

The Changing Face of Workplace Training



The global pandemic has radically transformed the way we work, with working from home, virtual meetings and online training now standard-issue for many Kiwi organisations.

But while the past two years of lockdowns have undoubtedly triggered this sea change, an increasing number of employers have discovered benefits that extend well beyond the realms of keeping people safe from COVID-19. By taking advantage of enforced down time to upskill their teams, employers have experienced the upsides of the virtual world. And, according to leading learning and development specialists Aspire2 Business | Workplace Communication (Workplace Communication), it's a phenomenon that's here to stay.

"We're finding that more and more of our clients are now opting for blended learning, a combination of face-to-face and online training," says Aspire2 Executive Assistant Clare Brown.

"Online training provides businesses with invaluable flexibility, particularly if staff are spread across different locations so meeting together for training is difficult. And with an increase in working from home, differing vaccination policies, and the unplanned lockdowns we've been experiencing, the ability to train staff via Zoom has given businesses much needed peace of mind in these uncertain times."

In 2021, Workplace Communication delivered highly successful Zoom programmes to numerous Kiwi businesses. Their bespoke training solutions, experienced tutors, and expert ability to bring all learners on the journey – even those not digitally savvy – has firmly cemented their place as the country's top-tier workplace communication training provider.

Ardmore Nurseries: Upskilling in downtime

Auckland's Ardmore Nurseries has been growing quality plants for wholesale for over 45 years. They have 35 acres of land, and 40 employees covering a range of key roles from field nursery staff, truck drivers and dispatch, to sales reps and customer service staff. While initially utilising the services of Aspire2 Business for face-to-face learning (four hours a week), COVID-19 forced a pivot to virtual training via Zoom. The platform turned out to be such a hit with staff that training was increased to four hours twice a week!

Says Ardmore co-owner, Kara Beaumont, *"It was great to be able to get some of the training done while people were at home. Many of our roles can't be carried out from home, so it meant employees could spend time doing training when they were unable to do other work. We also knew that they were engaged with their team which was important for mental wellbeing at a time when people could feel isolated and disconnected from the workplace."*

"Thanks to the Zoom training, staff maintained a connection to each other and deepened their knowledge of our standard operating procedures. It also meant that once we returned to work it was all hands on deck because training had already been completed."

Ventia Telecommunications: Virtual training, seamless transition

As Australia and New Zealand's largest telecommunications network construction, deployment and maintenance provider, it goes without saying that keeping staff at the top of their game is crucial. That's why Ventia utilises the expertise of Workplace Communication. Their customised training programmes have improved conflict resolution, grown leadership and customer service skills, and boosted health and safety, reducing the gap between the workplace skill demands and the skills of Ventia's people. While previous training has been delivered face-to-face, the arrival of COVID saw the group transition seamlessly to Zoom learning.

"As technically skilled learners working in the telecommunications space, they were able to move to Zoom very easily," says Workplace Communication Programme Manager, Sharyn Humby. And thanks to a well-prepared tutor, the right resources, and effective use of Zoom breakout rooms, learners didn't skip a beat.

The positive impact training has had on the business has been far-reaching, from improved workplace relationships and productivity, through to fewer workplace issues, better health and safety and increased staff retention. Inter-department communication has improved significantly and staff have learnt to deal with external customers more professionally.

Learner feedback:

"I've found my voice and I'm confident to share my story with others. My team has been very supportive."

"When I started, I didn't like coming to work, but now I'm getting along with everyone and enjoy being part of the team."

"I've learnt a lot around planning what I want to say. Previously I didn't think too much about this and didn't consider the needs of my audience."

AIM Services: Enhancing digital skills – a happy byproduct of Zoom

AIM Services regularly invests in Workplace Communication training to ensure their 320-plus team continues to take good care of Auckland Council's parks, sports fields, buildings,

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streets and trees. A recent blended learning programme for horticultural and trades staff targeted the company's essential workers and those with English as a second language. It did much to boost health and safety, enhance teamwork, improve customer service skills and increase confidence. Initially launched face-to-face, the programme had to be moved to Zoom due to lockdown, giving learners a precious opportunity to boost their digital skills.

Says Workplace Communication tutor Carmen Wimmer, *"We started working with computers right from the beginning, which helped learners gradually become familiar with the technology. At a certain point we needed to switch to Zoom sessions, which all of them mastered with the help of family members. The learners loved Zoom and didn't want the sessions to end! The training was very successful with more skills learnt that first thought."*

Employer feedback:

"Learners have been really into the programme and encouraged each other. Zoom is a great platform for online learning. The possibility of various demonstration techniques was great."

Learner feedback:

"It was great to proceed with the programme during the lockdown. I feel more confident when using the apps."

"I found the technology hard but the course gave me confidence."

Universal Communications Group (UCG): Online training targets off-site workers

For the past few years UCG – a leading supplier of Telecommunications design, cabling and construction services - has been working with Workplace Communication to upskill its Auckland based staff. Face-to-face delivery has worked well but a recent drive to offer training to employees outside New Zealand's biggest city saw a shift to online learning for a group of UCG aspiring leaders.

Says one learner, *"We learnt to use Zoom more comprehensively. I enjoyed chat rooms, breakout rooms and the ability to see the body language of others in the group."*

Says another, *"This programme has helped me to communicate actively with others, increased my job satisfaction, improved my teamwork and I've become more confident when listening and speaking."*

Whilst attended virtually across the country, the programme continued to give UCG a plethora of benefits including:

- Improved workplace engagement
- More effective communication
- Strengthened leadership skills
- Customer service excellence

Blended learning, big benefits

Workplace Communication has helped Ardmore Nurseries, Ventia, AIM Services, UCG and many other Kiwi organisations develop their most valuable assets – their people. Bespoke training delivered by expert tutors and tailored to meet the unique needs of each organisation, has empowered companies and their teams to reach their full potential. Training via Zoom has played a starring role.

Key business impacts:

- ✓ Better staff engagement
- ✓ Communication skills training uninterrupted
- ✓ Strengthened team cohesion
- ✓ Increased confidence in technology
- ✓ Personal growth and potential realised

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