



Real

Evaluation of Business Learning Centres

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SECTION	PAGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 PROJECT OVERVIEW	4
3 BUSINESS PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT	11
4 MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE.....	18
5 LEARNING CHAMPIONS.....	21
6 Real LEARNERS.....	25
7 EXTERNAL SUPPORT	29
8 LEARNING MATERIALS.....	31
9 USAGE OF Real LEARNING CENTRES.....	35
10 ADDITIONALITY AND VALUE FOR MONEY	38
11 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	42
Appendix A: Real for Business Consultations	
Appendix B: Real Business Learning Centre Contacts	
Appendix C: Analysis of Learning Champion Responses	
Appendix D: Real Learners	
Appendix E: Developments On-going within Real	

A Report by



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

1. DTZ Piedad Consulting was commissioned in August 2002 to undertake an evaluation of Glasgow's Real Business Learning Centres. The aims of the study were to assess the impact on assisted companies, review processes, identify good practice and consider the appropriateness and form of any future delivery. The study involved desk research, extensive surveys of participants and a workshop with the SE Glasgow Real team.
2. Real was a concept developed following a meeting in August 1999 between Glasgow's three Universities, ten FE colleges, Glasgow City Council's Education and Cultural and Leisure Services departments and SE Glasgow. Real is the brand name that the group chose to identify the new partnership, whose ambition was to support the development of Glasgow – the Learning City. The idea behind Real was to create an inclusive learning environment, drawing individuals into learning through both business-related training and personal interest.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

3. The Real Business Learning Centres represent the business aspects of a much wider project. The wider Real project set out to address identified needs within Glasgow in terms of poor educational achievement and low uptake of learning. The business-related elements involve two components, namely, Real for Business and Real in a Box. Real for Business was a bespoke package aimed at larger businesses with 250 employees or more. Real in a Box was a standard package designed for Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs).
4. The concept was similar for both, namely, the provision of a fully equipped workstation, including PC, to be a dedicated learning resource providing access to on-line training and learning materials. The aim was to develop an interest in learning amongst employees, either through business-related training or through personal interest. The purpose of the learning was not a key concern – the main aim was to encourage engagement in learning and to overcome the key barriers to training and learning, including costs, time and access to facilities.
5. SMEs were initially required to make a one-off contribution of £249 towards the costs of the programme, although during the course of the programme this contribution was increased to £399. Real for Business companies were required to contribute roughly 50% of the start-up costs, which ranged from £1,500 to £4,000.

TARGETS

6. There were two explicit business targets set for Real to achieve during the three-year programme (2000/01-2002/03):
 - To design, develop and implement 4 large company business learning centres for Real for Business; and
 - To deliver and implement Real in a Box within 120 SMEs across Glasgow.
7. Both of these targets were achieved within the time-scale of the project.¹ The project also sought to contribute towards the wider Real target of getting 32,000 registered learners over the period. The community aspects of the project, which operated through the network of Glasgow City Council libraries in the city were also aiming towards this target.

PROJECT MANAGERS AND LEARNING CHAMPIONS

8. The Workers Educational Association (WEA) was appointed to act as project manager. WEA's main responsibilities were to: identify and sign up appropriate SMEs; arrange for relevant hard/software to be installed; develop a guide for the new role of Learning Champion; organise induction to Real for Learning Champions and learners alike; and arrange attendance at workshops and Learning Cafés for Learning Champions.
9. Within each participating SME, a Learning Champion was appointed, whilst larger companies had up to 25 Learning Champions. The Learning Champion's role encompassed: raising awareness and advising staff about the Real project; encouraging and motivating staff to engage in learning; distributing correspondence on opportunities through Real to staff; facilitating guidance when necessary; and acting as the company's main contact for all aspects of Real.

BUSINESS PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

10. The business-related elements of the Real project were delivered at a total cost to the public sector of £381,740 over a three-year period. Over the same period, private sector income from SMEs totalled £37,696, implying a net public sector cost of £344,044. In addition, the larger Real for Business companies and Drumchapel Dalsetter Business Centre were required to contribute amounts at least equivalent to the SE Glasgow investment in their learning centres, implying additional leverage of at least £16,000. The resulting private to public sector leverage is relatively low at 1:6, although some of the businesses have gone on to invest further funds in the

¹ During the course of the pilot, this number decreased to 112 due to either relocation outwith Glasgow or liquidation.

development of their learning facilities – these sums are estimated to be in the region of £40,000.

11. The project was implemented on the basis of annual approval papers and, as such, had no long-term strategy or comprehensive business plan. The headline targets have been achieved but, at the time of the evaluation, there had been inadequate attention to addressing on-going support and development issues and implications.
12. The companies recruited are from a diverse background in terms of size, sector of activity, technical competence, connectivity and prior involvement in IT-based training. To some extent, this reflects the fact that the initial project was seen as a pilot, with an element of testing and some acceptance that there would be a need to try out some ideas that would subsequently be rejected.
13. The logistical and administrative effort required to deliver the project were underestimated and WEA's role in the project was very different from that envisaged at the outset. They were limited in their ability to deliver training and learning support due to the time required to be spent on administrative and logistical aspects.
14. The partners charged with developing on-line learning materials took much longer to deliver than expected, and BT was unable to deliver on its commitment to install 100 ADSL lines free of charge as ADSL was not available in most of Glasgow at the time. These factors meant that the product actually delivered differed in a number of important respects from that which had been envisaged and the aim of developing on-line learning was compromised.
15. However, despite a number of hitches in the inception phase, the participating companies did not seem disillusioned with the project and feedback has been generally positive.

MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIONS

16. Managers and/or learning centre contacts were interviewed in 59 of the SMEs and the four Real for Business companies. Participating companies were found to be generally very positive about the initiative, although many felt they had failed to fully exploit the potential of Real, for themselves and staff alike, due to time constraints.
17. The aspirations of the Real in a Box companies differed from those of the Real for Business companies in a number of respects, in particular in relation to the desire for external events and linkages. This highlights the diversity of the client group who have a range of different needs, reflecting their sectoral interests, scale of operation and level of technical expertise.

18. The provision of a dedicated PC with accompanying software was a key attraction of the project and was highly valued by participating companies. Although the majority of companies already had at least one PC, they were rarely used for training or learning purposes. **The availability of a dedicated resource was central to the project's success.**
19. Participation in Real has had a positive impact on the level of training. In some cases, there was evidence of displacement – for example, some companies no longer sent staff on external basic IT training courses. There was also evidence of new and additional learning opportunities being exploited that would not have been undertaken in the absence of Real, such as staff who had never used computers before getting the opportunity to learn and use basic IT skills.

LEARNING CHAMPIONS AND LEARNING CAFÉ EVENTS

20. A survey of Learning Champions (LCs) was undertaken. The findings suggested that, although the LC role is valid and important, it is not being carried out effectively at present. Training has been patchy: not all LCs claim to have been offered training and there has been less than full participation from those offered training. The role does not appear to be seen as a priority by those involved, with limited time devoted to fulfilment of LC duties and generally poor awareness of the resources available.
21. The Learning Café events had a mixed response. Real for Business companies were generally positive about these sessions, which were workshops designed to present an alternative and fun approach to learning. However, some participants and management from Real in a Box companies had expected the sessions to be directly related to using the Real resources and would have preferred more in the way of standard training sessions relating directly to Real and/or IT skills.

Real LEARNERS

22. All registered Real learners were invited to respond to a questionnaire. Response rates were disappointing and this was largely felt to reflect the fact that many registered learners had yet to make use of the Real facilities and, as such, felt unable to respond to the questionnaire.
23. Time continues to be one of the key barriers to uptake of training and learning activities and this largely accounts for the low level of usage. However, the survey also highlighted limited awareness of the materials available through Real.

24. Learners are not always making use of the LC in their company to access information on or get assistance with the Real resource – in many cases, they do not even know who this is. For those learners who had made use of the facilities, Real had had a positive impact on IT skills, with learners reporting increased confidence in using IT. Many started with limited or no experience in IT.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

25. External support has been offered by a number of individuals from different organisations – WEA, SE Glasgow and an HR/training expert. To date, there has been no clear structure to the external support and the variety of individuals who have been involved in contacting learning centres for different elements of information and feedback has created some confusion for those involved in the project. Contact has been somewhat ad-hoc in nature and the differing roles performed by the Real partners have not always been clear.

LEARNING MATERIALS

26. Through Real and the associated web-site, learners are able to access a range of materials including software packages, CD-ROMs and on-line content, some of which have a recognised qualification attached. Not all are business-related learning opportunities – some are specifically geared at personal interest in order to present as broad as possible an appeal. However, awareness of the range of materials accessible is very poor in general.
27. There is clearly demand for an expanded range of materials, including a better range of on-line materials. Larger companies in particular feel that they have exhausted the current range of materials. For other companies there is a more basic requirement to improve awareness of existing materials. The level at which materials are pitched seems to be considered appropriate by the learners, although management often feel the need for more advanced materials. Some have commented on the limited interactivity of the materials available and felt that the materials were not fully exploiting the opportunities offered by new technologies.

REGISTRATION AND UPTAKE

28. Registered learners represent a relatively small proportion of total staff in most companies, roughly a third on average, although the figure tends to be lower for larger companies. This may reflect the fact that the formal commitment on the part of participating SMEs was to register 10 learners, which will represent a higher proportion of staff in smaller companies. However, data also indicates that registered users in smaller companies are also more likely to be active users of the Real learning centre, suggesting that these companies have more fully embraced the concept of Real.

29. Another factor to be noted is that in larger companies, non-registered learners often make use of the Real centre. Usage is very patchy – the most regular users tend to utilise the centre for around an hour a week, but these represent a small proportion of all registered users, many of whom hardly ever use the centre or have never used it.
30. Lack of time and the range of materials available are the key constraints to any future increase in usage, although most companies felt that some increase would be achieved and were keen to promote greater use of the resources.

ADDITIONALITY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

31. Much of the training activity undertaken is unlikely to have taken place if the companies had not participated in Real. Furthermore, participation in the project has encouraged some learners to undertake further learning opportunities elsewhere in their own time.
32. The provision of PCs and supporting software represented good use of public sector funds in that, without these aspects, the involvement of the companies would have been difficult to secure and the facilities needed in order to undertake training and learning activities would not have been available. The programme is felt to represent good value for money by participants and, at an average cost of £2,700 per centre and £375 per registered learner, the costs appear reasonable relative to those of delivering training across the Scottish College network.
33. Further value for money can be achieved by deepening involvement in existing participant companies. There is clearly considerable scope for increasing participation, awareness and usage in existing centres and the on-going costs of support should be considerably lower than the start-up costs already incurred. There is also evidence that the level of company contributions to the Real project could be increased for the larger companies.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

34. The over-riding message emerging from the research undertaken is that Real represents an excellent concept, with valid and commendable aims and objectives. There were a number of problems and difficulties in the inception phase, which meant that delivery was not quite as effective as had been anticipated at the outset. However, these problems were generally addressed as they arose and are now in the past. Indeed, as the project involved a new concept, some testing of the market was required and the team expected that there would be an element of learning during the initial phases. On-going developments are seeking to address some of the key issues that have arisen in the first phase, particularly in relation to access (see Appendix E).

35. For the future, Real has developed a wide base of companies who are generally enthusiastic and keen to engage in workplace-based learning activities. They have the potential to expand their usage of the resource considerably, but have yet to engage fully and thereby realise the full potential. A range of positive feedback was provided by companies, although this was sometimes accompanied by criticisms of certain aspects.
36. The criticisms identified are not fundamental to the project concept, but generally reflect the problems encountered in the start-up phase. Aside from the logistical and administrative aspects, which were more time-consuming and costly than had been anticipated, the key issues identified for future action include the range of materials available and the structure of external support offered. Development of the LC role and greater engagement with management should help secure the results envisaged at the outset.

OPTIONS

37. There are essentially three options to be considered:
 - (1) Cease the programme and provide no further funding;
 - (2) Continue the programme, with project management provided by SE Glasgow; or
 - (3) Continue the programme through a formal joint venture (JV) with external support provided by a public or private sector partner or partners.
38. The validity of the programme's core aims and objectives and the potential for considerable expansion in uptake of learning opportunities within existing learning centres would support continuation of the programme i.e. options (2) or (3). To cease the programme now would be to miss the opportunity to develop the latent potential within the existing participant companies.
39. Should a JV be considered, it is envisaged that this might involve a formal and contractual relationship between one or more partners on a 3-5 year rolling programme of investment and trading. Partners could contribute staff, resources and intellectual property and the JV operated as a trading company. The JV might also be established as a non-profit making trading company. Further work would be required to explore and test these options.
40. The main criticisms in relation to delivery essentially relate to the inception phase, which is now complete. With appropriate focus and amendments, it is considered that Real could play an important role in the future development and encouragement of learning in SMEs, including planned Workforce Development programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

41. The key recommendations for future delivery, in order to use resources most effectively and build on the existing investment, are summarised as follows:
- A clear business plan with identifiable targets must be developed as a priority. This should cover a 3-5 year period and provide the basis for identifying key activities, roles and an exit strategy for SE Glasgow. Our inclination is to recommend that Real moves to a delivery plan based on option 3 above. This would imply that the business plan could also provide a basis for developing a JV prospectus and selection of formal partner(s).
 - Future resources should be aimed, at least in the next 1-2 years, at increasing uptake within existing learning centres, rather than seeking to develop further centres. In this way, increased value for money will be achieved as resources are used more intensively and effectively.
 - The target market(s) must be better identified and materials and support must be developed accordingly. At present, there is too broad a focus, with the result that the generic products are failing to meet specific demands. Consultation with existing Real participants will help identify the characteristics of those companies who stand to derive the greatest benefits from such a programme.
 - Structured support – initially with a focus on face-to-face contact – must be offered to companies, to include interface with management, LCs and learners.
 - The role of the LC must be developed, as these individuals will play a key role in future engagement and are the main point of contact within each company. They need to fully understand their role and be motivated and encouraged. LCs should have an identified individual either within SE Glasgow or probably in a partner organisation that is available to provide support as and when required (both ad-hoc and structured).
 - SE Glasgow should generally signpost to appropriate materials, rather than fund the development of new materials – the sourcing and identification of appropriate materials would be a suitable role for a JV partner with relevant expertise.
 - All materials/applications should be assessed through an agreed QA system.
 - A monitoring and evaluation framework should be developed, seeking to collect information on uptake and usage and to identify future needs in terms of learning materials.
42. In summary, the Real Business Learning Centre project has not been without its problems. However, the concept and aims remain valid and commendable. There is an existing base of companies with learning centres that has enormous potential from which to develop. The challenge for the future lies in releasing this potential and fully exploiting the opportunities for expanding engagement in learning within Glasgow's SMEs.

