SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

We have just started, as of may 23rd, the first implementation of a pilot project with the Firefight II blended learning package. The package was translated in Swedish and 50 students are currently taking the course online.

As discussed during the final meeting in Esher, it is necessary to develop a dissemination strategy and implementation process. In order to implement the project in Sweden we have worked towards that goal and we are now able to present all the partners and observers of the project with the process we have put in place.

Every implementation ought to be different from one country to another. Those are just guidelines from a successful implementation.

This document presents the thought process we followed in order to identify the most effective implementation plan. This document does not aim to propose a single, final training solution for firefighters training, but to build a strong foundation on which future project work can be conducted.

CURRENT SITUATION

In every implementation, we need to assess the current situation of training delivery in a given territory.

At that stage, we review the laws regarding firefighters and officer's training in order to make sure the delivery model will fit within the legal frame of the country.

We must also examine any national standards that define the skills required to work as a professional firefighter in accordance with good safety practice.

In order to gain an overview of existing firefighter training provision in any country, we shall also need a complete description of all organizations currently involved in firefighter training.

The kind of information we will want to look at:

- Who determines the strategic orientations of firefighter training programs (laws, regulations, standards);
- Who is responsible for designing initial and ongoing training programs;
- Who develops the course content;
- Who delivers the training;
- Who certifies that instructors are qualified to deliver training programs;
- Who delivers theoretical training, and how;

- Who delivers practical training, and how;
- Who is responsible for certifying the qualifications awarded to firefighters after their training.

In every aspect, we can provide experience learned both from MSB during the implementation in Sweden and EducExpert's experience in North America, France and Switzerland.

STRATEGIC PROJECT ORIENTATIONS

This section presents what we deem to be the main criteria to be discussed as regards implementing a new way of training delivery. Blended learning will impact training delivery in many different ways.

Standardizing training

It is increasingly important to standardize training over a given territory. This is particularly true for professions that include a certain risk for the professionals involved.

The greater the number of instructors, the higher the risk that key messages will not be delivered homogeneously. The risk of disparity is higher still if training is not based on standards that are widely recognized across the territory.

Given the need for collaboration between emergency service teams during large-scale operations, increasing individual mobility, and turnover rates within the fire service, standardized theoretical and practical training is essential to ensure that firefighters can do their job as safely as possible.

Ensuring training accessibility

Today's students expect access to resources anytime and anywhere. In addition, part-time firefighters, who have another full-time job, need flexibility in their training schedule.

We now accord great value to time spent with family and on leisure activities. In order to ensure sufficient firefighting staff to maintain public safety, training tools must be as accessible as possible: i.e. web-based tools for theoretical training, and decentralized practical training.

Optimizing resources (human, material and financial)

In many countries, several excellent practical training centers are relatively under-used, while instructors spend the majority of time delivering classroom-based theoretical training. Instructors often have considerable expertise to share with their students, but do not have enough time to do so.

The training delivery model needs to leverage resources so as to optimize cost effectiveness and the acquisition of skills.

Reducing the direct and indirect costs of delivering training

Long-distance travel for relatively long assignments generates high costs that exert considerable pressure on both individuals and public authorities.

Direct costs include instructors' salaries, training costs for the emergency services and individuals involved, material and equipment.

Indirect costs include travel, accommodation and food expenses. Part-time firefighters must take time off their regular jobs, which may have considerable cost. And each fire station must replace firefighters who are on training, generating further indirect costs.

These considerations must be taken into account when developing a new training delivery model.

Reducing the environmental impact of travel and the associated risk of accident

There is a road safety risk associated with all travel, and therefore a risk to the health of all individuals involved.

Furthermore, we must be aware of the environmental impact of long-distance travel in motorized vehicles.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN

The purpose of the communication plan must be to keep fire safety leaders and other influential stakeholders informed and involved in the process. It is vital to test their response at this stage, so as to determine whether the new model is likely to be accepted.

Change management strategies must include stakeholder consultation at various points in the project, to enable them to express their opinions and ensure their buy-in.

There can be no change without buy-in to the new model, so we must act strategically to obtain this buy-in.

