

BA Case Study: Educational Start-Up

Fast Growing Start-Up Distance Learning College

Manage Course Quality and Learner Experience to Ensure Sustainable Growth

BA Skills Covered: Full-cycle contribution, contextual/historical analysis, stakeholder communication and management, problem/solution identification, scope definition, requirement gathering and documentation, use cases, business process modelling, wireframes, diagrams, report writing, presentations, supporting business and technical implementation, creating instructional materials, project evaluation and self-evaluation.

BA Documents Utilised: Contextual/competitor research, resource analysis, stakeholder management plan, communication plan, root cause analysis, SWOT analysis, GAP analysis, scope statement, BA work plan, legislation and regulation summaries, business requirements, software requirements, functional requirements, use cases, requirements traceability matrix, wireframes, diagrams, process models, impact analysis, roll out plans, change/transition management plans, UAT plan and evaluation, training materials and success log, data analysis and visualisation, and project evaluation.

Oxbridge Home Learning

2019 - 2023

My Role: Business Analyst - *Course Development and Quality Assurance*

I used a range of business analysis tools and techniques to help significantly improve all aspects of the learner journey and experience on two major courses for adults – a teaching adults' course (AET) and an assessing adult's course (CAVA).

I also successfully trained new starter tutors and improved their user experience as a tutor on the courses I had responsibility for.

Project Summary

To improve the AET and CAVA courses, the associated holistic learner experience, and relevant business processes. To then consequently receive improved feedback from learners and tutors, which had been very concerning prior to my starting work on the courses/experiences.

To improve the experience and retention of tutors on both courses.

To generally improve the quality of the courses while adhering to strict awarding body

guidelines. To improve the cohesiveness of the brand so that the learner journey is consistent and guided/supportive from sales/marketing/website, all the way through to course completion. To modernise the tone and visuals of the courses.

To create cross-department operational cohesion by the development and sharing of business process models, diagrams, and training.

The result was that literally all the negative feedback Oxbridge had been receiving from learners on CAVA and AET stopped and was replaced by ever-increasingly positive feedback. I won employee of the month on several occasions, I was promoted twice internally, and I was nominated for a local educational award.

The Main Challenges

To start, there were two fundamental issues with the two courses I had responsibility for (AET/CAVA – teaching/assessing adults) – the onboarding/initial learner experience were poor and confusing – and the course materials and assessments themselves were poor and confusing. This was causing major concern for both user groups – learners and tutors – and the feedback from both was consistently negative.

Many learners were complaining about the instruction and materials they received after paying to sign up – and tutors were often leaving the business after barely starting because the materials and assessments were just too problematic and confusing – and they felt they weren't getting effective support from above.

In working as a BA on this project, I had to mainly fend for myself and work to what I knew were BA best practices. I was basically left to my own devices and expected to succeed with minimal input from senior management. This was due to the fact Oxbridge were a fast-growing start up, and at that time didn't have a team of dedicated business analysts or UX professionals. They empowered and trusted me to lead on all things BA, and that suited me at that point in my career as it gave me the opportunity to do things my way – at least mostly.

No one above me in the structure had any real experience or understanding of business analysis or UX in any form, so trying to explain why I needed to do what I was doing was quite challenging. I put together presentations and resources – but ultimately what bought me respect was my real-world success.

Senior management started paying close attention to what I was doing once the real-world positive impact was unquestionable. The power of effective business analysis incorporating best practise UX design is undeniable in my experience and has been proven to me time and again. I always believe it is only a matter of time before they prove their worth on a project and to a business.

Solutions

The first problem that needed a rapid intervention solution was the state of both the AET and CAVA courses. There were many confusing errors in the learning materials and the assessments. They had many holes in them. There were too many significant issues to 'get away with' or ignore. The situation with learners and tutors was so dire and toxic, something had to be done immediately – and there wasn't time to wait for a complete course revamp. Plasters would have to do until there was time for surgery.