43. With the recommendations outlined above, it is our view that the programme has potential for much wider impact within Glasgow, but also for wider application across the SE Network, with Real providing a possible model of good practice for replication in other SEN areas. The potential for expanding the coverage would need to be assessed through a detailed feasibility study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DTZ Pidea Consulting would like to thank all those who participated in this evaluation, in particular:

- The many individuals from companies participating in Real who kindly took part in the surveys, interviews and workshops which formed the backbone to this evaluation;
- Jonathan Clark, Elaine Wilson, Annette Kerr, Shirley Davison, Keith Falconer, Andy Woolley, John Godwin, Donald MacPhee and Gillian Cowell of Scottish Enterprise Glasgow;
- Brian McKechnie, formerly of the Workers Educational Association;
- Olga Morrison and Caroline Clark from the Workers Educational Association; and
- Marion Paterson of Alba Training Ltd.

1 INTRODUCTION

STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 DTZ Pieda Consulting was commissioned in August 2002 to undertake an evaluation of Glasgow's Real Business Learning Centres. The aims of the study were to:
- Assess the impact of the project on participating companies and individuals;
 - Review the processes used during the project's development;
 - Identify good practice;
 - Determine what further support may be required in the future; and
 - Identify any modifications required to the delivery of the programme.
- 1.2 This document provides a report of the findings from the research undertaken and presents recommendations for future delivery.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

- 1.3 The study entailed four key elements:
- A desk review of materials provided by Scottish Enterprise Glasgow (SE Glasgow) and accessed via the Real web-site, including:
 - Annual Board approval papers;
 - Workers Educational Association (WEA) proposal submissions;
 - Reports prepared by Marion Paterson following visits to assisted companies in summer 2002;
 - Real publicity material; and
 - Other background material on Real processes and materials.
 - Meetings with key individuals involved in the delivery of Real:
 - Elaine Wilson, Annette Kerr and Jonathan Clark at SE Glasgow;
 - Brian McKechnie, Olga Morrison and Caroline Clark at WEA; and
 - Marion Paterson, an HR/training expert, contracted by SE Glasgow to undertake a series of visits to assisted companies.

- Surveys of Real for Business companies, Real in a Box company contacts, Learning Champions and registered Real learners (as detailed in Table 1.1).
- A workshop involving key SE Glasgow personnel involved in the delivery of Real.

	Nature of Survey	Target Number	Achieved
Real for Business	Workshops	4 companies (out of total of 4)	4 sessions with management (one conducted by telephone)
Real in a Box Learning Centres	Face-to-face	12 centres (out of total of 112)	11
Real in a Box Learning Centres	Telephone	48 centres (out of total of 112)	48
Real Learners	E-mail/postal	450 individuals (out of total of 759)	54
Learning Champions	E-mail/postal	50 individuals (out of total of 156)	23

1.4 The main body of the report discusses the key issues emerging from the various aspects of the research, while the appendices provide detailed write-ups on each of the surveys. The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides an overview of Real in a Box and Real for Business;
- **Section 3** considers issues in relation to business planning and project management;
- **Section 4** presents the key issues emerging from consultation with management in assisted companies;
- **Section 5** looks at the role of the Real Learning Champion, both in theory and in practice;
- **Section 6** considers the project's achievements from the point of view of the Real learners;
- **Section 7** considers the external support structure;

- **Section 8** provides an assessment of the learning materials;
- **Section 9** looks at the level of usage of the Real learning centres;
- **Section 10** assesses additionality and value for money; and
- **Section 11** presents conclusions and recommendations for future delivery.

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- Brian McKechnie, formerly of the Workers Educational Association;
- Olga Morrison and Caroline Clark from the Workers Educational Association; and
- Marion Paterson of Alba Training Ltd.

2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

CONTEXT OF Real

- 2.1 A MORI survey undertaken in November 1998 showed the resident workforce population of Glasgow to be more poorly qualified than surrounding areas, with respect to educational attainment. Only some 18.6% of Glasgow residents are qualified to NVQ level 4 and above and 27% of the population have no qualifications. These figures are more acute in areas of social exclusion where almost half of the Glasgow population and 60% of the long-term unemployed live.
- 2.2 A Local Employment and Training survey carried out in 1999 indicated that, despite continuing growth in employment, Glasgow's labour market was relatively poor when compared to the rest of West of Scotland in terms of training delivered to the workforce. In the survey, 33% of workers had had some form of training during the previous six months – 8% lower than the regional figure.
- 2.3 The Real project was driven by a recognition of the need to address these factors. The project sought to build on the strong infrastructure of learning providers across the city, which is advanced relative to other UK cities, including ten Colleges and three Universities, who are key partners in Real.

PROJECT INCEPTION

- 2.4 Real was a concept developed following a meeting in August 1999 between Glasgow's three Universities, ten FE colleges, Glasgow City Council's Education and Cultural and Leisure Services departments and SE Glasgow. Real is the brand name that the group chose to identify the new strategic partnership, whose ambition is to support the development of Glasgow – the Learning City. The idea behind Real was to create a network of high quality, supported and inclusive learning environments throughout the city, drawing individuals into learning through both business-related training and personal interest.
- 2.5 The project has both community and business elements. The Real learning centres that are the subject of this evaluation represent the business element. Within this, there are two components, namely, Real for Business and Real in a Box.
- 2.6 Real for Business allows for large organisations in Glasgow to develop a Real branded learning space, within a dedicated area away from the work environment. Colleagues in SE Glasgow's Business Growth directorate normally refer these companies to the Learning City team.

- 2.7 Real in a Box was aimed at Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). Research indicates that SMEs are more reluctant to support staff development, be it personal or work related. For the individual, the dedicated learning resource sought to offer the opportunity to learn at a time, place, pace and level to suit their needs. In addition, Learning Champions were to be able to provide on-going support for staff taking up learning opportunities. For the organisations it offered *free* access and was therefore less time consuming, bureaucratic or as costly as buying in tutor-led courses or sending staff on external courses.
- 2.8 Real learning centres are key components of lifelong learning in Glasgow. Through the use of up-to-date technology, they give widespread access to learning opportunities and offer a new way to help people participate in the knowledge-based economy.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF Real

- 2.9 The overarching objective was to increase participation in learning, and attainment of qualifications by the workforce in Glasgow. This was to be achieved through designing and developing the Real learning concept.
- 2.10 Learning in the workplace was seen to have the benefits of:
- Reducing the time and therefore costs associated with lifelong learning;
 - Taking quality learning to the workforce (whose owner/managers tend to see learning and staff development as a “means to an end” and not important to the individual or to the organisation);
 - Easing the bureaucracy linked to all forms of learning;
 - Creating an on-going thirst for learning; and
 - Increasing the skill levels of the workforce.
- 2.11 Two explicit targets set out for Real to achieve during the three-year programme (2000/01-2002/03) were:
- To design, develop and implement 4 large company business learning centres for Real for Business; and
 - To deliver and implement Real in a Box to 120 SMEs across Glasgow. Initially, the aim was that 50% of the SME companies would be recruited from the food, drink and hospitality sectors as a result of the development of the Virtual Food College.

- 2.12 There were also two further objectives that linked Real for Business and Real in a Box into the wider Real brand within Glasgow. These were:
- To contribute to the wider target for Real of 32,000 new learners registered as Real members over the 3 years. Glasgow City Council's library management information system was to maintain and supply the statistical records.
 - To contribute to the target of 7,900 Individual Learning Accounts to be opened by Glasgow residents.

OPERATION OF Real

- 2.13 To drive the project forward, SE Glasgow contracted with the Workers Educational Association (WEA), between the financial years 2000/01 to 2002/03. WEA effectively acted as project managers. Their role was to identify, develop and establish dedicated Real learning centres within the premises of 120 SMEs. Establishing these on the premises of the SMEs was seen as critical in removing actual and perceived barriers to lifelong learning.
- 2.14 WEA's main responsibilities were to:
- Identify and sign up appropriate companies;
 - Arrange for relevant hard/software to be installed;
 - Develop a guide for the new role of Learning Champion;
 - Organise induction to Real for Learning Champions and learners alike; and
 - Arrange attendance at workshops and Learning Cafés for Learning Champions.

Real FOR BUSINESS

- 2.15 For Real for Business, eligible companies had to employ in excess of 250 staff. The company needed to be committed to learning and seeking a partnership relationship. A bespoke package was developed for each company which included: design of the Real learning centre; provision of materials; access to high speed Internet connection; access to Real on-line learning; provision of a bank of CD-ROM materials; and, support in the operation of the centre.
- 2.16 In the short-term, there had to be agreement by the company to contribute towards the cost of Real. The minimum level at which this was set was 50% of start up costs, although there was flexibility and agreements were made on a case-by-case basis. In the long-term, the agreement committed the company to involvement with on-line learning with the partners in Real across the city.

- 2.17 The Real for Business bespoke package included:
- A designer to help develop layout and use of the Real branding;
 - Top of the range business computers, with high speed connection to allow access to multi-media and Internet;
 - Real branded desks and chairs;
 - Access to a continuously evolving web site with information and links to learning resources;
 - A range of on-line learning materials with tutorial support;
 - Access to a wide range of CD-ROM learning;
 - Logos, banners, signs and screen-savers with Real branding;
 - Direct access to on-line learning materials developed to meet the needs of food sector companies;
 - A pack for every registered learner including pens, paper, bookmarks etc.;
 - An easy to read guide to encourage the take up of learning and help individuals identify the learning style most suited to them; and
 - Support from the Real team on how to set up, plan and use the Real learning environment.

Real IN A BOX

- 2.18 The Real in a Box option was designed to suit the needs of the smaller business, giving them access to the Real learning environment from the work place. To be eligible, the company had to have fewer than 250 staff in employment.
- 2.19 In order to participate in Real in a Box, SMEs had to make an initial contribution of £249 (this was increased to £399 during 2001/02). Support was also to be made available for on-going use of the Real environment after initial delivery and implementation. The payments were one-off payments and businesses were able to keep everything apart from the software, which was owned by Real.
- 2.20 In return the SMEs had to release a minimum of 10 staff (where numbers permitted) to register as Real learners and allow them to access the Real learning environment within company time.

2.21 The 'Real in a Box' package included:

- A computer capable of Internet access;
- Access to multi-media and Internet;
- A Real branded desk and chair;
- Access to a continuously evolving web site with information and links to learning resources;
- Access to on-line learning materials with tutorial support;
- Access to a wide range of CD-ROM learning;
- Signs and screen-savers with Real branding;
- Direct access to on-line learning materials developed to meet the needs of food sector companies;
- A pack for every employee who registered for Real i.e. pens, paper, bookmarks, and an introduction to Real;
- An easy to read guide to encourage the take up of learning and help individuals identify the learning style most suited to them; and
- Support from the Real team on how to set up, plan and use the Real learning environment.

LEARNING CHAMPIONS

2.22 Within each participating company, a Learning Champion was appointed. The Learning Champion's role encompassed:

- Raising awareness and advising staff about the Real project;
- Encouraging and motivating staff to engage in learning;
- Distributing correspondence on opportunities through Real to staff;
- Facilitating guidance when necessary; and
- Acting as the company's main contact for all aspects of Real.

2.23 The Learning Champions were viewed as integral to the success of learning in companies. The key objective was to ensure that learners had some form of internal on-going support. Each SME was contractually obliged to nominate at least one employee to act as a Learning Champion. The 4 large companies utilising Real for Business had a higher target of between 3 to 25 Learning Champions.

- 2.24 Training for Learning Champions was to be delivered using a “toolkit” and half-day workshops. The role of WEA with respect to Learning Champions was to maintain contact and support them. SE Glasgow also supported the Learning Champions through the potential for networking at Learning Café events.
- 2.25 Learners were initially signed up to Real by WEA staff who also delivered their induction sessions. During induction, discussion revolved around the background to Real and its benefits, the role of the Learning Champion and the content of the web-site – www.intoreal.com. On-going recruitment was to be undertaken by the Learning Champions.
- 2.26 The network of Real learning centres available to learners includes the city’s 32 community libraries, through which there is access to over 200 PCs with free Internet usage, desktop publishing software, scanning and printing facilities and the support of trained staff to assist learners. The libraries also stock learning materials in the form of CD-ROMs, DVDs, books and videos.
- 2.27 Glasgow City Council’s Cultural and Leisure Services department has worked jointly with SE Glasgow to establish this network of community library and Real learning centres. Each of the 12 larger libraries and Real learning centres also has training suites with dedicated computers where workshops can be held. All centres have sessions for learners that can last from 30 minutes to 3 hours, with booking by phone or in person.

Real LEARNING MATERIALS

- 2.28 The on-line learning materials available through Real’s web-site are listed below:

<u><i>Tutor Supported</i></u>	<u><i>Self Directed (free)</i></u>
Business Health-check; Cleaning; Developing People for Owner Managers; Health & Safety; Hygiene; Introduction to the Internet; Local Investigations; and Publishing on the Internet.	Basic Office Skills; Managing a Learning Centre; On-line Learning in Pioneer; Pioneer On-line Guide; Routes to Learning; Sharpen Up; Supporting Adult Learners; the Worx; the Lowdown; The Key; Glasgow Digital Library; The Govan Story; Virtual Reality: VR Library; VR Chat Zone;

<u>Tutor Supported</u>	<u>Self Directed (free)</u>
	Creative Learning: Video Editing; Just Coz; Digital Animation; Film Theory; 3D Modelling; VJ/DJ; Sound Mixing; Sound Editing; Big Tower Little Tower; and Inter-sections M8 J11.

2.29 In addition, licences have been purchased for 31 Learning Bites, which are short modules of on-line learning material on a range of topics, some of which are listed below:

- Recruitment;
- Appraisals and performance management;
- Equal opportunities;
- Time management;
- Meetings;
- Negotiation;
- Persuading and influencing; and
- Presentations.

ON-GOING DEVELOPMENTS

2.30 The Real team has continued to develop and enhance the programme, responding to areas of need and issues that have arisen during the first phase of operation. Appendix E summarises the current developments underway, which place a particular focus on facilitating access and improving information flows. These on-going developments involve existing partners in both the public and private sectors.

3 BUSINESS PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

3.1 A team within SE Glasgow managed the business aspects of the Real project, although the primary responsibility for delivery of the project was contracted out to the WEA. This section provides a summary of identifiable project expenditure and reviews the business planning and project management aspects of the project.

