

**TRAINING** Continual professional development can help to improve an organisation's reputation and save costs through staff retention

## Update skills to cut staff turnover

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Opinion



Continual professional development is high on the agenda for many UK organisations because of government requirements for professional qualifications to be developed and improved throughout working life.

As yet legislation does not affect the IT sector, but continual professional development offers an opportunity to reduce staff churn and improve credibility.

Continual professional development is not cheap. Each programme must take into account an individual's abilities and define a tailored learning plan. This plan then incorporates training courses and conferences alongside self-assessment and on-the-

job experience that must be monitored and tracked.

As yet the IT industry has remained under the government's radar, despite the impact of technology on the economy. However, with the upturn creating recruitment and retention problems, it is time the industry took a step towards offering structured and monitored career development.

Can the industry overcome its short-term approach, accept the up-front costs and be prepared to reap the rewards of increased staff retention and improved reputation in the medium term?

Continual professional development is a well-established process for attaining and maintaining the quality and relevance of skills and professional services. Many professionals have long recognised the value of improving skills and knowledge alongside work experience.

However, there is a growing

move by government to legislate for continual professional development. For pharmacists, for example, it is now mandatory to keep up-to-date with new treatments, technologies and the understanding of diseases.

The essence of continual professional development is that it combines work experience with prescribed training courses and attendance at conferences and exhibitions. Furthermore, much of this information is completed on a self-assessment basis. Some training can be done online and employees can be encouraged to update information about their training and career development.

Organisations have to monitor performance, evaluate the quality of self-assessment tests and ensure the programme always offers relevant training and conference or exhibition visits.

If organisations have a CPD programme that does not require

a huge up-front or ongoing investment, there are additional benefits – most notably in boosting public credibility. Information on continual professional development progress and the qualification of staff can play a key role in publicising the expertise and quality of the organisation.

Furthermore, a sustained focus on staff development has proven operational benefits: improved staff retention reduces the ever-increasing recruitment overhead.

Continual professional development can provide a platform for monitoring the multitude of IT skills.

By combining clear career development with employee-led self-assessment, an organisation can ensure every aspect of an individual's expertise and experience is recorded and monitored.

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