



Briefing note on the ThirdForce
approach to Skills for Life

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About this document:

The purpose of this document is to outline how ThirdForce PLC provides learning services to support large employers across the UK in delivering adult literacy and numeracy training to their employees.

ThirdForce PLC (TF) has great pleasure in presenting this document. It is a TF confidential document. It should not be disclosed in whole in or in part to any third party without our expressed prior written consent.

BACKGROUND TO THIRDFORCE PLC

ThirdForce PLC (TF) is a leading provider of technology enabled learning solutions and services that are deployed in over 20 countries across 4 continents. It is a specialist in a number of fields with over 25 years' experience in the learning industry. The company has offices in the UK (Uxbridge), USA, Ireland and Canada. TF is a public limited liability company incorporated and domiciled in Ireland, and is listed on IEX in Ireland and AIM in the UK.

In the UK TF supplies the Corporate, Government, Public Sector and Education markets. The majority of content is aimed at meeting the training needs of entry level learners in subjects as varied as Skills for Life (S4L), desktop ICT, compliance, Health & Social care and many others. TF has an extensive portfolio of e-learning content covering in excess of 2,200 courses and believes that this suite is one of the top three e-learning portfolios in the world.

Work-based learning

TF has achieved a high reputation in the Corporate market by offering a full solution to help make training 'stick' across multi-site operations spread over a wide geography with a high labour churn. This includes:

- dedicated project management team
- experienced account management
- field-based learning resource
- telephone customer service helpdesk
- full hardware support.

A range of delivery options is provided including the innovative el-box™ (touch screen tablet PC) which provides a mobile and dedicated training device to remove the fear of traditional hardware for first time users. Learners access the e-learning courses onsite using back office PCs (or increasingly on home PCs) or el-boxes™ and complete their training in a series of 30 to 40 minute sessions which are coordinated by the client's 'Site Coaches.'

Accredited training

The vast majority of TF's training courses are accredited by awarding bodies. The company has many years experience of working with the British Computer Society, EDI, Edexcel, City & Guilds, RIPH and OCR. TF is the largest global provider of the benchmark European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) course run by the ECDL Foundation. This encompasses self adapting diagnostic assessment and high stakes examinations. As a global operator TF's courses have been developed in several languages to assist learners with ESOL needs in the UK and foreign government education departments.

THE SKILLS AGENDA

The Leitch report highlighted how important the role of large employers will be in up-skilling the workforce of UK PLC. These employers will need help to reconcile the commitment they must make to embed learning within their workplace alongside the everyday business pressures and targets they are accustomed to facing. Internal company departments that have never considered the business benefits of providing development opportunities for their employees in non-core activities will need convincing of why they should lend their support. Finance Directors will require reassurance that they will not be exposed to incremental financial risk in embracing contracts with external providers to deliver this training.

TF recognises that success in this area requires a partnership between the 4 main stakeholders – the NES, employers, learners and provider. Employers are looking for an outsourced solution that is not only compatible with their core business processes but will integrate with their established L&D strategies and minimise workplace disruption. Their learners are looking for a discreet support service and accessible learning content that is relevant to their everyday lives. The NES is looking for robust business models that can be recommended to the 620 target companies and training providers that will offer a sustainable service that can expand and adapt.

For many years TF has provided software and technology that has supported the UK government's skills agenda. The company has now made a long term investment to become a leading provider in this area and created a specific division in January 2009 to expand the Learning Services team. The use of technology within the S4L proposition (outlined on page 5) will provide scalability to manage the growth all parties anticipate in this area. TF is committed to winning respect from both the NES and employers for our integrity, innovation and the quality of support that will be provided for learners.

Our experience

Whitbread, Care UK, BP, TRG and Barchester have all used TF to deliver S4L training over the last 3 years. These have achieved different levels of success with each experience reinforcing TF's belief that technology acts as a 'wow' factor for learners in this area and efficiencies can be achieved across all sectors. However, it has also reinforced a belief that S4L programmes need buy-in at every level within an organisation and targets need to be shared between the employer and the external training partner.

Our business models

TF has developed 4 models to suit the needs of our various clients. All of these include the blended proposition outlined on page 5:

- Standalone S4L provision
- Combined S4L and NVQ provision with TF LSMs delivering sector-specific NVQs
- Combined S4L and NVQ provision with TF LSMs delivering client-accredited NVQs
- Combined S4L and NVQ provision with client IVs assessing client-accredited NVQs

Our clients

TF is the largest provider of compliance training in the UK and lists BP, Whitbread, Spirit Group, Regent Inns, Marston's, The Restaurant Group, Tragus Group, La Tasca, Nando's, Intercontinental Hotel Group, Accor, Malmaison, Rank, OCS, Care UK, Barchester, Anchor, Voyage and MHA as existing clients. Over 500,000 learners within these organisations have accessed TF training courses – the majority of them experiencing e-learning for the first time.

It is TF's intention to maximise our close relationship with clients such as these to explain the benefits of contracting directly with the NES and show them how our business models and wraparound support services will make this a success. Detailed proposals are being considered by 4 current clients that have not delivered S4L within a NES contract before.

Our future plans

TF has a long track record of deploying new innovation to improve learner experiences. The introduction of the el-box™ and a blended approach to delivering S4L have come from listening to learner's needs and using our technological expertise as a competitive advantage.

TF's membership of the Irish Learning Alliance and participation in the 'ELITE' project gives access to a platform that is going to transform the way companies provide learning material to their employees over the next few years by consolidating the evolution of the applications grouped as 'Web 2.0'. No other e-learning company in the UK will be able to offer this.

THE THIRDFORCE 'ONE STOP SHOP' S4L PROPOSITION

TF offers a blended solution of high quality learning content supported by field-based Learning Support Managers (LSMs.) Significant efficiencies are delivered from TF's core competencies as a technology enabled learning company.

Software

- Integrated electronic diagnostic and ILP
- Self adaptive diagnostic based upon learner responses to establish current ability
- Integrated mock exam to prepare for external examinations
- All records stored electronically
- In-house development team to adapt/improve S4L material

People

- National coverage – including Wales and Scotland
- Experienced management team with proven track record of working with NES
- LSMs accompany learner through from diagnostic to final exam
- External exams conducted by LSMs
- Field-based team respond to learner needs – flexible working hours provided
- Management support to help clients prepare for Ofsted assessments

Tracking

- Clients track learner progress on TF's online Achievement Information Management System (AIMS™) - proprietary Learning Management System
- Links to client payroll departments enables them to track penetration levels at every site
- The AIMS™ reporting suite automates the delivery of this information to operations teams which ensures they take ownership of training across their regions.
- Use of MAYTAS to help clients submit claims for funding

Delivery platforms

- Embedded learning in the workplace on either PCs or fully supported el-boxes™
- Courseware available online for learners to study anytime, anywhere providing genuine 24/7 learning

CONTACT DETAILS

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