EXPENDITURE AND SOURCES OF INCOME

3.2 Table 3.1 summarises identified expenditure for the project over the period 2000/01-2002/03.

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total
WEA Project Management	28,594	91,063	16,600	136,257
HR Peripatetic Post	-	-	9,900	9,900
Real Administrator Post	-	5,500	16,500	22,000
Equipment & learning materials	117,485	57,000	9,200	183,685
Licences and broker	-	-	4,679	4,679
Marketing and Materials	-	9,123	-	9,123
Drumchapel Dalsetter Business Centre	-	5,000	-	5,000
Glasgow Marriott	-	4,029	-	4,029
McVities	-	1,500	-	1,500
Tennents	-	3,770	-	3,770
Kyndall Spirits	-	1,797	-	1,797
Total Costs	146,079	178,782	56,879	381,740

3.3 It should be stressed that this table only includes those elements of expenditure that can be clearly identified and apportioned to Real. The total excludes important elements of expenditure that cannot be quantified but were central to the delivery of the project. These include:

- SE Glasgow staff costs (other than the Real Administrator appointed in the latter part of 2001/02);
- Costs of developing learning materials (other than the costs of obtaining licences);
- In-kind contributions of partners; and
- Cash and an in-kind contribution of participating companies.

- 3.4 The identifiable public sector costs of £381,740 were partially offset by the income generated through the contributions made by participating companies. Initially, Real in a Box companies were asked to contribute £249 towards the project costs, but this figure was increased to £399 in 2001/02 as it was felt that companies would be willing to make a larger contribution to costs. In total, these contributions resulted in project income of £37,696 over the three-year period. This implies a net public sector cost of £344,044. In addition, larger Real for Business companies and the Drumchapel Dalsetter Business Centre contributed an amount at least equivalent to SE Glasgow's investment in their learning centres, which would suggest total contributions of at least £16,000 from these larger businesses.
- 3.5 Thus, in total, direct private sector contributions from Real in a Box and Real for Business companies have amounted to around £54,000. This implies a relatively low private to public sector leverage ratio of 1:6.
- 3.6 In reality, some companies (especially Real for Business companies) have invested considerably more in the development of their learning centres, ranging from the purchasing of additional materials to the development of additional centres. For example, Kyndal Spirits estimate that they have spent an additional £30,000-40,000 in developing 4 further learning centres in other locations outside Glasgow. In total, the four Real for Business companies estimated that they had spent a total of £44,000-55,000 in developing their learning centres, although these figures have not been verified.

BUSINESS PLANNING

- 3.7 The principal element of the planning process for the business aspects of the Real project entailed submission of approval papers to the SE Glasgow Board, requesting funding. There was also a short Joint Operational Plan, which covered both the business and community aspects of Real.
- 3.8 The approval papers, submitted on an annual basis, outlined:
- Rationale for the project;
 - Activities and targets for the forthcoming year;
 - Achievements of the previous year(s), where applicable;
 - Funding required for the forthcoming year; and
 - Planned monitoring and evaluation activity.
- 3.9 The key targets identified in the approval papers were as follows:

- Registration of 32,000 learners (this target related to the wider Real project, not just the business elements);
- 120 companies signed up as Real in a Box; and
- 4 companies signed up as Real for Business.

3.10 These latter two targets were achieved during the three-year duration of the project.² As the first related to the wider Real project, it was not directly assessed as part of this evaluation. At the time of the evaluation, there were 759 learners and 156 Learning Champions registered via Real for Business and Real in a Box.

3.11 The approval papers were written for the purpose of securing funding for a further year of activities and, in this respect, were appropriate. However, in terms of a more comprehensive business-planning tool, they did not represent a sufficiently detailed and forward-looking document. The approval papers clearly identified the rationale and purpose of the project, but then went little further than identifying the number of companies to be signed up to the project. Ideally, a more comprehensive business plan would have contained:

- A clear definition of the target market, including the characteristics of the companies to be targeted in terms of:
 - Size (the only criterion for Real in a Box was that the company had to be a SME i.e. fewer than 250 employees);
 - Sector of activity (initially, the project was to be targeted at the food, drink and hospitality sectors, but this does not appear to have occurred in practice); and
 - Technical expertise and level of IT usage.
- Explicit targets for the number of learners to be registered through Real in a Box and Real for Business;
- A clearly defined framework for monitoring and evaluation (the approval papers make reference to Glasgow City Council's management information system – Galaxy – but it is understood that the outputs from this system were not as comprehensive as had been envisaged);
- A medium/long-term strategy identifying the on-going support to be provided to companies; and
- An exit strategy identifying the point at which public sector intervention would cease.

² During the course of the pilot this number decreased to 112 due to either relocation outwith Glasgow or liquidation.

- 3.12 A more thorough business plan would have helped provide direction to the project and a more strategic approach to delivery. The year-by-year approach to business planning, which results from the way in which public sector funds are approved, leads to a short-termist approach and, in this case, one which is driven largely by narrowly-defined targets. For Real, this meant that the main aim was to sign up 120 Real in a Box companies, with less attention given to the aftercare and on-going support provided to these companies.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Workers Educational Association's Role

- 3.13 The delivery of the project was out-sourced to WEA on a non-competitive basis. This was a valid decision on the basis of the availability of resources and expertise within WEA and their proven track record in delivering the Job Rotation programme for SE Glasgow. This latter project had given WEA contacts with a range of companies considered to be well suited for participation in the Real in a Box project.
- 3.14 The administrative and logistical aspects of the project turned out to be far more time-consuming than had been envisaged at the outset, with the result that WEA's role was quite different than had been anticipated. The main issues were in relation to:
- **Supplier contracts:** the contracts to supply PCs, desks and chairs did not prove straightforward and required intensive management. In particular, the PC supplies contract changed mid-project, causing considerable upheaval.
 - **Delivery arrangements:** with separate contracts for the various items of furniture, it proved difficult to co-ordinate delivery and, for example, chairs sometimes arrived before other items and were sent back to the supplier as the recipient company was not expecting the delivery. WEA were often required to deliver the PCs themselves.
 - **Technical support:** WEA were required to install the PCs – a task for which they were not prepared and for which they were not the most suitably skilled individuals. They were also generally the first point of call for companies who subsequently experienced technical problems with their PC.
 - **Distribution of materials:** WEA were required to distribute learning materials to the Real for Business contacts, which involved them in time-consuming collation and distribution of documents and manuals.
 - **Invoicing:** WEA took on responsibility for invoicing companies and chasing debts. This was a time-consuming activity and meant they were exposed to the risk of bad debts. In the event, all monies owed were recovered, but WEA had to spend time chasing these debts.

- 3.15 In these various respects, WEA's role was quite different from that which they had anticipated when submitting their proposal for undertaking the assignment. They had not budgeted for spending a significant proportion of their time in dealing with the supply and installation of equipment. The result was that WEA spent the majority of their time in the administrative and logistical aspects of the project and had limited time to devote to the training and learning support for which they have expertise and skills.
- 3.16 On the whole, it appears that this shift in role resulted from an underestimation on the part of SE Glasgow of the time and energy required in administering the project. With hindsight, it would have been more appropriate to appoint administrative and technical support from within SE Glasgow. This would have freed up WEA to undertake the training and learning support role they had envisaged, which would have used their skills more effectively and would have represented a more appropriate use of resources. In the latter stages of the project, an administrator for Real was appointed by SE Glasgow and spends a dedicated proportion of her time on administration of this project. Such a post would have benefited the delivery of the project from the outset, with a similar technical support function.

Learning Materials

- 3.17 The Real project was conceived as an on-line learning project seeking to foster a learning culture. The idea was that appropriate materials would be designed to support this vision. However, the reality was that the on-line materials that were being developed by the partners took much longer to produce than had been envisaged. The result was that, for the large part of the project, the on-line learning materials were not available. Instead, companies were offered more standard learning resources, in particular CD-ROMs and software-based packages.
- 3.18 In practice, many of the companies were satisfied with the resources available. The concept of PC-based learning was so new to many of the companies that the actual medium of delivery was of little concern. Indeed, it is understood that many companies were keen to get more CD-ROMs, even once the on-line materials began to become available.
- 3.19 WEA felt uncomfortable about persuading companies to sign up to a programme that was not delivering as promised. However, although the 'product' was different from the initial promised offer, companies do not appear to have been angered by this and the feedback from companies was generally very positive. The delay in securing the on-line materials does not appear to have hampered the project in terms of creating any disillusionment amongst participating companies.

BT Involvement

- 3.20 At the outset, an agreement had been drawn up with BT, whereby they were to provide the first 100 ADSL connections free of charge. In the event, when companies began being recruited, hardly any areas of Glasgow had the capability for ADSL connection, so none of the companies were able to benefit from this offer. BT was therefore unable to deliver on this commitment, although ADSL is now available in much of Glasgow.
- 3.21 As with the learning materials, this does not appear to have been perceived as a major problem for companies. Again, this would support the view that, for most of the companies, the attraction was the concept of PC-based learning, rather than on-line learning. Findings from the survey of Real learning centres show that, although 85% of the companies interviewed had PCs prior to becoming a Real learning centre, only a third of these used the PCs for training purposes. This suggests that the real barrier was in getting companies used to, and comfortable with, the idea of PC-based training. Indeed, two-thirds of those interviewed had Internet connection prior to becoming a Real learning centre, although this was generally modem-based.

SUMMARY

- The business-related elements of the Real project were delivered at a total cost to the public sector of £381,740 over a three-year period.
- Private sector cash contributions are estimated to be approximately £54,000, implying a private to public sector leverage ratio of 1:6.
- The project lacked a comprehensive business plan, being implemented on the basis of annual approval papers, which lacked any long-term strategy.
- The logistical and administrative efforts required to deliver the project were underestimated.
- WEA's role in the project was very different from that envisaged at the outset and they were limited in their ability to deliver training and learning support due to the time required to be spent on administrative and logistical aspects.
- The partners charged with developing on-line learning materials took much longer to deliver than expected, whilst BT was unable to deliver on its commitment to install 100 ADSL lines free of charge.
- Despite a number of hitches in the inception phase, the participating companies did not seem disillusioned with the project and feedback has been generally positive.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- If continued, the project needs a comprehensive business plan over a 3-5 year timeframe.
- This must clearly define the target market and set out a structured support framework to be offered to existing Real learning centres.
- The business plan must also define targets, a monitoring and evaluation framework and an exit strategy.
- In designing future projects, SE Glasgow must learn from the experience of the Real team, particularly in terms of devoting sufficient time and resources to administration and logistical aspects of delivery.

4 MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

- 4.1 The research phase of the study included a survey of Real learning centre contacts within Real in a Box companies and management within Real for Business companies. Within the Real in a Box companies, the centres contacts were usually at management level and, in very small companies, were often the owner manager. Again, in smaller companies, the learning centre contact was often also the Real Learning Champion. This section draws out some of the key issues emerging from this survey. A fuller description of the survey findings can be found in Appendices A and B.

ASPIRATIONS

- 4.2 Companies were asked about what they had hoped to achieve by becoming a Real learning centre. The most common response was a desire to improve the skills of the workforce and, on closer examination, this generally related to IT skills in particular. Companies were also seeking assistance with the costs of both hardware and software associated with training.
- 4.3 The majority of companies felt that their expectations had been met or exceeded. Where expectations had not been met, this was usually due to the companies' own failure to commit adequate time to developing the resource. Attitudes to Real were generally positive and the impression was that the learning centre contacts viewed it as a valuable initiative with considerable potential. They accepted that their own failure to devote sufficient time to using the resources meant that the full potential of the Real learning centre had not been realised.

KEY FEATURES

- 4.4 For most companies, the most useful and beneficial aspect of becoming a Real learning centre was the provision of software and a PC. On the other hand, linkages with other participating companies and external events (such as Learning Cafés) were not seen to be particularly useful or beneficial.
- 4.5 It is interesting to note some differences in the responses of SMEs as distinct from those of the larger Real for Business companies. The latter had a much more positive view of the Learning Café events and were keen to establish linkages with other companies. This highlights the different needs of SMEs as compared with larger companies and the differences in what they hoped to achieve through becoming Real learning centres.

LEVEL OF TRAINING

- 4.6 Around two-thirds of the companies interviewed felt that the level of training in the company had increased since they had become a Real learning centre. The overriding constraint to further uptake of training was time, which was mentioned as a constraint by around three-quarters of all companies.
- 4.7 Prior to involvement in Real, the main types of training activity undertaken were external or in-house courses or on-the-job training. Only a very few companies used self-taught training. This suggests that Real offered an opportunity to engage in a new form of learning activity.
- 4.8 The larger companies in particular saw the Real resources as complementing rather than replacing existing training activity. For some of the smaller companies, Real had replaced other forms of training, as employees could undertake training at the workplace, rather than being sent on external courses. Clearly, in terms of the time commitment required, this is preferable from the manager's point of view, particularly with regard to the repeated comments on the lack of time available for training.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- 4.9 Companies were reluctant to directly attribute any changes in business performance to their involvement in Real. Around a quarter did feel there had been some positive impact, although details were not provided. Similarly, they did not feel able to directly link any changes in staff retention to the Real project. This is not surprising, given the fairly limited extent of involvement to date.
- 4.10 A few general comments, both positive and negative are given below:
- *Access to the opportunity has provoked interest amongst staff. It is a great idea and the company are glad of their involvement.*
 - *[For those who have used it well], it is as if there has been a light switched on inside them, and there is no doubt that managers have seen talents in people that they had no idea were there.*
 - *It will make a difference in the future. The girls who installed the PC and came to discuss it were very helpful.*
 - *Real learning is good value for money, allows experimentation and learning in confidence at the right pace. Colleagues can support learners rather than external training courses which are pressurised and learners do not have the same opportunity to make mistakes and learn at their own pace.*

- *Poorly delivered, though a great idea. It is aimed at suits and ties, but not delivered at the right level, too basic and badly marketed.*
- *Small businesses can't afford to let staff have time off to train. Good project in general, but Real should have more involvement after initial set-up, e.g. provide their own external Learning Champions.*

SUMMARY

- Participating companies were generally very positive about the initiative, although many felt they had failed to fully exploit the potential of Real due to time constraints.
- The aspirations of the Real in a Box companies differed from those of the Real for Business companies in a number of respects, in particular in relation to the perceived usefulness of external events and linkages.
- The provision of a dedicated PC with accompanying software was a key attraction of the project and was highly valued by participating companies.
- Participation in Real has had a positive impact on the level of training.
- The Real project has provided support to a wide range of companies, both in terms of the sectors of activity and the size of organisation, with no clearly defined client group sharing common characteristics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- A single product cannot cater to the needs of such a diverse client group; a target market must be defined which has clear characteristics and products and services must then be designed to cater to their needs.
- The key challenge continues to lie in overcoming the time constraint, which acts both as an actual and perceived barrier to training.

5 LEARNING CHAMPIONS

CONCEPT

- 5.1 The concept of a Learning Champion (LC) was developed early in the project's life (in the first 3-4 months) when it became evident that there would need to be a key individual (or individuals) within the company (not necessarily at management level), who would be charged with generating and maintaining enthusiasm for the Real concept.
- 5.2 The role envisaged for the LC included:
- Identifying and recruiting learners (at least 10 in each company, where feasible);
 - Receiving and disseminating information on learning materials available;
 - Monitoring usage of the Real learning centre; and
 - Providing support and advice for learners.

