received by the business.

iTrain consultants have also produced business presentations and delivered end user training to support the following projects:

Supplier Registration: Introduction of a new online supplier registration system with interfaces into SAP to help suppliers do business more easily with TfL.

Accounts Payable Workflow: iTrain implemented TfL functionality enhancements to improve the handling of invoice approvals.

Overtime: Replacement of a non-rostered overtime claim TfL e-form with SAP self-service functionality for raising and approving overtime claims.

iTrain consultants have enjoyed a positive relationship with TfL and have provided a top standard of SAP training and support. If you are interested in SAP applications support or SAP training, iTrain has the experience, skill set, and full time SAP consultants available to support your entire project life cycle.

iTrain is a specialist independent ERP change management and integration services company providing IT solutions both nationally and internationally. Visit our website at: www.itrainconsulting.co.uk.