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A Custom Story:

Customised Resources at the
University of Limerick

Key Findings

Value for money, time saving: Students were able to access all their reading materials in one convenient book which saved them valuable time locating relevant reading. *“(For) our guys, it’s a much more efficient use of their time, having ten different books in one book.”* The lecturers were able to support the students in balancing their work/life commitments and the department received excellent value for money, purchasing the books for their students.

Excellent customer focus and customization process: Creating the custom book was a quick and smooth process largely due to the expert advice, guidance and efficient delivery they received from the Custom Publishing Team with Pearson. The excellent ongoing support led to high levels of customer satisfaction. *“That’s why we’re coming back, quite apart from the quality of the book, we’re coming back for the good customer experience.”* -Yvonne Delaney

Creates a sense of pride: The teaching team appreciated that they were all able to lend their input to the process of creating the custom book and it led to a feeling of ownership within the department and beyond. In fact, Yvonne even stated she *“roll(s) it out any time we get new visitors here.”*

About the Product

Pearson’s custom publishing programme offers tailored, affordable course materials for students. The resources we create include personalised print books, eBooks or online assessment courses and they are aligned exactly to the content of course modules resulting in reading which is targeted and cost-effective.

Summary

The University of Limerick is a higher education institution located in Limerick, Ireland with over 11,600 students, including 2,400 international students, and 1,300 staff. It awards degrees up to the postgraduate level and offers Ireland’s first co-operative education program where they give students the opportunity to participate in an eight-month work placement as part of their degree. Yvonne Delany is the Director of the Management Development Unit at the university and she, along with fellow instructors, worked together to create a custom book for their Certificate in Management course. They found the experience very positive, citing many benefits including: a smooth process of creating the book; an excellent customer focus from Pearson; saving students valuable time and money and adding value for the teaching team.

“I would rate my experience in creating a custom product as 5/5.”
-Yvonne Delaney



Description of course

The Certificate in Management course at the university enrolls approximately 130 students, runs over one year and equates to six European Credit Transfer and Accumulation (ECTS) credits. It appeals to a wide variety of students from diverse backgrounds and all of them are employed full-time. Students are motivated to study this course for two main reasons: to enhance their career progression or prospects and to further their academic study. For those interested in furthering their academic career, the Certificate in Management course enables access to the level seven Diploma in Management course at the university.

There are two key outcomes for the course, both supported by the creation of a custom book.

1. Students obtain their certificate in order to progress onto the next academic or career step
2. Yvonne Delaney wanted to be sure that students were able to bridge the theoretical-practical divide and apply the knowledge they gained. The instructors sought to provide a safe environment to practice learned skills, so students were more confident to go back to the workplace and apply those skills in real-life situations. Specifically, they want to help students work through important managerial skills such as presentation, interview and motivational techniques.

Delaney and fellow lecturers chose to create a custom book with Pearson in order to have a book which compiles targeted content corresponding with each module allowing students to progress efficiently through the course. Further, due to their students' finely balanced commitments to life and work, they wanted a book that saved them time by having all content compiled in one convenient book.

Product Implementation

This course lasts over one year and students meet once every three weeks for 8 hours each session. It combines lecture and workshop and follows a methodological approach called problem-based learning. This means that during class the lecturers assess the understanding of fundamental concepts by the students and back that up with theoretical input to get them familiar with the content.

Class Delivery and Flow for Ten Modules:

- **Session 1:** After being introduced to each module topic, students go home with an assignment to work on, in a group or individually, that is closely linked to the content they have been taught during the class.
- **Session 2:** When class meets again three weeks later they hand in their assignment and move on to communications. In communications they are asked to evaluate their communication process within their specific organization. Lecturers then explain theories behind communications followed by a student report and/or presentation on their organization as part of their next assignment.

The custom book helps staff save time

Students appreciated that all chapters corresponding to each module were located in one book

Support from the Pearson Custom team was top-notch

Students really appreciate and find value in the custom textbook



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- **Session 3:** Finally, three weeks later they come back in and apply their learned theories and concepts from the previous two sessions. This process then rotates for the ten modules.