IDENTIFICATION AND TRAINING

- 5.3 The survey of LCs indicated that the individuals had generally been selected by management, rather than having volunteered themselves for this role. In some cases, the individual was already involved in the company's training and/or IT strategy but in many cases, there does not seem to have been any particular attempt to identify an individual with appropriate characteristics for the role. That being said, the small size of the companies concerned often meant that it was not possible to be too selective over the appointment of a LC.
- 5.4 In theory, all LCs should have been offered a half-day training session to prepare them for the role. In practice, only half of the LCs who responded to the survey said that they had been offered such training. Most of those invited to training had attended, and most found it to be sufficient by way of an introduction to their role. However, this leaves a potentially larger number never having been offered training, or not recalling being invited. Given the importance attached to the role, a thorough induction session is critical.

THE ROLE IN PRACTICE

- 5.5 In responding to the survey, LCs seemed to perceive their role to be as described above, with encouraging registration, active participation and assisting with training delivery seen to be the most important features of the role.

- 5.6 However, in practice, LCs found that they were primarily asked to provide general information on Real and to provide technical support to learners. This latter point possibly reflects the fact that LCs seemed to have a higher level of IT competency than learners in general. The nature of contact appears to be largely informal and infrequent.
- 5.7 Evidence from the survey of learners suggests that LCs are having a very limited impact within their companies. Of the learners responding to the survey, only 50% even knew who their LC was and only 1 in 8 said that the LC had encouraged them to register. This suggests that the LCs typically have a very low profile within their companies.
- 5.8 Of those learners who were aware of their LC, most saw the role as being to encourage participation and registration and monitor usage i.e. more in line with the perceived role. Despite the limited level of contact, those who had had dealings with their LC generally rated the support received as good or excellent. Their comments agreed with those of the LCs in that the contact was usually informal in nature. A quarter stated that the level of contact was too infrequent.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- 5.9 Two-thirds of LCs surveyed knew whom to contact for support in relation to Real, although for some this was a contact within SE Glasgow and for others, this was a WEA contact. It is also the case that some individuals were not entirely sure to which organisation the contact belonged.
- 5.10 Of those who had received support, the vast majority rated it very highly while the majority felt that the frequency of contact was about right.

KNOWLEDGE OF Real MATERIALS

- 5.11 Despite their role in disseminating information about Real, LCs generally did not appear to be well informed themselves about the material and courses available through Real. Of particular concern, given the emphasis on on-line learning, was the lack of awareness of the Real web-site www.intoreal.com. Of the LCs responding to the survey (who are likely to be the better informed), 39% claimed to be familiar with the content of the web-site. About a quarter were totally unaware of www.intoreal.com, whilst others were aware, but did not have the time or sufficient interest to familiarise themselves with the content.
- 5.12 This lack of familiarity with the resources available through Real is a concern, given that the LCs are supposed to be the 'evangelists' for the project. Awareness amongst the learners is likely to be poorer still. The lack of awareness may reflect a number of factors, including:

- Low priority given to LC role, both by management and by the individual concerned (around two-thirds of LCs spent fewer than 5 days per year fulfilling their role);
- Lack of time devoted to developing awareness and knowledge (which may reflect prioritisation or sheer pressure of other duties); and
- Method of information dissemination from SE Glasgow/WEA, which has been largely written/electronic, as opposed to face-to-face.

LEARNING CAFÉ EVENTS

- 5.13 A number of Learning Café events were run by an external training organisation. LCs were invited to attend these events, which lasted a maximum of two hours. Around two-thirds of LCs responding to the survey stated that they had been invited to attend, and around half of these had done so.
- 5.14 Of those who attended from SMEs, most found the events to be of limited relevance to fulfilling their role. There were also some criticisms from management within the SMEs who felt that the events had not been relevant to their company's needs. It appears that there was some misunderstanding over the exact purpose of the Learning Café events. SE Glasgow promoted the events as fun and informal workshops but the participants (and their managers) generally seemed to be expecting training directly related to the Real learning centre. Learning centre contacts in SMEs rated external events as one of the least useful/beneficial aspects of the programme.
- 5.15 By contrast, the larger Real for Business companies generally seemed more positive in relation to the Learning Café events. This seems to suggest that the needs of the Real in a Box companies are quite different from those of the larger Real for Business companies. The latter are willing and open to participation in more alternative forms of training, whilst the former are looking for more fundamental training requirements to be met e.g. basic IT skills. It seems that SMEs are not necessarily averse to the concept of external events *per se*, but would prefer such sessions to be directly related to Real. One respondent even suggested that quarterly sessions for LCs would help in bringing them up to speed and keeping them informed.

SUMMARY

- The LC role is valid and important, but is not being carried out effectively at present.
- Training has been patchy: not all LCs claim to have been offered training and there has been less than full participation from those offered training.
- The role does not appear to be seen as a priority by those involved, with limited time devoted to fulfilment of LC duties and generally poor awareness of the resources available.
- The Learning Café events had a mixed response, with some participants and management from SMEs critical of their lack of focus on the Real project.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- The LC role should be retained and developed, with **all** LCs participating in an induction course to Real.
- There should be greater reliance on face-to-face contact for information dissemination and support, both between LCs and Real learners and between LCs and the external support team.
- In addition to regular face-to-face contact with SE Glasgow (or Real partners), LCs must be able to access support as and when required to help them in fulfilling their role.
- External training and learning events need to be directly related to the Real initiative, at least until all LCs are familiar with and committed to the project.
- The requirements of larger businesses are very different from those of SMEs and a generic product is not suitable; products need to be more tailored to company needs.

6 Real LEARNERS

BARRIERS TO LEARNING

6.1 When asked to state what barriers they faced to training and learning, learners stated time, cost and access to facilities to be the main barriers. In the context of Real, this is encouraging in that cost is not an issue for many of the learning opportunities and access is facilitated. Time remains a key concern, however, and continues to be a major constraint, both from the management's point of view and the Real learner's.

6.2 Comments from learners in relation to time constraints included:

- *Since registering as a Real learner I haven't used it once. I find that due to my job I have no time to use it. Break times are short enough and during these I have other things to do. After work I have family commitments.*
- *The facilities are excellent. Wide range of courses available – not necessarily work related. The problem is devoting time to use the facilities in work.*
- *Real is a good idea in principle and the learning centre PC is useful – it is a pity though that workloads tend to determine when I get to make use of them and not.*
- *Due to lack of support/time at work, I intend to pursue Real learning at my local library.*

INVOLVEMENT WITH Real

6.3 Of those learners who responded to the survey, a third had yet to make any use of the Real facilities. Indeed, in view of the very low overall response rate to the survey (see Appendix D), the actual proportion who have used the Real facilities may be lower still, given that those who have used the facilities were probably more likely to have responded. Registered learners may have felt unable to answer a questionnaire about a resource they have never used. Of those respondents who had accessed Real, the average time spent per month was 4.5 hours.

6.4 Interestingly, 42% of those who had used the resources had used them for personal interest. This is encouraging in that the aim of Real was to generate interest in learning as a concept, rather than purely as a business-related issue. The extent to which learning was driven by personal interest is significant. The interviews with management did not specifically address this issue, so it is not possible to say whether management are supportive of this approach.

IT SKILLS

- 6.5 Around a third of learners saw the main purpose of Real as being to improve IT skills. Indeed, involvement with the Real project had a positive impact on IT skills, with a marked shift in self-reported skill and confidence levels. Learners were asked to state how confident they felt in using IT both before becoming a Real learner and since. The proportion stating that they felt very confident in using IT rose from less than a third prior to involvement in Real to 45% since registering with Real.
- 6.6 In addition, the numbers who had never used a PC or who did not feel at all confident fell markedly. Prior to involvement with Real, 11% of respondents had never used a PC; at the time of the survey, only 2% were in this position. Similarly, prior to involvement in Real, 9% of respondents said they were not at all confident with using a PC; this proportion had fallen to 4% by the time of the survey.
- 6.7 A number of positive comments were made in survey responses in relation to IT skills, for example:
- *I had never used a PC before and Real taught me all the things I know now to be able to do my job.*
 - *One member of staff who was unable to use the PC correctly last year is now fully literate in loading and operating new software packages which has greatly assisted our business.*
 - *[Real] has been very helpful to me in getting over the initial lack of confidence in using computers. The materials have been useful and easy to follow.*
 - *One learner who lacked basic literacy skills has managed to get through the basic food hygiene course by himself and is known to have found this achievement to be very rewarding.*
 - *A secretary/office manager who joined a small surveying practice from a retail had only very limited IT experience. She has now worked through all the MS Office CD-ROMs and basic IT skills courses and is looking to undertake MS Office tutorials at Advanced level, as well as to study material on digital media packages.*
 - *One member of staff has used Real in their own time, and is now able to produce rotas and other work related reports on the PC – she has also been promoted.*

SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

- 6.8 As discussed in the previous section, awareness of and contact with LCs was generally very low. This is a concern, given that these individuals are meant to be the primary source of information and support in relation to Real.

- 6.9 With the low level of usage reported, there is clearly a role for greater support and encouragement for using the resources. This may be a combination of overcoming lack of confidence and encouraging prioritisation of time for learning. The latter issue will also need commitment from the management within the company.

LEARNING MATERIALS

- 6.10 Of those who had used the Real resources, the most commonly used were the CD-ROMs. Several respondents had also used the learning bite materials (28% of those who had used the resources), but relatively few had undertaken courses aimed at gaining qualifications (17% of those who had used the resources).
- 6.11 The low uptake of courses with accreditation is not a concern in terms of assessing the success of the programme, as Real aimed to engage individuals in learning as a concept not purely as a means of gaining qualifications. In this respect, it is also encouraging to see that a good proportion of those using the Real resource were doing so out of personal interest, rather than solely for business-related reasons.
- 6.12 The vast majority of learners who had used Real materials felt that they were pitched at the right level, with only a few feeling that they were too basic.

WIDER INTEREST IN LEARNING

- 6.13 The majority of the learners (80%) were aware that Real resources are available through the Glasgow City Council community libraries and a fifth had made use of these facilities. One learning centre contact spoke of a kitchen porter who now goes to the library at the college in his spare time – due to Real, he is accessing learning opportunities that he probably would not otherwise have accessed.
- 6.14 Of those learners who responded to the survey, around two-fifths have since gone on to further study elsewhere and a further 30% had plans to undertake a course in the future. The Real initiative appears to have had some success in encouraging people into taking up training and learning opportunities in a wider setting. One learner commented: *“I am grateful to Real for the confidence to use computers and to go on to college to further my knowledge and skills.”*

SUMMARY

- One of the key barriers to training and learning activities continues to be time.
- Many registered learners have yet to make any use of the Real resources, which seems to reflect a combination of lack of time, but also limited awareness of what is available.
- Learners are not making use of the LC in their company to access information on or get assistance with the Real resource – in many cases, they do not even know who this is.
- Real appeared to have had a positive impact on IT skills, with learners reporting increased confidence in using IT.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- The fundamental barrier of time constraints needs to be overcome if usage of Real is to increase.
- This might best be achieved by encouraging management to allow staff to dedicate a slot of time within working hours each week, or even each month, to training – the nature of the materials means that this need only be a half hour or hour long slot.
- Awareness of the materials available needs to be improved, so that learners can overcome any fears, apprehensions or concerns over the relevance of the materials.
- As described in the previous section, the role of the LC needs to be developed and enhanced, so that learners are able to access the support they need within the workplace.

7 EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- 7.1 Both Real learners and LCs seem to have suffered from a lack of external support once registered. The administrative and technical challenges faced at the outset of the project meant that there were limited time and resources available for follow-up activity with registered users and designated LCs. Indeed, many LCs report not having received any induction training for their role (although some turned down the opportunity for training). In this respect, it is unsurprising that the LCs are not fulfilling their roles as intended and, in turn, that the learners are not receiving the support and encouragement they need in the workplace. As a result, uptake and involvement have been low to date.
- 7.2 There have been attempts to rectify this situation. WEA were asked to undertake a follow-up round of visits to all learning centres and Marion Paterson, an HR/Training expert was commissioned by SE Glasgow to undertake a series of visits to all Real in a Box learning centres in the summer and autumn of 2002. While these are useful activities, and will no doubt have served to heighten awareness and renew interest in the Real resources, they are still not the sort of structured external support that will be required if uptake is to improve significantly.
- 7.3 Part of the problem is that Real learning centre contacts, LCs and learners have been faced with a range of different external contacts over the duration of the project, with little continuity. Various individuals within SE Glasgow have made contact, as have WEA, Marion Paterson and, most recently, independent consultants. This has led to considerable confusion over the roles of each organisation and the purpose of the contact made. One learning centre contact commented on the preference for *'just one contact instead of many... very confusing.... need to speak to different people about different aspects of Real.'*
- 7.4 Real learning centre contacts had mixed views on the best means of communication. The number of visits from different individuals had led some to be reticent to suggest more face-to-face communication, and one commented that e-mail communication would be preferred. However, experiences with the e-mail questionnaire undertaken as part of this study (see Appendix D) and the low-level content awareness of the www.intoreal.com web-site content suggest that this may not be effective in many cases. Others did feel that increased face-to-face communication would be helpful and this would probably be more effective, at least until uptake and awareness increase to more acceptable levels. The key requirement is for structure, continuity and clarity in the role of the individual(s) responsible for maintaining this contact.
- 7.5 A further issue relates to the individual within the organisation with whom this contact should be initiated. At present, there are two possibilities – the Real learning centre contact or the LC (although in some cases, particularly in smaller companies, these will be the same individual). This may also be causing some confusion, with some communication being directed via the designated learning centre contact, and other contact being directed via the LC.

SUMMARY

- To date, there has been no clear structure to the external support and a variety of individuals have been involved in contacting learning centres for different elements of information and feedback.
- Contact has been somewhat ad-hoc in nature and the purpose has not always been clear.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- Future contact must have a clear purpose and each centre must have a designated contact person within SE Glasgow or a Real partner organisation.
- A structured programme of visits should be designed, with the aim of informing and developing LCs, encouraging existing learners and identifying new learners where relevant.
- In order to eliminate any potential confusion or duplication, it is recommended that all contact be with the LC. This will also help strengthen the role of the LC and maintain their involvement and commitment to the project, although there may also be certain occasions where contact with a more senior manager may be required.

8 LEARNING MATERIALS

AVAILABILITY

- 8.1 As discussed earlier in this report, the on-line materials that were meant to be central to the project were not available until the project was well underway. However, it has also been noted that this does not appear to have deterred companies or caused any disillusionment. It seems that the concept of PC-based learning was so new to many of the companies, that the exact medium of delivery was not a major issue.
- 8.2 Indeed, the CD-ROM materials seem to have been very popular, with many companies requesting more of this type of learning material, even once the on-line materials became available. This suggests that companies had become familiar with this medium and wanted to exploit it further, rather than wanting to get to grips with a new medium.