PROJECT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING STAGE

Once the pre-project stage has been validated, we can move on to subsequent stages of the project itself. We must undertake a rigorous analysis of the project, based on the conclusions of the pre-project work, and draw up an end-to-end schedule for the project. We can then launch official project work.

There follows a list of the main project stages needed after the pre-project stage has been completed.

1) Designate project managers
    - Lead organization
    - Essential resources
    - Decision-making resources

2) Create workgroups

3) Undertake project design work
    - Legal and regulatory framework for the new approach
    - Organizational structure of the new approach
    - Training delivery processes
    - Any necessary local, regional, national and external partnership agreements
    - Project communication plan
    - Financial analysis of the project
    - Pilot projects

4) Define deliverables and key project dates
    - Laws and regulations
    - Standards
    - Distance learning as part of a blended learning solution

5) Validate the project planning stage

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

If the pilot project show successful result and the partner country wish to go forward in implementing blended learning as a solution, the following steps can be analyzed in collaboration in order to take advantage of every partner's past experiences.

1) Establish laws and regulations
2) Establish standards
3) Define the training and management structures needed to deliver training
4) Establish the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the process
5) Draw up a communication plan
6) Compile training programs for students and instructors
7) Compile appropriate documentation
8) Transfer and produce appropriate distance learning programs
9) Adapt national technology networks to include blended learning
10) Train field agents

11) Conduct specific field tests
12) Debrief on field tests and make any necessary adjustments
13) Compile statistics and establish performance indicators
14) Obtain validation
15) Deploy nationally
16) Follow up
17) Revise

NATURE OF COURSE FOR THE PILOT PROJECT (THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL)

- The pilot project aims to set up and distribute the **FireFight II** course as a distance learning course for a target group of fire officers different geographical sectors of the country;
- **FireFight II** is an e-learning course which is estimated to last 4.5 hours. The translation and voice over of the course content into your country's own language will be done. The additional documents offered in the course library will only be available in the original language.
- **FireFight II** is aimed at fire officers, fire intervention commanders (ICs) and fire chiefs. At the end of the course the learner should:
  - Have a basic knowledge and understanding of incident management using the Cutting-Extinguishing Concept (CEC) methodology;
  - Know more about situations where it is appropriate to use the CEC;
  - Be able to respond early and effectively to emergencies by taking good strategic, tactical and methodological decisions;
  - Be able to use available resources effectively, such as the response units and the latest firefighting technologies (cutting extinguishers, thermal imaging cameras and positive pressure ventilation fans).
- No practical training is included in the scope of the pilot project. The notions covered mainly concern the understanding of the concepts and command of the strategic and tactical decision taking model and not the execution of practical tasks. The final content simulation and the self-assessment validate what has been learnt.

DEFINITION OF OVERALL PROCESS

Access to e-learning (technological infrastructure)

The training is available via an Internet access. All the main operating systems (Window, Mac, Linux) and standard browsers (Internet Explorer, FireFox, Chrome, Opéra, etc.) can be used to

view the training course. An up to date version of the Flash plug-in (version 11 or higher) is required to deploy the training. The course library offers some additional documents to the training in PDF format which can be read with the Adobe PDF Reader software. These additional documents are optional. Their consultation has not been taken into account in the estimated course time and is not necessary to correctly answer the self-assessment questions.

Tutoring and technical support

Tutoring is a service which permits the learner to ask a question about the course content. These questions are sent to one or several specialists in the subjects covered by the course. The specialist then receives a notification by e-mail and SMS advising them that they have been sent a question. He/she must then access the training environment and use the message service to consult the question. The tutor sees the question and knows which part of the course the learner was in when the question was asked. The tutor then words a reply and sends it to the learner using the message service. The tutor must be someone who is well acquainted with the concepts presented in the course content so as to be in a position to clarify the points raised by the learners.

As a general rule, the tutoring must be carried out by in-house personnel of the Fire Unit which subscribed to the training. Within the scope of the pilot project, there are two possible options:

- Option 1: Assign at least one tutor to each of the regions taking part in the pilot project. This option ensures a more personalised reply according to the unit and its operational procedures. It also means that there is better local management of the difficulties encountered by the learners. As this option reproduces the actual deployment of an e-learning course, we think this is the best approach for drawing the most objective conclusions about the results of the pilot project.
- Option 2 (recommended by EducExpert): Assign a centralized tutor for the duration of the pilot project. This tutor will be responsible for replying to all the questions raised by the learners, whatever the group they come from or the region they are in. This option means that the information is centralized and a standard reply is given for the duration of the pilot project.

