Case Study

How Bud helped Riverside Training maximise its revenue.

Riverside Training is an established training provider with a wealth of industry knowledge and experience built over 20 years. Originally delivering to SMEs in West England, they have seen their client base grow in the last 5 years to include larger, national organisations.

> With a learner base of 500-700, Riverside Training provides a range of funded learning programmes including L2 through L5 apprenticeships in administration, customer service, financial services, HR and management.

The Challenge

Riverside Training is typical of a mid-sized training provider that had incrementally grown over time, taking on larger, national clients. It had introduced processes and systems in a tactical way. As Paul Workman, Riverside's Managing Director explained,

> "We were utilising an e-Portfolio (Smart Assessor) and funding management system (PICS) which helped us store the basic information. But a lack of integration meant we also had paper-based enrolment, manual re-keying into separate systems, and a significant administration team that spent a huge amount of time chasing incomplete learner information and creating a host of manual reports and spreadsheets. We'd spend the first 10 minutes of every meeting trying to agree our key numbers! Quite apart from the compliance worries this created, it was badly affecting our profitability and investment in the business."

As Riverside started delivering Standards-based programmes to larger national clients they were also finding it harder to manage the consistency and progress of their delivery. Paul noted,

"As the number of trainers grew and became more geographically spread it was more difficult to ensure the content of our programmes was consistent. Our e-Portfolio was geared to support Frameworks (and assessment), making it harder to easily track the progress the learners were making towards EPA."

"We saw that the introduction of Standards and the Levy was raising the bar in terms of client expectations of curriculum quality and overall professionalism. At the same time the reduction of some funding bands was making it more difficult than ever to invest and compete. We knew we needed to re-think our approach; to find a system that could improve the learner and trainer experience and decrease the administration costs."

The Solution

At the start of 2018 Riverside reviewed and trialled an early version of Bud. Paul recalls,

"We were immediately taken by the concept that Bud was an 'all-in-one' solution, that it brought together enrolment, programme design, e-Portfolio, VLE and funding management into one joined-up system. The modern look and intuitive feel of the system made it an easy sell to our trainers and was helpful in simplifying the change process and team training."

Riverside's initial focus was on improving the enrolment process. Bud's work-flowed paperless enrolment process ensures that all the information required to meet ESFA rules is captured and data-checked, and that any gaps are flagged. To further improve efficiency, some elements of the enrolment process were also 'self-served' by the applicant learner.

Paul was delighted with the impact on the business,

"We quickly saw a dramatic improvement in the level of 'right-first-time' enrolment and a subsequent reduction in time spent chasing up missing or non-compliant information. We saw the time spent by trainers on learner enrolment reduce from an average of 90 minutes to less than 20 minutes - roughly speaking it freed-up a person-day a month for each of our trainers and transformed the experience for the trainers and learners. No one wants to sit filling in forms for an hour and a half!"

Paul continued,

"For the first time we also had a real-time dashboard that told us the status of every one of our applicants and learners - no more 'missing learners' and checking and reconciling different spreadsheets."

As well as the direct saving of trainer time during enrolment, Riverside saw a significant reduction in the effort required by their admin team to chase missing information and to compliance check the learner records. Paul said,

"I'm delighted that we simultaneously reduced our costs of administration, whilst growing our confidence that our learner records are complete and compliant." The savings have been significant with the administrative resource and associated costs of print and postage, reducing by £100k per year.

Alongside Riverside's drive to improve the efficiency of their enrolment they also wanted to improve the quality and consistency of their curriculum, and to be able to better monitor the progress of their learners. Utilising some of Bud's curriculum templates and Bud's in-built Programme Design, they created their 'model curriculum' so that their trainers were consistently delivering the very best content that could be controlled and updated centrally. Paul observed,

> "Bud enables our trainers to bring their own personality and style to their delivery and enables adjustments that meet the needs of the individual learner. But the fundamental content and structure of our delivery is always based on our 'model curriculum'."

Once Riverside learners are 'on programme', Bud's Learning Portal guides and prompts the trainer and learner, and provides alerts when work becomes overdue. The tracking of learner progress has proved invaluable in ensuring that learners remain fully supported, on-track and are ready for End Point Assessment in a timely manner.

every aspect of their apprenticeship delivery. "We can quickly see our key information about learner numbers, caseloads, starts, completions, and progress towards EPA, enabling us to drill down to individual Learners."

The Result

Using Bud has made a big difference at Riverside. Paul summarised the key benefits:

"We saw the obvious efficiency benefits from enrolment very quickly, but we've seen other less-obvious quality and efficiency benefits from how Bud automates, prompts and alerts you throughout the delivery cycle.

Since implementing Bud we've reduced our admin team by 75% - for us, that's a material saving.

Our trainers have been freed up from a lot of admin and can focus on what they enjoy doing - teaching. Overall our trainers are now supporting caseloads that are 10-20% higher."

"Because Bud is built to support scale it has also played an important part in helping Riverside grow. Clients love the broad capability and modern, learner-centric look of Bud, and this has definitely helped us when we're in front of new employers."

"The benefits of Bud exceeded my expectations. I knew it was going to improve our delivery, but I didn't recognise the extent to which using systems that weren't fit for purpose were impacting our operations. It's all the little things that Bud joins together seamlessly and its well thought-through, intelligent approach to tasks that you don't fully appreciate that has enabled us to drive quality and scale effortlessly."