AWARENESS

- 8.3 The research undertaken during the course of this evaluation highlighted poor awareness both at the LC and the learner level of the range and type of materials available. This is an issue for both the larger Real for Business companies and the Real in a Box participants. For example, Marriott Hotels were unaware that they could access the Food Hygiene Certificate Course via www.intoreal.com and are currently sourcing this elsewhere. Similarly, a number of companies mentioned that they would like to have access to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) course via Real – a course that is already available on-line.
- 8.4 There is clearly potential that is not being realised due to lack of awareness and this is an issue that needs to be addressed. LCs will have received frequent communication about materials, but this is clearly not being disseminated and is often not even being taken on board by the LCs. The low awareness and usage of the Real web-site do not help in this respect.
- 8.5 Written or electronic communication may be appropriate in the future, once greater commitment and engagement have been secured. However, in the immediate future, face-to-face communication would be more appropriate. As part of the structured programme of visits, the external contact should meet with LCs and, if relevant, managers, to discuss training needs and identify where Real might be able to complement or supplement existing training activities. More general awareness-raising sessions with learners may also be appropriate until the LCs are fully engaged, although in future it should be the LC's responsibility to disseminate information to learners and raise awareness.

RANGE

- 8.6 Feedback on the range of Real learning materials available varied considerably. Clearly, awareness was low in many companies and so comments on the range of materials were not really appropriate. For those companies that had a greater familiarity with the range of materials, comments differed, often according to the size of the company. The Real for Business companies generally had a better (although not perfect) awareness of the materials available and tended to have used them more extensively. These companies often felt restricted by the range of materials available and felt that this was limiting their usage of the Real resource as staff had exhausted the potential of the existing materials. By contrast, many of the smaller Real in a Box companies were happy with the range of materials available and felt that they had yet to exploit their full potential.
- 8.7 As part of the survey, Real learning centre contacts and LCs were asked to provide details of any particular courses or training materials that they would like to access through Real. In view of the diversity of companies involved in the project, it is not surprising that the comments were similarly varied. Some mentioned generic types of training and learning that they would like to access, including:
- Courses geared towards small businesses;
 - Customer care courses;
 - Language course software;
 - Web design courses;
 - Desktop publishing;
 - Internet use;
 - Training related to counselling; and
 - Navigation, spreadsheets & tables, creating official work related documents.
- 8.8 Some also mentioned specific products that they would like to access, including:
- Sage Accounts;
 - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development products;
 - Dreamweaver;
 - Autocad; and
 - Illustrator.

QUALITY

- 8.9 In general, companies seemed reasonably content with the quality of the materials available, although obviously some had limited familiarity with the materials.
- 8.10 The main criticisms related to the interactivity of some of the materials, with some commenting that the materials did not fully exploit the potential offered by on-line learning. It was felt that the materials were often too text-based and did not fully engage the learner.
- 8.11 One respondent also commented on the potential value of “just-in-time” learning, whereby the learner might spend 15 minutes learning a specific task which can be immediately put into practice, so that the learning is directly related to need and is of immediate relevance and applicability.

LEVEL

- 8.12 Interestingly, the comments on the level of the materials varied according to the source of comments. Company contacts – often more senior or management level staff – felt that more advanced materials were required. This was particularly the case for the Real for Business companies who had generally made more extensive use of the materials available. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of the learners who responded to the questionnaire felt that the materials were pitched at the right level. This may reflect a difference between the perceptions of management and the reality of what is required by learners. This underlines the importance of assessing training needs at all levels within an organisation, not simply by talking to management.

SUMMARY

- There is clearly demand amongst some companies for an expanded range of materials, whilst for other companies there is a more basic requirement to improve awareness of existing materials.
- The level at which materials are pitched seems to be considered appropriate by the learners, although management often feel the need for more advanced materials.
- Some have commented on the limited interactivity of the materials available.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- The problems that were encountered in developing bespoke materials for Real suggest that it would be more appropriate to use existing materials, selecting from the extensive range of on-line materials already available, rather than developing new materials.
- Training needs must be carefully assessed in order to identify appropriate materials, both from the perspective of management, who will understandably be seeking a business need, as well as Real learners, who may have personal learning interests, such as language courses.
- In identifying new materials, there must be a comprehensive quality assurance system to ensure that materials are of a high standard.

9 USAGE OF Real LEARNING CENTRES

LEARNER REGISTRATION

9.1 Tables 9.1 and 9.2 present information on the level of registration within participant companies and the level of usage, in Real in a Box companies and Real for Business companies respectively.

Table 9.1 Registration and Usage in Real in a Box Learning Centres							
Company Size	Number of companies	Total employment	Registered Learners		Active Learners		
			Number	% of staff	Number	% of staff	% of registered learners
0-5	39	167	97	58%	44	26%	45%
6-10	27	189	125	66%	77	41%	62%
11-25	24	391	187	48%	101	26%	54%
26-50	10	393	134	34%	46	12%	34%
51-100	10	525	191	36%	34	6%	18%
101-150	3	320	24	8%	9	3%	38%
151-200	1	170	9	5%	0	0%	0%
Total	112	2,155	767	36%	311	14%	40%

All data are based on information gathered by Marion Paterson, summer 2002

Table 9.2 Registration and Usage in Real for Business Learning Centres						
Company	Total employment in Glasgow	Registered Learners		Active Learners		
		Number	% of staff	Number	% of staff	% of registered learners
Tennent Caledonian Breweries	400	145	36%	30-40	8-10%	21-28%
McVities	900	51	6%	100	11%	196%
Kyndal Spirits	80	1	1%	1	1%	100%
Glasgow Marriott	400	32	8%	50	12%	156%
Total	1,780	229	13%	181-191	10-11%	79-83%

% may exceed 100 where non-registered users make use of the Real learning centre

- 9.2 The figures in Table 9.1 are based on the results reported by Marion Paterson, following a series of visits to companies undertaken in summer 2002. They show that, overall, around a third of employees in Real in a Box companies are registered as Real learners. However, the level of penetration is considerably higher in smaller companies, with around two-thirds of employees registered as learners in companies with 6-10 employees.
- 9.3 Of those registered, a much smaller number are deemed to be regular users. Overall, only 14% of staff are classed as such, although again, the proportions are higher for smaller companies. The active learners represent a half to two-thirds of all registered learners in smaller companies but, again, account for a smaller proportion of registered learners in larger companies. Thus, both the penetration and the activity levels are higher for smaller companies.
- 9.4 The higher level of penetration in smaller companies will, to some extent, reflect the formal commitment on the part of SMEs to register 10 learners (where staff levels exceed 10). Clearly, this will represent a higher proportion of staff in smaller companies. However, the activity levels suggest that this is not the only explanation and the data suggest that learners in the smaller companies have been more enthusiastic and have more fully engaged with the concept of Real.
- 9.5 For the larger, Real for Business companies, information was provided by management. These data are possibly misleading in that, in both Glasgow Marriott and McVities, large numbers of staff who are not formally registered as Real learners regularly make use of the resources.

LEVEL OF USAGE

- 9.6 Data collected by Marion Paterson during the course of her visits indicated that, in Real in a Box companies, learners typically used the Real learning centre for between half an hour and an hour at a time.
- 9.7 Some information on levels of participation was also collected from the surveys although, as previously identified, the response rates were low and so the results may not reflect the true picture. Just under two-thirds of LCs reported that the Real in a Box learning centre was used at least once per month, with most of the remainder stating participation of at least once per week. Active learners reported that they spend 4.5 hours per month, on average, which would roughly equate to an hour per week. However, such regular users probably represent a small proportion of all those Real registered learners. The Real for Business companies reported similar levels of usage, with main users reporting that they spend about an hour per week.

- 9.8 The Real for Business companies felt the impact of the loss of Individual Learning Accounts had had a negative impact on levels of usage, which might have been higher had this scheme remained in place.

FUTURE USAGE

- 9.9 The LCs and company contacts were generally positive in relation to future up-take and the majority felt that usage would increase, or at least stay at the same level. This is a reflection of the fact that most felt the resource was under-used at present. As stated earlier, the key constraint to future participation was time, although some also commented that the range of materials available could also influence future up-take.

SUMMARY

- Registered Real learners represent a relatively small proportion of total staff in most companies.
- Take-up of Real learning opportunities is very patchy – the most regular users tend to utilise the centre for around an hour a week, but these represent a small proportion of all registered users, many of whom hardly ever use the centre.
- Time and the range of materials are the key constraints to any future increase in usage, although most companies felt that some increase would be achieved.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- The range of materials needs to be given careful consideration and expanded to meet demands and expectations.
- Registration is no indication of active participation and there is great potential to increase uptake from the existing Real learner base.
- There is also a large untapped potential source of learners in existing companies i.e. the learner base could be expanded considerably without recruiting additional companies.

10 ADDITIONALITY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

ADDITIONALITY

- 10.1 In evaluating the project, additionality was assessed from two perspectives: the provision of the workstation and the level of training/learning.

Provision of Workstation

- 10.2 The workstation provided within the Real in a Box package included a PC (with associated software), desk, chair, mousemat and items of stationery. When asked to rate the most useful aspects of Real, two-thirds of learning centre contacts stated that the provision of software and a PC were the most useful elements of the programme.
- 10.3 This finding was despite the fact that the vast majority of companies (85% of those surveyed) already had at least one PC prior to becoming a Real learning centre. The issue seemed to be that the existing PCs were rarely used for training and learning activities and the availability of a dedicated PC for such purposes was highly valued. Indeed, three quarters of learning centre contacts indicated that the business would not have become a Real learning centre if the PC had not been provided.
- 10.4 These findings indicate that the provision of a PC was critical in securing the involvement of the companies. Although they generally already had PCs, they were not willing or able to use these for training and learning purposes. Therefore, without provision of the PC, it is unlikely that the training/learning activities would have been undertaken. Some companies were fearful of allowing staff who were not IT-proficient to use existing PCs in case they caused any damage; in other cases the management did not want to encourage non-business related activities at the workstation (particularly Internet usage).
- 10.5 In conclusion, it appears that the provision of a PC did represent an additional resource, in the sense that it allowed new learning activities to be undertaken. Furthermore, evidence suggests that around half of the Real PCs continue to be used exclusively for training and learning activities, rather than simply being seen as an additional workstation for more general business use.

Level of Training/Learning Activity

- 10.6 Both Real learners and learning centre contacts were asked about the training and learning activities that had been undertaken since becoming a Real learning centre and the responses were quite different.

- 10.7 Almost three-quarters of the learners who responded to the questionnaire felt that they would have accessed the same training/learning activities elsewhere, either within or outwith working hours, if they had not had access to a Real learning centre. By contrast, two-thirds of the managers, or learning centre contacts generally felt that the learning opportunities would not have been accessed if the company had not become a Real learning centre. Generally, this was because they did not feel they would have found the time to send staff on external training courses, combined with a lack of access to PCs for in-house training.
- 10.8 The views of learners, although valid, represent the responses of a small proportion of registered Real learners and they are likely to be the more enthusiastic of this group. As such, it is possible that their responses are not representative of the wider group of learners. The non-respondents are liable to be less enthusiastic about learning generally, and therefore are less likely to have pursued learning opportunities elsewhere. As such, the low reported additionality amongst the respondents may not reflect the true picture. The responses of the managers or learning centre contacts, suggesting higher additionality, may be the more valid answer.

VALUE FOR MONEY

- 10.9 Ability and/or willingness to pay does not appear to have been a barrier to uptake, even for the smallest of companies. The contribution of £249 (initially) or £399 (in the later stages of the programme) for SMEs seems to have been seen to represent good value and was clearly affordable. At the outset, the aim was to work towards a self-financing programme and the findings of this evaluation would certainly suggest that a higher level of income could be generated. Similarly, the larger businesses do not seem to report any issues in relation to the contribution they were required to make. Virtually all companies interviewed considered the initiative to represent good value for money for themselves and three-quarters considered the initiative to represent good value for the taxpayer.
- 10.10 Comments from those who did not consider that the initiative represented good value for money for the taxpayer included:
- *All the equipment is currently sitting unused.*
 - *Literature has a scattergun approach – lot of resources, but reaching where it should? Too much at wrong businesses.*
 - *The amount of money spent on PCs and all the materials does not seem to me to have been used efficiently – lots of staff have never used it and it is all expensively produced.*
 - *Too much effort is spent on administration and not enough on materials, but Real has potential to do much more.*

- 10.11 The net public sector cash commitment of £344,044 (see paragraph 3.4) represents an investment of around £2,700 per learning centre and around £375 per registered learner/Learning Champion.³ However, as the research would suggest that only around two-fifths of all registered learners are active users, the cost per *active* learner would be somewhat higher, at around £940.
- 10.12 It is worth noting, however, that these figures comprise the initial start-up costs; on-going costs would be considerably lower. As such, if the number of registered Real learners within existing participant companies can be increased and, within this group, frequency of usage increased, then average costs per learner would fall considerably.
- 10.13 In terms of comparative data against which to benchmark these costs, a suitable indicator is the 'weighted sum' (WSUM) figure used by the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) when allocating resources to colleges in Scotland. In 2002/03, SFEFC set the WSUM at £157.81. This figure is the amount allocated to a college for a specified level of activity, namely 40 teaching hours.
- 10.14 In the case of Real, the findings suggest that, for active learners, usage has typically been of the order of 4-5 hours per month or around 50-60 hours over the course of a year. To deliver this level of training, a college would expect to receive in the order of £225 per year. Over the course of three years, each Real learner/Learning Champion has incurred a net public sector cost of £375, or £125 per year. When the analysis is restricted to active learners, the equivalent figures are £940 over three years or around £310 per year, rather higher than the WSUM figure.
- 10.15 However, the WSUM allocation from SFEFC is purely for on-going teaching costs. Other costs, such as infrastructure, ICT and strategic development costs are dealt with separately. In the case of Real, much of the expenditure incurred so far relates to infrastructure and start-up costs; it would be anticipated that the on-going costs of delivery to existing learning centres would be considerably lower. In addition, it would be hoped that any future costs would be spread over a larger number of active learners as uptake improves. This being the case, value for money should improve considerably from current levels. When these factors are taken into account, the costs per learner seem reasonable in relation to the WSUM figure.

