

Pearson's MyLab™ and eBooks

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CASE SUMMARY

Northampton Business School have been using Pearson's MyLab successfully since 2010. In 2013 they worked with Pearson to **integrate MyLab into their VLE** to reduce the administrative burden and improve the student experience. Their eLearning Development & IT Support Manager feels a **collaborative partnership** has been developed with Pearson. At the same time, Vital Source supported them to deliver a **suite of Pearson eBooks to their distance learners** through the VLE.

Courses

Various: Undergraduate and Postgraduate

Digital Solutions

Pearson's MyLab for 6 disciplines
Pearson eBooks via VitalSource platform

Context

We have been using a number of MyLab across Northampton Business School since 2010 and we started providing downloadable eBook versions of Pearson textbooks with our distance learning MBA students in September 2013. Our first experience with MyLab was delivering access codes to students and expecting them to self-register for the ones they needed. This proved unmanageable with students adding themselves to the wrong courses and was a significant draw on my time as the departmental IT Support Manager with students coming to me with all their registration issues, and tutors trying to resolve inconsistencies between the MyLab rosters and the actual enrolment lists.

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Managed Registration

In 2012 I decided to manage the registration to the MyLab on behalf of the students. In an ideal world Pearson could have managed the whole process for us, and offered this as part of the service, but due to concerns about the clarity within our university data protection statement we didn't want to share the

student details with Pearson, which was at that time a requirement for MyLab enrolment. The only automated process was to upgrade to an Enterprise solution which would then enable automatic enrolment via our Blackboard Learn™ VLE.

At that time the cost of Enterprise licensing for this far exceeded the staff time costs in managing the registration of 3000 students myself which took 4 hours per module cohort/session per MyLab, and was a very drawn-out process involving cross-referencing module choices and selection with actual VLE enrolments, due to students being able to change modules up to 3 weeks into term. We couldn't confirm all students as fully registered until week 5 or 6 and there was a cost implication when students

had used the access code but then switched to needing access to another MyLab, or to a different module that wasn't supported by a MyLab.

I worked out that the manual consolidation of enrolments saved us £3000 in wasted access codes (redeemed in the first week of

a module, but never used again) and whilst Pearson provided the codes in advance of the start of term, it was impossible to confirm all students were set up and ready to go in a timely manner. Also I was still fielding student queries for 2 hours a day at the start of term as they were having password reset issues (all password reset emails were received to a generic

but University controlled email address, and then matched and forwarded to the personal email address) or browser compatibility/popup blocking or plugin configuration issues.

At that point the only options were to upgrade to Pearson's Enterprise solution in order to benefit from the additional enrolment integration services or continue as we were. The extra costs couldn't be justified so I had to continue with that admin process for the next 2 years (repeating the process for September and February intakes, as well as for staggered intakes for our partner delivery programmes). I did what I could to help students, with the Pearson representative running staff inductions and face to face first day of class introductions and support sessions, and I created custom online help tools for the distance learners.

Moving to Integration

In 2013 Pearson offered direct VLE integration as part of the package, there was no additional cost as long as we were prepared to take responsibility for some technical bits with our Blackboard Learn™ site. There has been a financial saving and a big time saving from a centrally managed enrolment onto the MyLab as opposed to student-led enrolment, and we can more accurately get eligible students access to the appropriate MyLab, even when they switch modules.

The time invested in enabling the integration (and the fact that there was no additional cost) could easily be seen as a time saver ahead of the start of a semester, and the representatives from Pearson all understood the reason why the VLE integration was so important. They understood how to support our unique requirements and our teaching and learning needs. By adjusting the contract to allow the VLE integration to align with the enrolment processes and timescales that we could not change or influence. They worked hard to fit the service around us.

At the same time we had decided to supply downloadable eBook versions of Pearson textbooks to all of our MBA students from September 2013. We were recommended to use the VitalSource platform by the Pearson team as it suited our specific requirements of offline access to a personal copy of the eBook, to which the student would retain access without interruption for the duration of their studies. We worked closely and responsively with the Pearson, VitalSource, and Blackboard support teams to integrate the eBooks into our VLE.

Outcomes

There are a number of things which have resulted from integrating Pearson's MyLab and eBooks into the VLE.

Speed and Flexibility

For a start it was so much quicker. I worked with the technical team at Pearson and with only minor adjustments to our Blackboard Learn™ installation it took just 45 mins to set up each MyLab and have students automatically registered and enrolled on the right courses. Pearson has shown a real commitment

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to on-going support and understanding our situation. They worked out an option so that if a student is eligible and enrolled in the MyLab but then drops or changes module without using it at all, we don't get charged. That ability to adapt not just to the learning platform and the delivery, but to our institutional processes too, seems to be unique to Pearson as a publisher.

This meant that from day one, all students on that module have a copy of the eBook and can be using the MyLab learning resources during the first few weeks – incredibly important for the academic staff when developing the early stages of a module, in knowing that all students have access to the exact material needed at the time needed.

From IT Support to Academic Integration

The reduction in administration meant that the emphasis shifted from the IT Support Management aspect of my role (reacting to support calls) to the eLearning Development Manager role. I can now focus more on the academic integration of the eBooks within the module development cycle (rather than as a parallel resource) and supporting our academic staff in the effective use of the features that the MyLab and eBooks offer to engage our learners. This is enabling us to engage with flipped classroom pedagogies and provide a more connected and on-demand learning experience for our Generation C learners.

The extensive student support requests diminished to only 2 emails per week and they were queries I could forward to Pearson's technical support service to deal with, offering guidance to a solution, rather than needing to fix a problem.

Relationship with Pearson

The relationship with each of the Pearson representatives has felt more like a collaborative partnership rather than a supplier-client relationship. Pearson have conducted themselves as a true learning solutions provider, far beyond the scope of what I'd have expected from a publisher. That has come across in every discussion we've had. They understand their solutions and also how to support the administrative functions of an institution. Plus they were aware and always conscious of our teaching and learning needs and our vision to found our eLearning developments in reference, relevance, and narrative, to enable our academic staff as transmedia-storytellers, and to provide our students with u-Learning (ubiquitous learning) in a timely and cost-effective and cost-transparent manner.

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Pearson Service

Responsive and perceptive I think would be most appropriate way to describe the service we received from Pearson. We could always rely on our two local representatives (Glenn and Luke), but it was also clear that the levels of support behind the scenes were immense, and that they were able to tap into those resources very quickly.

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