The staff experienced a smooth co-creation process in which they mapped their lectures to chapters from a variety of Pearson books. They were able to select the best fit content from a range of chapters, settling on the best two chapters for each module. They were supported throughout by their dedicated Custom Publisher who sourced a range of suitable content for them to align with their modules. They found the process to be supportive and efficient. Crucially, it allowed for a quick turnaround from concept to published book in 10 weeks, ready for the September cohort.

Instructor Experience and Perception

Value for Teaching Team: Staff appreciated the value of this approach in providing content for their students: compiling one unique book in which all the most valuable information is placed instead of in multiple books. This opinion is shared across other institutions, a University Reader at the University of York commented that *“our custom book brings together a disparate range of resources in an affordable format, which otherwise would probably not be practical.”* It enables all students to access the best content easily and quickly, plus the content is highly relevant to the modules because it was hand-picked by the staff, so *“it’s exactly what’s relating to their module.”*

One of the main outcomes for this module was that students were able to bridge the theoretical/practical divide. Delaney found that ensuring relevant theoretical models were easily accessible within the custom book helped them to bridge the potential gap in knowledge and application. The customisation allowed them to closely match up the theories found in the book to the skills they practiced in class.

Delaney reported she and the lecturers that chose the content for the custom book felt pride in their contribution and *“they thought it was brilliant”* to be involved in such a process. In fact, Delaney revels in being able to share the book with others.

“I roll it out any time we get new visitors here. Absolutely, because it’s gone all over the place...and people really like it.”

Further, Delaney found the chapters chosen by the lecturers cut out much of the *“high leveled jargon,”* which results in a more approachable book for students.

“(The custom book is) something they can read easily. And the chapters that the lecturers have selected...have really nailed it.”

Customer Focus: Delaney found the customer support from the Pearson Custom team was top-notch. A lecturer at the University of Hull shared the same sentiment stating, *“I would rate my experience in creating a custom product as 5/5.”*

Despite the fact that they made their decision about which chapters to incorporate into the custom book rather late in the summer, the Pearson representative went out of their way to walk them through the process and be transparent with them regarding the challenges of completing the book on time. Even facing these challenges, Pearson was able to deliver on time and Delaney felt she *“wasn’t left hanging at any point in time.”* The ease of creating and ordering the book, as well as the prompt response of Pearson, made ordering the book a positive experience.



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"Actually, it was the best thing that ever happened. But I have to give credit to (Pearson representative) for this...So, thanks a million for that."

"That's why we're coming back, quite apart from the quality of the book, we're coming back for the good customer experience."

Saves Time: The typical cohort of students that enroll in this course are full time employees. They are busy and their time is precious as it is divided between work, life and study. The custom book allows students to access one book instead of taking multiple trips to the library to get multiple books to correspond to each module.

"(For) our guys, it's a much more efficient use of their time, having ten different books in one book...and it helps them."

The custom book also helps staff save time. Because the chapters have been picked out specifically by the lecturers, the theoretical models corresponding to each module topic are easily accessible.

Perception of the Experience of Others: Delaney has found that students really appreciate and find value in the custom textbook. Based on her experience, students appreciated that all chapters corresponding to each module were located in one book. She believes *"they love it. They absolutely love it."*

Further, other professionals have shown an interest in the custom book. They have even asked for copies of the books to use themselves. Delaney believes the book not only looks aesthetically pleasing, but the quality of the diagrams and pictures add to the high standards for the book overall, and that seems to resonate with other professionals.

"The head of nursing...liked it because it cut across communications, management and leadership, interviewing skills, change management, all the buzzwords in management at the moment, in one single book. And it gave a flavour."

Recommendations: If other lecturers are interested in making their own custom book, Delaney suggests they start with a clear idea of what the course is that they want to apply it to. She found that lower level courses taken earlier in a degree in particular benefit from a wide range of modules for a more general view rather than an in-depth approach, and *"this (kind of) book just gets it at this level."*

Conclusion

Creating a custom book was a positive experience for Yvonne Delaney and her staff. They felt it added a lot of value to the course for the instructors. It appears their busy students really benefit from the time saved by only having to access one book. Further, their experience with the Pearson team was extremely positive. The quality of the custom book and the exceptional customer service contributed to their decision to order the book again in September.