The technical support shall be provided by a project member of staff. We intend to train at least one person (the main local contact and if possible, a back-up local contact able to intervene if the main local contact is absent). A record of the calls received shall be kept for analysis at the end of the project and to help with planning when the project is deployed on a larger scale. A free telephone number should be reserved should the geographical location of the learners lead to long-distance communication charges.

The person assigned to the technical support must have good knowledge of Internet and the tools used to access it. The majority of the operations concern access problems (user name or

password forgotten) and browser configuration (pop-up windows, deletion of temporary Internet files, etc.).

Role, responsibility and training of local contacts

The contact is a local member of staff whose main responsibility is to boost the training. The learners may need the local contacts' help with straight forward questions regarding the use of the training environment functions.

The local contact does not have to be an officer or a representative of the unit authority. The local contact must be selected according to their credibility with respect to their peers and their adherence to the project of incorporating a blended learning model into fire fighter and fire officer training.

When setting up the training project for other clients, we started with an introduction and training session with the selected local contacts to ensure that they are correctly taken in hand and to satisfy ourselves that they fully understand their role in the training course.

The trained local contact will be responsible for running the various assimilation sessions for each new training group.

Assimilation sessions

For several years now, when setting up large training projects, we have observed the importance of carrying our assimilation sessions with the learners enrolled on the training course. The purpose of the assimilation session is to present the learners with the various steps to be taken and to familiarize them with the new training tools at their disposal.

The assimilation session is an opportunity to bring the learners together and to reply, from the outset, to any questions they may have with respect to the e-learning concept. The learner must understand from the beginning that e-learning is easy to use, effective and has many advantages with respect to flexibility and time management.

Training management for pilot project

The training should be managed by a team from within each country implementing a project.

The management of the training course concerns in the main, the following services:

- Registrar: Creating groups and training sessions, recording learners in the e-learning system, communicating the access codes;
- Monitoring: Monitoring learners on the training platform, communicating with the training managers, identifying gaps observed between learner achievements and the goals, reporting these observations;
- Planning: Managing the assimilation session schedule in collaboration with the fire unit training managers.
- Pedagogic monitoring: According to the services selected, an organization can regularly obtain statistic reports for its groups in training.

Overall satisfaction survey

Given that the FIREFIGHT II course might be the first e-learning exercise for some partners, this is an analysis as to whether e-learning makes reaching the objectives mentioned previously easier and an overview of the learners' satisfaction. It is also a means of being able to draw certain lessons in order to improve and develop subsequent sessions.

All the candidates and the instructors will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will be used to fully analyse the pilot project. The results will be compiled on an anonymous basis in order to permit complete freedom of expression.

Personalized versions of the survey will be developed according to the role played by the various participants in the training. The survey replies must be anonymous but it will be important to compare the replies between learners, tutors and local contacts. The views of those involved at all levels are essential and will be useful for drawing up the subsequent steps to the pilot project and setting up the e-learning on a large scale.

We have taken part in the drawing up and carrying out of such surveys in the past. If required, we can guide partners in the drawing up of the survey and we will supply a model developed in one of our projects.

Communication

Your country's responsible body for training, the Firefight II project management and EducExpert must work together to inform about the pilot project. This communication exercise targets the following clients:

- Decision-making authorities
- Personnel within MSB
- Fire unit directors
- Learners taking part in the pilot project

According to the date selected for setting up the pilot project, a sufficient period must be programmed to prepare and carry out effective communication.

Post mortem of project

The post mortem will take place between the responsible of the project and EducExpert teams. Its main objectives will be:

- To provide the partner with an end of project summary report
- To process the survey results
- To draw lessons from the pilot project and to include the conclusions in future projects
- To contact decision makers

Training material for setting up project

Presentation and training for the local contacts in English and targeted language (PPS and PDF)

Instructor guide in English and targeted language (paper and PDF)

Software tools for setting up project

LMS in English and targeted language

TAPIOKA (training registration and management software) in English and targeted language