This became clear from the stakeholder and user interviews I conducted, and from data analysis of comprehensive user feedback data sets. I had also conducted heuristic reviews of the learner and tutor experiences. I analysed the requirement documents from the awarding organisations and also all quality assurance documentation – internal and external. Senior management needed me to 'stop the bleeding' as soon as possible.

Based on the analysis I initially conducted, my immediate 'plaster' solution was to write instructional guides (using effective UX writing/learning design) to clarify and guide as an accompaniment to the courses. These guides would address the common issues that had been identified/prioritised and provide interim solutions. These guides weren't the ultimate solution – but they took the edge off the user hostility and tamed their feedback. The guides gave us breathing space. I also taught the solutions to the tutors and made them aware of these guides so they could be on the same page as their learners. These guides and the tutor training really reduced the temperature and improved the overall mood. Senior management noticed that the bleed had slowed significantly, and my reputation was boosted as a result.

*I also created an innovative solution for what was a very confusing assessment requirement for the CAVA unit 2 and 3 assessments. I liaised with the awarding body to ensure that the form I was creating was valid, authentic and reliable and could be used by the learner to provide evidence. It was and they approved its use. This was a great addition as these assessments were the root of many complaints, and the form clarified the requirements and enabled learners to have a fair assessment and progress. *Example available by request.*

Still though, of course, it wasn't good enough for the learners or the tutors to have to rely on the guides – the course and experiences needed a complete revamp.

With a bit of time and space bought by my intervention guides, I then moved on to analysing the whole learner and tutor journeys and experiences, and to completely update the whole of the AET and CAVA courses, based on learner experience and design best practices. I undertook the LinkedIn learning design pathway during this time so I could most effectively redesign and rewrite the courses.

**A screen recording UX review I completed of the college's website is available to view by request.*

The key to my success in improving the learner experience and the courses was by understanding and implementing effective business analysis and UX/learning design. They make such a difference whenever there is confusion, whenever something is not perfectly clear – and many things were not clear as part of the learner/tutor journey and experience.

As part of this implementation, I created use cases with requirements for both learners and tutors. I created profiles and journeys for them both. I knew from experience that communication with my team and management would have to be visual, concise and clear. Any new processes would have to be straightforward and easy to follow.

I also created business process models covering all aspects of learner engagement from making

their initial inquiry to completing the course. The processes often had sub-processes. Likewise, I did the same for the tutor recruitment, onboarding/training, and ongoing support etc.

To implement the new processes, I then created run through training videos for sales/marketing/customer service staff – and likewise for new starter tutors. The 'office' staff were given the user profiles, journeys, and stories for both the learners and tutors – and the tutors were given them for the learners.

In terms of the learner experience and learning materials, I ensured that there was a strong clear brand voice, consistent throughout, that would guide learners from start-to-finish. I also ensured that all instructional content was crystal clear throughout. Inserting instructional microcopy throughout can save answering a hundred user questions later. This helped tutors to then focus on teaching/assessing rather than having to clear things up etc.

Results

The immediate result of my intervention materials bought us time to completely revamp the courses. The result of the new courses was that we then no longer received any complaints about the materials, and the feedback about them was very good. I had limited scope for what I could do in terms of redesigning the course and the materials, but I know from the feedback I received from all quarters that the new versions I was responsible for were a vast improvement on the old.

Not only was the learner experience improved, but also the tutors. Up to that point, the turnover of tutors on CAVA especially was very high. The time and money lost recruiting and training new starters etc. was huge. As a result of the training materials and additional focus I placed on tutor training and the use of resources and guides etc. staff retention improved significantly. When the new courses went live and they had their training on all systems and processes, the new tutors could then succeed in a role than many before them had really struggled to get to grips with, perhaps no fault of their own.

My performance on the project was noticed and rewarded internally by senior management. I won employee of the month on several occasions and was nominated for a regional educational award. I was also then subsequently promoted into the role of course development and quality assurance lead, with a responsibility for updating all courses to a similar standard to what I had achieved with AET/CAVA. My new role would also include greater input into the college wide learner experience.

The success of the project was quite unexpected, fast, and considerable and goes to clearly show the huge impact effective business analysis can have on business performance.