³ Based on net public sector costs of £344,044 and a total of 915 learners/Learning Champions in 125 learning centres

SUMMARY

- The provision of PCs and supporting software represented good use of public sector funds in that, without these aspects, the involvement of the companies would have been difficult to secure and the facilities needed in order to undertake training and learning activities would not have been available.
- Much of the training activity undertaken is unlikely to have taken place if the companies had not participated in Real, and participation in Real has encouraged some learners to undertake further learning opportunities elsewhere.
- The programme is felt to represent good value for money by participants and, at £2,700 per centre and £375 per registered learner, the costs are reasonable relative to the costs of delivering training across the Scottish College network.
- Further value for money can be achieved by increasing involvement and uptake in existing Real participating companies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

- In order to build on the results achieved to date, the most effective use of resources would be to concentrate on increasing usage of existing Real centres, rather than seeking to develop new centres.
- There is considerable untapped potential within existing Real participant companies, in terms of both registered learners who have not used the facilities and non-registered learners within participating companies.
- It may be appropriate to seek a greater financial contribution from companies, as there do not appear to have been any problems with regard to willingness or ability to pay. A graduated charging structure is recommended, with charges increasing according to the size of the business.

11 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The over-riding message emerging from the research undertaken is that Real represents an excellent concept, with valid and commendable aims and objectives. Some problems and difficulties were encountered in the inception phase, which meant that delivery was not initially as effective as anticipated, but these problems are now in the past and a number of developments are currently underway to enhance future delivery and access (see Appendix E).
- 11.2 For the future, Real has developed a wide base of companies keen to engage in workplace-based learning activities. They have the potential to expand their usage of the resource considerably, but have yet to engage fully and thereby realise the full potential of Real. A range of positive feedback was provided by companies, although this was sometimes accompanied by criticisms of certain aspects. Comments include:
- *Real learning is good value for money, allows experimentation and learning in confidence at the right pace. Colleagues can support learners rather than external training courses which are pressurised and learners do not have the same opportunity to make mistakes and learn at their own pace.*
 - *Access to the opportunity has provoked interest amongst staff. It is a great idea and the company are glad of their involvement.*
 - *A brilliant idea, pity it wasn't sold well enough – wrong level.*
 - *It will make a difference in the future. The girls who installed the PC and came to discuss it were very helpful.*
 - *Our staff like how it is set-up. It is less intimidating than other forms of training.*
 - *Poorly delivered, though a great idea. It is aimed at suits and ties, but not delivered at the right level, too basic and badly marketed.*
 - *Need more courses, both in new subjects, at all levels, and in existing subject areas at a higher level to broaden the range of opportunities for learners and to stimulate interest.*
 - *Real need to co-ordinate a database of requests for materials and when a threshold is reached commission training materials, even at a small cost, or at the very least keep us informed as to when/if they will run. They have come up with good ideas for courses (e.g. digital media) which have not been followed through and we have not been told why.*
 - *Small businesses can't afford to let staff have time off to train. Good project in general, but Real should have more involvement after initial set-up, e.g. provide their own external Learning Champions.*

- 11.3 These comments demonstrate a strong body of support for the programme and the criticisms identify the key priorities for action. Aside from the logistical and administrative aspects, which were more time-consuming and costly than had been anticipated, the key issues in terms of delivery related to the development of on-line materials and the level of support offered to the LCs – the key point of contact within the companies.

OPTIONS

- 11.4 There are essentially three options to be considered:
- (1) Cease the programme and provide no further funding;
 - (2) Continue the programme, with project management provided by SE Glasgow; or
 - (3) Continue the programme through a formal joint venture (JV) with external support provided by a public or private sector partner or partners.
- 11.5 The validity of the programme's core aims and objectives and the potential for considerable expansion in uptake of learning opportunities within existing learning centres would support continuation of the programme i.e. options (2) or (3).
- 11.6 Should a JV be considered, it is envisaged that this might involve a formal and contractual relationship between one or more partners on a 3-5 year rolling programme of investment and trading. Partners could contribute staff, resources and intellectual property and the JV operated as a trading company. The JV might also be established as a non-profit making trading company. Further work would be required to explore and test these options.
- 11.7 To cease the programme now would be to miss the opportunity to develop the latent potential within the existing participant companies. The main criticisms in relation to delivery essentially relate to the inception phase, which is now complete. With appropriate focus and amendments, it is considered that Real could play an important role in the future development and encouragement of learning in SMEs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.8 The key recommendations for future delivery have been identified in relation to specific subject areas within the report. These recommendations seek ways to use resources most effectively and build on the existing investment. The key priorities for action are summarised as follows:
- Future resources should be aimed at increasing uptake within existing learning centres, rather than seeking to develop further centres, at least in the short term. In this way, increased value for money will be achieved as Real resources are used more intensively and effectively.

- A clear business plan with identifiable targets must be developed. This document should cover a 3-5 year period and should identify the exit strategy i.e. the point at which public sector intervention should cease.
 - The target market(s) must be clearly identified and materials and support must be developed accordingly. At present, there is too broad a spread, with the result that the generic products are failing to meet specific demands. Greater focus is required.
 - Structured support – initially with a focus on face-to-face contact – must be offered to companies, to include interface with LCs primarily, but also with management and learners as appropriate.
 - The role of the LC must be developed, as these individuals will play a key role in future engagement and are the main point of contact within each company. They need to fully understand their role and be motivated and encouraged.
 - LCs should have an identified individual within SE Glasgow or a partner organisation that is available to provide support as and when required (both ad-hoc and structured).
 - SE Glasgow should generally signpost to appropriate materials, rather than fund the development of new materials – the sourcing and identification of appropriate materials would be a suitable role for a JV partner with relevant expertise.
 - All materials/applications should be assessed through an agreed QA system.
 - A monitoring and evaluation framework should be developed, seeking to collect information on uptake and usage and to identify future needs in terms of learning materials.
- 11.9 The first priority is to develop a comprehensive and coherent business plan identifying key activities and roles. If appropriate, this can then be used as the basis for developing a JV prospectus.
- 11.10 In summary, the Real Business Learning Centre project has not been without its problems. However, the concept and aims remain valid and commendable. There is an existing base of companies with Real learning centres that has enormous potential from which to develop. The challenge for the future lies in releasing this potential and fully exploiting the opportunities for expanding engagement in learning within Glasgow's SMEs.
- 11.11 With the recommendations outlined above, it is our view that the programme has potential for much wider impact within Glasgow, and for wider application across the SE Network, with Real providing the model for replication in other areas. The potential for expanding the coverage would need to be assessed through a detailed feasibility study.

Appendix A
Real for Business Consultations

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Background/ motivation	Main goal was to get employees back into "learning culture" – aimed to get as many people involved in learning from the shopfloor as possible.	Culture of adopting best practice across the group (60 hotels across the UK). Southampton Marriott had a similar concept in place and the Glasgow team built upon this and they had an existing PC as well with Internet access which was then used to help improve general PC skills, across the Hotel, for example regarding confidence in using billing and booking systems.	Encouragement of learning - change in company ethos towards a learning culture. Recognise link between competitiveness & skills. Staff have long service (typically 15-16 years) and the old workforce (relative) leads to a greater gap in knowledge of PCs and new skills.	Principal motivation was to allow workers to take charge of their own personal development and to encourage them to take a more structured approach.
Key objectives	Needed to 'upskill' shopfloor employees with respect to technology. Useful concept to be used in conjunction with individual learning account (ILA) vouchers (£150, with management prepared to meet other learning costs up to £200). A 'thank you' from management to employees for going through the change management process in business smoothly.	Improved performance of staff in use of systems for billing, bookings (restaurant and accommodation), etc. and accounts packages and to maximise the business benefits from the company's investment in IT.	Company has become increasingly capital intensive / modern equipment is more dependent upon IT skills - touch screen & general keyboard skills required to interact with the equipment. Many employees had long service and due to their age, very little exposure to PCs and IT in general was something alien to them and somewhat intimidating. Management could see this becoming an increasing problem as more sophisticated equipment is deployed and sought to use Real to address basic training in use of PCs - develop confidence, particularly among older workers.	In particular, older workers were seen as a target group, which arises from the low turnover of staff / high retention. Tennents also wanted to be seen to be doing something to participate in the community and therefore this was a good opportunity. Good retention rates and low turnover of staff, so morale wasn't a key motivation.
Matched expectations?	Met expectations – has been used to establish 3 further learning centres outside Glasgow using the brand. Loss of the individual learning account (ILA) vouchers has had significant dampening effect as employees have lost the spending power to choose which learning to become involved in within the centres.	Real has failed to meet expectations to date. It is difficult to sell to the staff as a learning concept, because it is really just technology at the moment, with a major constraint being the lack of training materials to use on the system.	Limited success and centre has been / will continue to be useful in delivery of skills in areas such as food hygiene. Great things promised and a good concept but have yet to manifest themselves in reality, so has fallen below expectations.	Good start marred by lack of new materials and this has had knock on effects – not able to support full-time LC / centre co-ordinator and loss of interest among a potential group of staff. However for those who have made use of it, there have been clear benefits and a noticeable improvement in attitude and outlook, which is positive. Communication needs to be improved and wider circulation to include LCs.

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Training activity?	2% of turnover is spent on training/learning each year, and most of the business training for shopfloor employees is on-the-job. Work-related training and learning is dictated by business needs, while personal learning was largely driven by the individual learning account voucher system.	Have undertaken SVQs for the last 5 or 6 years to Craft Level (II) and are now progressing Level III (supervisory) in association with University of Strathclyde for front of house, housekeeping, restaurant / bar and catering staff as well as some doing SVQs in administration for those in office functions such as Accounts.	In the past, the company has relied largely upon purely on-the-job training as skills were very much specific to a given task/role or piece of equipment. However, in recent years, the training has also become more generalist and focused upon behaviour rather than just upon skills. For example, they need to instil team working skills and problem solving skills, while for managers they are seeking to help them understand new techniques/skills such as team leadership and employee empowerment. Head Office dictates strategy on HR/Training.	Has always relied upon on-the-job training, although some is conducted on site by equipment manufacturers and other providers. PC-based training is new to the company. Have sent staff out on block release regularly to colleges and like flexibility / bespoke nature of private training providers.
Formal training requirement /training procedures?	No, but training plays an important role in the business.	A mixture of approaches is taken. The company as a whole is going for Investor in People (IIP) status, but this was already held by the Glasgow Marriott as an individual centre. New Deal to training for management are covered by this.	McVities is not an Investor in People yet, although this is still a long-term to medium-term objective. Have gone through the mock accreditation procedure - have many procedures in place already, although some gaps need to be filled (e.g. starter pack/ handbook).	None formally. Ad-hoc, as required by the individual for his/her role. Formal training /personal development procedures adopted through IIP while under previous ownership.

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Mode of delivery and role of Real in training portfolio?	80% of training is conducted internally using external consultants/trainers. Seven or eight companies are contracted to deliver this training.	<p>Management training through the company (Whitbread) virtual university (validated by Oxford Brookes University) covering MBAs for example. Other initiatives include the use of the Disney Learning Journey, HCMIA and Service Excellence Programme and Welcome HOST. They also use materials from the Ashridge Management College.</p> <p>Mostly on-the-job training, but often backed up by classroom based delivery, e.g. when discussing regulations. More senior staff are mostly trained in a classroom environment and typically external providers use this mode, for example Stephen Covey's management / leadership course. For example, the Service Excellence programme consists of a series of five individual 2.5-hour sessions, reaching a total of 17.5 hours. Real equipment provides Internet connection and access to electronic data and CD-ROM materials, e.g. time-management, managing conflict, think smarter, managing stress, balance sheets & motivation courses.</p>	<p>Real is a stand-alone element of the training strategy of the company. Most training is still delivered through traditional classroom-based tuition and while initially the company foresaw that Real might replace this, they are now convinced that the classroom will always be key. However, Real could work to supplement classroom-based training. Support is vital to make it work.</p> <p>Have sought materials from John Wheatley and Glasgow College of Food Technology in addition to using Real and a number of staff at any one time will be undertaking VQs. Have also a number of staff on production engineering courses through the Open University.</p>	<p>Used in alliance with on-the-job training and manufacturers also come in to train employees on equipment.</p> <p>It is basically another tool to use.</p> <p>Only one of five PCs is connected to the network to minimise potential threats to the network, but it is probably sufficient.</p>

Real for Business Consultations				
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Impact on level of training?	Real has been key in achieving the goal of 'bottom end' learning i.e. Personal needs learning versus business needs learning. Real has helped meet social learning rather than the learning that may be required for execution of the employee's job.	Have made use of individual learning accounts (ILAs) in the past and they are hopeful that a revised ILA programme would have an impact on activity, particularly if the initiation of training was employer-led or the subjects were more employer-focused. At present, the project has not led to a huge surge in training activity.	Obtained a food hygiene CD-ROM from Olga (WEA) which has been very useful and this will be used as part of training for new employees in future. Are working their way through the entire workforce to give them a basic grounding in food hygiene training and have had good feedback so far as to quality of the materials and relevance. Have put 300 through food hygiene course (using the equipment) as a means of attempting to eliminate problems that lead to customer complaints. However, in addition, some 100 or so (hard core users) use it regularly more than twice a week, while many more use it for casual uses. Others are just users when forced to do so (e.g. Food Hygiene), but some of these have subsequently been converted.	Initially there was a reasonable level of interest, particularly in PC skills but now they are reduced to approximately 25% or thereabouts of original figure (i.e. 30-40 of original 150 perhaps who have used it) which has been a bit disappointing. They need fresh materials to re-engage with this group. Main age group is probably 35-45 years of age. A couple of employees are using the centre to undertake degree courses. At least four others undertook other training using the Real systems, on the back of being awarded their ILAs, but since the loss of ILAs, the potential for wider uses has diminished.
How does management perceive training?	Training is seen as a key driver of success in the business by management. Human resources is a major player in the structure of the business with direct access to directors and the board at all times.	Company is very pro-training, with part of the franchise fee to Marriott being returned in the form of a training levy, so at the point of delivery, training courses are 'free', in that they have already been paid for, with many courses being provided in-house. If anything staff sometimes complain that there is too much training. Some staff are also taken on through the New Deal programme and hence they are undergoing some very basic training. Have undertaken SVQs for the last 5 or 6 years to Craft Level (II) and are now progressing Level III (supervisory) in association with Strathclyde University for front of house, housekeeping, restaurant / bar and catering staff as well as some doing SVQs in administration for those in office functions such as Accounts.	Company more dependent on technology than in the past - need to re-skill workforce in PC skills - use of touchscreen technology, etc. Will become an even bigger problem if not addressed. Enjoyment key to engagement of staff in training - Internet the hook and is a back-door way of getting people into it. However, guidance is probably still required, especially for those who have not used a PC at all before, as it can be fairly intimidating at first.	Very important – have been IIP until taken over by Interbrew and their status is in limbo at the moment and may be lost. Good attitude expressed about training and importance to business performance and individuals.

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Does management actively encourage Real?	Yes.	None, though would consider this perhaps.	When it was first developed, Olga and someone else came in 3 times to run awareness sessions with members, to tell them what it was all about, what it could do for them, etc. Real/WEA have come every 6 months to promote Real and there are plenty of leaflets lying around the centre to help promote it and Real branding used. Initially LC supplemented this and played a major role in promotion of the centre, but now diminished publicity due to loss of this post and little effort put into promotion, although staff are encouraged to use it.	Fair to say there is a lull in activity at present. They are hopeful of more materials from Real and Learndirect and will, if this is the case, relaunch the centre in January 2003.
Incentives for learners?	Not directly for Real, though training and learning for business needs is part of the employee's annual learning plan.	None. Self-motivation needed.	Staff members are not provided with incentives to study/train - on their own initiative (except for food hygiene which is mandatory and is allowed for within company time).	None. Self-motivated, as training is for personal development rather than for Tennents/Interbrew per se.
Incentives for LCs?	None.	None.	None now – formerly a paid post.	None.
How used and when?	Mainly after hours in informal time.	Usage is patchy. For days on end the centre can be quiet and then it will go through a phase of being very busy. It is mainly used at peak times – between shifts, i.e. approximately 3pm, before evening/night shift starts. It is very difficult to say for what purposes it is used – probably in the main for e-mail and web surfing, but languages for going on holidays are also popular. The company have tried to get help from Real regarding software to facilitate log-in by individual users, or a firewall to restrict Internet uses, but have had no help yet. It would be preferable to be able to staff the centre full-time, or at least for significant period each day, but this is too expensive a concept. Up to 100 may have used it of 200 permanent staff and up to 200 "casual" staff.	People use Real mainly in their own time, so not a major concern about access and the centre is open 24 hours a day (using swipe cards out of hours).	Yes – used as a drop-in centre effectively and LCs are used to support learners with hardware or software questions –see below. "Are staff free to use Real as and when they like?"

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Are staff free to use Real as and when they like?	The learning centres are utilised during the day for formal, business needs training and learning activities. However, Real material and access is restricted to after business hours use.	Yes, except for during shifts. Other than during those periods, the staff have access to the facilities for 24 hours of the day.	Staff would be encouraged to use it when the production lines are shut down / when the plant is less busy. The key is to ensure use during work hours is planned and not impromptu - so long as this is the case, cover can be arranged if necessary. For 3 or 4 months of the year it would be fine to use during work hours, with a further 2 months OK with planning, but remaining 6 months of the year (up to Christmas) would be impractical.	Mostly used in staff spare time although for work-related courses, these will be delivered during work hours, though materials not really appropriate at present so this is only in theory at present.
Role of LC(s)	Learning Champion is not just a person, but rather learning is championed across the intranet, and other informal means i.e. newsboards etc. Role of LC is mainly down to Mr Lewis' role as HR development manager. Rather than the LC taking on active role, it is more administrative in nature.	Do not have a LC at present, and Training Management have insufficient time to promote the project internally.	Initially, McVities had a full-time Real Learning Champion and Marianne (Munro) recorded user statistics, etc. and gave advice and support to learners. However, ultimately, the company could not justify the full-time post and this has been axed and this has had a detrimental effect on usage. This will continue to be the case until such time as the volume of relevant materials is improved. Resistant to having part-time LCs or using workers for this, as it would impinge on work activity.	Initially used a member of staff to man the centre for the first 3-4 months and because she was a trained sales person, she was very good at generating interest. However, they haven't the manpower to spare so are instead relying upon the 25 LCs who will man the centre on a rota basis for 1 day each. In addition learners will have a list of the 25 LCs to contact and while they have developed a manual for LCs, they were given nothing effectively by Real for this and had to develop it themselves. LCs also need more ammunition with which to entice learners into the centre and it would be great to have someone from Real along once a month to host a lunchtime session on what is new, etc.

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Additionality?	Yes.	Yes, but limited to provision of dedicated machines. Has not lead to substantial additional investment in training materials.	Yes, albeit were considering some of the costs anyway. However PCs and learning materials were additional.	Yes – 3 more PCs than would otherwise be available. People have misconceptions about big company training budgets – they have responsibilities to shareholders, which restricts use of funds, so Real was a major boon and allied to ILAs was working very well.
Materials /training appropriate?	The material is appropriate in so far as it is used for the personal learning needs of employees. But there is a lack of interactive learning material with respect to Real and, more generally, across e-learning products, i.e. "on-line" learning with real-time responses and prompting.	Breadth of materials is very limited. Some IT courses/ materials are good, but lack of materials is a problem, which is why the company are aiming to be listed as a Learndirect Scotland accredited centre, to access more materials (at a discount).	CD-ROM materials are generally good, but are extremely disappointed with offering via the web-site, which quite simply isn't what it was cracked up to be. Several courses of interest are not available via the web - have to be on the college's own system / have to pay for materials, which was not what the company thought would be the case. Meanwhile the free courses which are available (learning bites) are "not great from a business perspective". For some courses they have found that this couldn't be delivered through the web or through CD-ROMs but have had to attend the college, so unsure of potential of the medium. While web-site is up and running, is eye-catching and professional looking, there are obvious deficiencies in content of materials. Web-site tells you to contact the college and doesn't tell you the cost of the materials –frankly, they can get that from Learndirect or by just getting a copy of their local college prospectus.	Have a range of information and materials available in the centre not just Real. A range of CD-ROMs, other books and materials, including those from the institute of Brewing, materials for management development and for presentation skills, etc. There is a mix of those with a business and personal interest. Major problems with delivery of some materials though – technical restrictions of ISDN rather than broadband means they have to go to Stow, GCNS or GCBP for some courses that should be run via Real.

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	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Demand for new materials?	No details supplied.	<p>Would like to access ECDL and food hygiene for use via Real. Have had difficulty sourcing food hygiene CD-ROMs, which would be very well used, while the price of ECDL materials is high (if studied conventionally, as it can take a full day) and GCFT wish to charge an additional £100 as a fee. However, they have been told by SUfl that if their efforts to become a Learndirect Scotland centre are successful, they will have good discounts on ECDL materials / fees. They are disappointed that similar discounts can't be offered (by Learndirect and others) through Real.</p> <p>ECDL appeals as it is a recognised qualification, even if only one that is at a basic level, but this appeals to volume users. Food hygiene qualifications are also ones that have mass appeal (as exemplified by the problems at the Glasgow Victoria Infirmary).</p>	<p>Demand from staff for courses such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ childcare/nursery nursing; ➤ beauty therapy; ➤ languages (basic for use on holidays etc.); ➤ getting to grips with basics of, say, Word or Excel; ➤ ECDL; ➤ desktop publishing; and ➤ call centre skills. <p>Employee / and Employer demand for core skills materials - improve literacy or numeracy in privacy. Introduction to the Internet</p>	<p>Foreign languages for staff going on holiday would be in demand. Basically anything new either for business or personal use would be great. Have tried to access materials at the community libraries, but they were reluctant to help the business and were dependent upon individual approaches.</p> <p>Basic skills materials would be good (literacy and numeracy) as they have done some of this through Workbase before and these courses were surprisingly well attended, which shows there is a need for it.</p>

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Main benefits	Brand - strong brand and its associations with learning, as well as the social skills side of Real.	<p>Access to on-line and CD-ROM materials in a way that does not pose a major risk to the company network, etc.</p> <p>Individuals can learn at their own pace and cost is minimised to the company.</p> <p>Potential to support other conventional training sourced by the company, while offers opportunity to deliver mass training in ECDL or food hygiene, if materials are sourced by Real.</p> <p>Will hopefully help address IT literacy of staff and address effective use of IT systems of the business.</p>	<p>Other source of learning materials – e.g. food hygiene.</p> <p>Hardware (and software) allows for staff to develop their skills in their own time and in privacy.</p> <p>Some more comfortable with this style of delivery.</p> <p>Self-policing of centre by users, so no problems.</p> <p>Staff retention was already high and turnover therefore low, as the company has a very strong base in the local community, but the project has been very good for morale. Put in another way, they know there would be considerable complaints if the company was to ever pull the plug on the project.</p>	<p>Branding and basic concept very good, but more could be done with them.</p> <p>Good first set of materials (e.g. CD-ROMs for MS Office products), but supply has dried up.</p> <p>For those who have used it well, “it is as if there has been a light switched on inside them” and there is no doubt that managers have seen talents in people that they had no idea were there. It has certainly impacted upon promotion / career development potential for those 30 or 40 hard core users – noticeable improvement in performance, but yet to follow through to improved business performance.</p> <p>Learning Cafes are really good in their own way (quite different from other forms of training and while not replacing these, they are a useful addition).</p> <p>Flexibility and privacy and lack of pressure good for target groups.</p>

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Main disadvantages	None.	Lack of materials, or poor communication of what is available, is restricting achievement of objectives. Poor "aftercare".	No main disadvantages / problems have arisen, but range of materials and poor promotion of what is available, or could be used (e.g. college or Learndirect courses) means Real not used to full potential.	Range of materials poor now and there appear to have been no new materials for quite a while. Implementation of Real is poor (e.g. installation of wrong Windows platform (98 instead of 2000) which should have been used). No broadband – so downloads are very slow and certain courses can't be run as the full interactivity is not possible. If it is meant to overcome social exclusion, then better access to Internet services is required.
Delivery of Real	Kyndal Spirit supplied all the equipment for the learning centres, Real delivered the brand they needed to deliver personal, bottom end learning needs. Scottish Enterprise Glasgow assisted with the "badging" of the centres.	Installation was "poor". They were issued with a stand-alone modem, when there was already an internal modem. Hotel asked for head phones to be provided and this was promised, but they never arrived. The team only installed one PC and the training manager was left to install the other 5 PCs herself. Software didn't arrive until later. Also the company ordered Real-branded Perspex dividers to create study workstations. However, when these arrived, they were much smaller than they had been led to believe and are almost worthless in terms of sub-dividing desks / workstations. Design company used by Real for fit-out was lacking in innovative design ideas and they would have done better using in-house decorating team, in hindsight. Overall impression of a lot of unnecessary hassle and disappointing outcomes.	Fine – no problems with delivery / set-up etc.	The initial promise of ADSL has not materialised as they (Real) didn't check whether it would be available in the area, so they waited for 9 months before BT told them they couldn't get it in their area (which is not attractive to BT due to socio-demographics). They have since put in an ISDN line, but after 9 months with poor information and effectively being misled by SE Glasgow.

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Changes to Real?	<p>Greater clarity required on what materials are available for learning through Real.</p> <p>More emphasis on life-skills learning and “interests” learning versus trying to meet business needs for big business.</p> <p>More vocational training at different levels so learners could progress at own pace.</p>	<p>Improved communication of materials / new opportunities for training is needed as well as Real facilitating training discounts. For example Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley TB (Tourism Training Unit) send out a mail-shot to a huge list via e-mail, with training courses offered at a discount. Real should maximise savings on admin costs and use these to fund discounts for training materials, etc.</p> <p>Send quarterly newsletters via e-mail, rather than hard copies, and set out progress on the project that way.</p> <p>Need for greater degree of on-going technical support and a dedicated phone contact would be a help. “After Sales” leaves something to be desired.</p> <p>Need to make it clear: What is Real? Is it the people, the kit/project, or a brand or all of the above?</p>	<p>Materials are the key issue – if this improves, then Real LC would be appointed once more. This post is missed, principally for promotion of the centre, hardware and software support and guidance to learners.</p> <p>Learners need to be made more aware of what is available and improve access to materials. Would use the Real equipment more if there was more contact to say “are you aware that X is available”. This has been a very disappointing aspect of the project – need better promotional material (content is what is needed, rather than quality/presentation).</p> <p>The 100 hard core users will run up against a brick wall eventually – currently they are finding enough to do, but will not last. Perhaps development time has been underestimated for materials.</p>	<p>Need better training of LCs – have had to develop their own manual because training was poor. Also keep them in the loop as it is important to keep them motivated.</p> <p>Real haven’t done a good job of publicising what’s on the site – you are forced to check manually and if there are no additions, that can be quite disheartening.</p> <p>Initial newsletter seems to have fizzled out. They don’t want fancy brochures, etc. – e-mail on a regular basis (perhaps with links to new features, courses or pages) would do and perhaps could be sent to Learning Champions, rather than just the learning centre contact.</p> <p>Choose trainers more effectively – quality and use trainers who will appeal to the audience on a peer to peer basis (not using “middle class ladies”).</p> <p>SE Glasgow/ Real have to realise that there are differences between library and workplace settings / resources and improve linkages between them.</p>

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Quality issues?	Real material is satisfactory, but lacks interactive element (a wider criticism regarding the lack of interactive e-learning material available in the market place).	Quality of CD-ROMs is not a problem, but a lack of breadth and depth of materials is a weakness. Learning Café event attended was too low a level and poorly targeted.	Quality not the problem, but range is a problem.	Training conducted for learning coaches didn't get good reviews at all and WEA were not much help either, so had to develop their own manual for LCs. However, by contrast Learning Café's were very well received. The one run where they made hats in teams was excellent as there was a very good trainer and it went down well with a mixed audience of management and other employees.
Costs / uses	Real contributed £2000 to "badge" its learning centres, while Kyndal Spirits made extensive contribution to 4 learning centres (3 further centres developed outside Glasgow) of £30-40,000.	£5K-£6K from Marriott Hotel, with less (unknown total) from Real, which effectively meant they received one free PC and part payment towards the other five PCs and decorating, etc.	Investment was done on an approximately 50:50 basis. £6,000 by McVities and £6,000 by Real as Lesley recalls.	Company put in £3,000 and Real invested £3,500 approx. Existing centre had 2 PCs and Real funding was used to supply an additional 3 PCs for the centre, with associated peripherals and software, and branded materials.
Value for money	In general, Real is good value for money, though Kyndal Spirits used it mainly as branding. Material and content not crucial or critically assessed.	The computers themselves were good value for money, while the software was not fantastic value, but was reasonable. Learning events have been "poor value for money" from the public's perspective, as they were pitched at too low a level to have any value. These need better targeting in future. Networking events were "OK", but companies were not very relevant, which lost some of the value from a networking perspective.	This represented great value for money, as they needed to upgrade the centre anyway and they were then able to purchase 2 PCs, printers, scanners, Real publicity/branding materials and top-to-toe redecoration of the centre. They did however avoid using some of the Real advertising as this would have been over the top.	Good value for money overall as it greatly improved the existing facilities and equipment available, however more could have been achieved if changes identified above had been made, particularly links to libraries, for example. However painting and decorating of the centre was not cost effective – would have been better doing it themselves.

Real for Business Consultations				
	Kyndal Spirits	Glasgow Marriott Hotel	McVities	Tennent Caledonian
Other points	<p>Kyndal Spirits got what they required from the Real experience (that is, branding of their learning centres), but perhaps did not view it as an essential part of training and learning at work.</p> <p>Main disappointment has been closure of the ILA (individual learning account) scheme, and the lack of interactive material for e-learning in general.</p>	<p>Learning Champion events – were pitched at far too low a level.</p> <p>Would like to see much improved linkages between Learndirect Scotland and Real, in particular – it should be co-ordinated and where synergies exist, these should be adopted (for example in regard to discounts).</p> <p>Colleges are also reluctant to engage with companies through Real when they will make more money if they only make materials available for individual students or those enrolled directly with colleges rather than through Real. It is unrealistic to think Real can make such a breakthrough when colleges are reluctant to lose lucrative business.</p>	<p>Excellent idea, and has made progress, but long way to go to meet goals and is running out of steam. Delivery promised but not manifested itself in reality. A relaunch is required. Case studies of individuals (testimony of benefits/personal objectives) and benefits for their employers would be an excellent way of helping promote the opportunities available – web-site doesn't go far enough.</p> <p>Colleges are possibly being defensive and not letting go of materials with commercial value (understandable) but also may be technically difficult to deliver without broadband.</p> <p>Colleges are often inflexible about content and delivery. Private providers are able to give exactly what you want and it is possible to negotiate discounts – not possible through Real, but maybe they could negotiate discounts on members behalf or perhaps Real could provide a flat rate discount on any courses undertaken by members.</p>	<p>Slight concern about the general lack of urgency with which issues are handled – too bureaucratic in general.</p> <p>Went to visit the BAe plant at Edrington to see what they had, but no formal links to other centres.</p> <p>Would like to see there being introduced best practice networking and sharing of knowledge, exchange of materials and advice to peers on materials, perhaps through a Real web-site bulletin board.</p>

Appendix B
Real Business Learning Centre Contacts

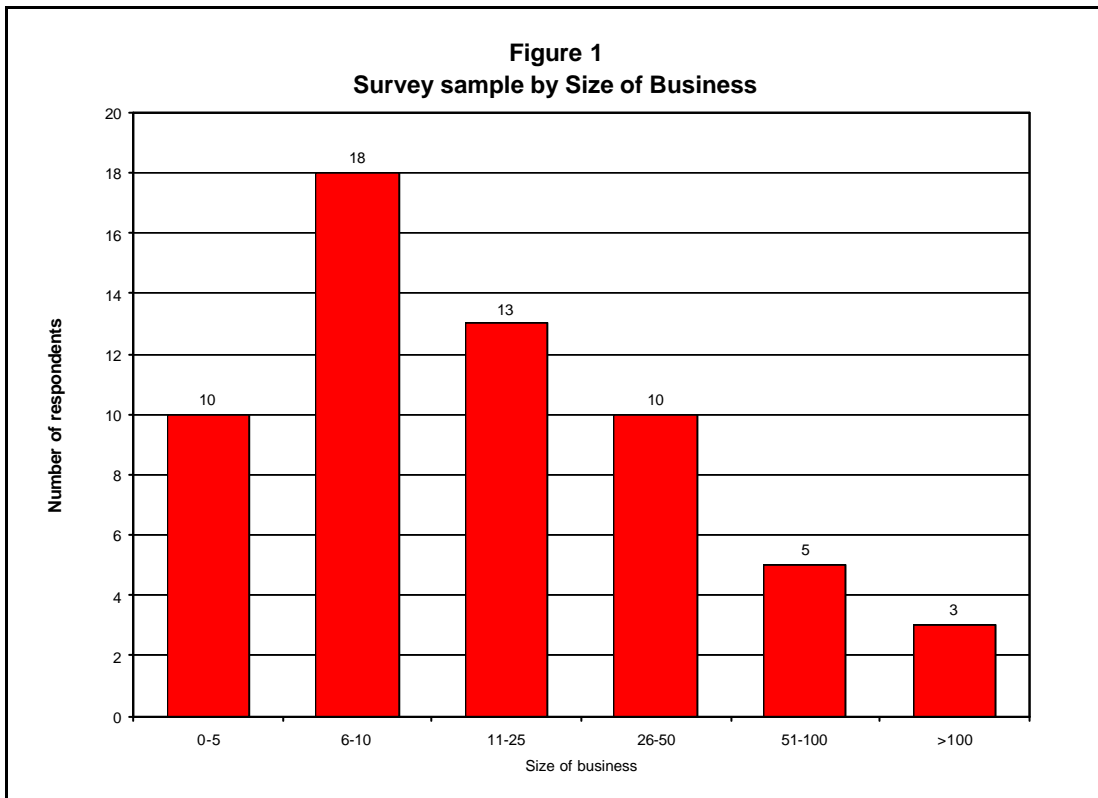
INTRODUCTION

This section covers the results of the survey of Real in a Box Learning Centre contacts.

The survey had a target of 60 interviews, including 48 telephone interviews and 12 face-to-face interviews. The respondents were the designated learning centre contacts. These learning centres were part of Real in a Box, aimed at Small to Medium sized Enterprises.

	Target	Achieved
Telephone Interviews	48	48
Face-to-face Interviews	12	11
Total	60	59

Figure 1 indicates the distribution of the sample interviewed, with respect to the number of employees working at each site.



INVOLVEMENT WITH Real

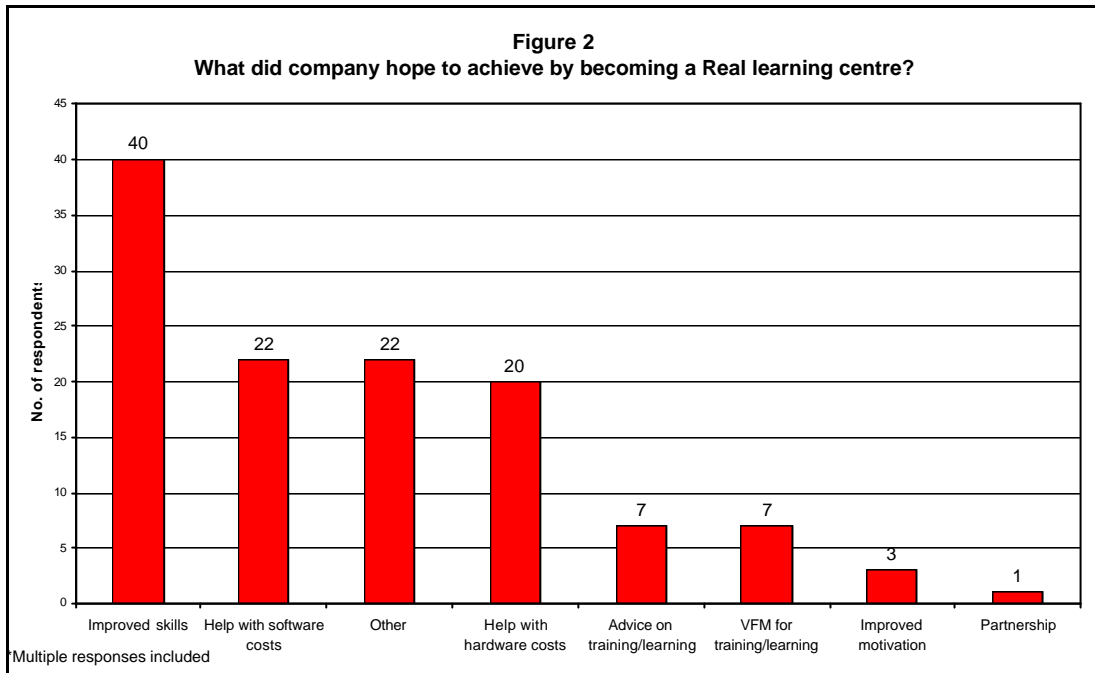
For nearly a third of businesses, initial contact with real was through the direct approach of a Real representative. A small proportion (13%) heard about Real from other sources and then approached SE Glasgow or WEA. A relatively large number of businesses (57%) stated that they initially heard about Real through 'other sources'. This includes around 36% who mentioned word of mouth and the networking of other organisations, such as the Local Development Companies. It also includes a number of interviewees (21%) who were first made aware of the Real team through written material such as mail-shots, flyers and advertisements.

INITIAL PERCEPTIONS OF Real

The learning centre contacts were asked about their company's motivations in becoming a real learning centre. Figure 2 shows that the most common motivating factor was to improve the skills of the workforce. Help with the costs of both training and learning software and hardware were also identified by the contacts as important to the companies.

A number of those responding 'other' expressed a desire to assist the workforce, through opportunities to train, in order to facilitate individuals' personal development, i.e. building personal confidence and communication skills. This was seen in some cases to be at least as important as training in skills wholly for the employer's benefit.

The contacts identified a number of other factors that their company had hoped to achieve as a result of becoming involved in Real. The majority of the suggestions offered were concerned with improving the IT skills of the workforce and increasing opportunities to access PCs for training purposes.

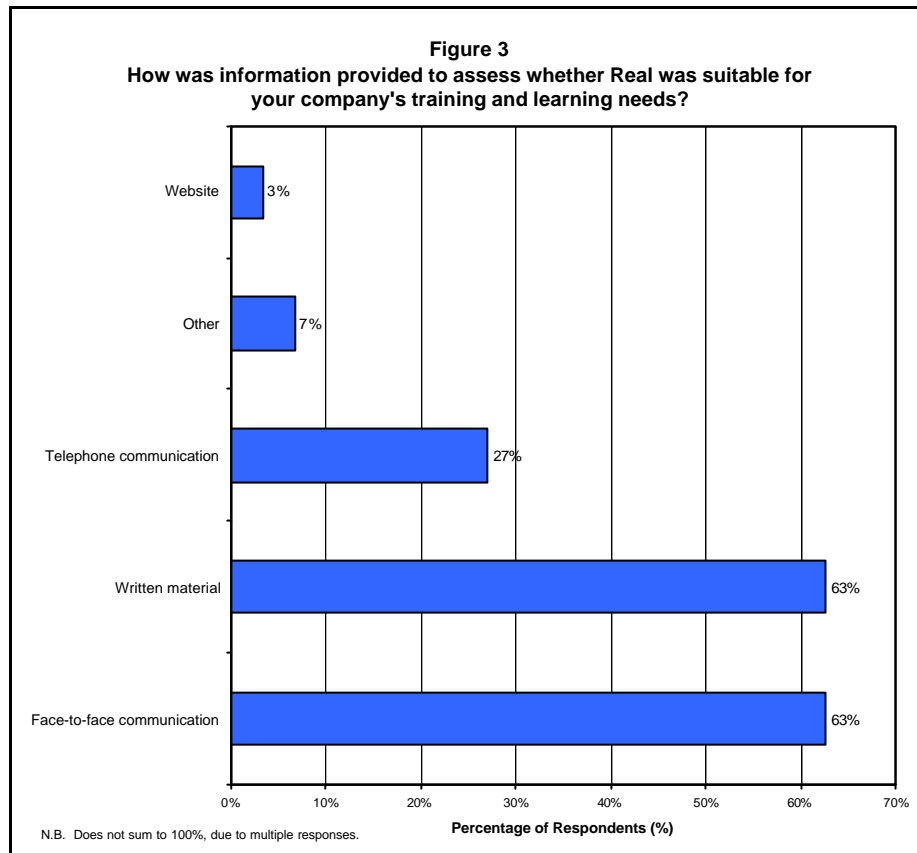


The businesses were asked if there were any particular skill needs that they were seeking to address through Real. Two thirds of the companies identified skills gaps they wanted to address. These were almost exclusively related to IT and much of this being at a fairly basic level, with references being made to those long serving staff who are old enough to have had little or no exposure to PC skills when at secondary school.

INITIAL INVOLVEMENT WITH REAL

Most respondents felt they had sufficient information to assess the suitability of Real to the company’s training/learning needs. Where the initial contact was with a Real representative or through approaching SE Glasgow or WEA, the level and clarity of information allowed the contacts to feel confident about involvement with Real in a Box. Only 12 respondents (20%) indicated they had insufficient information. This lack of clarity was linked to respondents learning about Real through organisations apart from SE Glasgow and WEA.

The information on which respondents could make decisions regarding suitability was supplied from a variety of sources. The high level of face-to-face contact clearly may have helped respondents in assessing the suitability of Real.

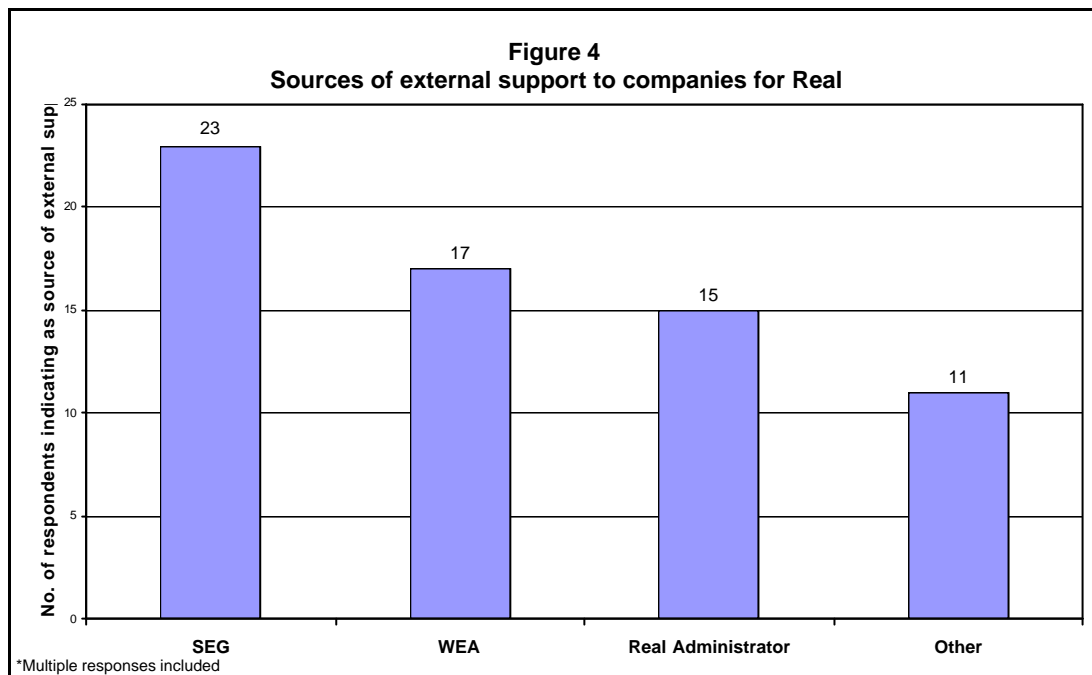


ON-GOING INVOLVEMENT WITH Real

Communication

In order to assess the level of on-going involvement with Real among the learning centres, the contacts were asked if they are aware of who could offer external support through Real. The majority of the contacts (75%) felt that they knew whom to approach for support. Figure 4 shows that Scottish Enterprise Glasgow appears to be the most common source of contact or support.

The contact with external support sources tends to be fairly infrequent with 70% of the learning centres reporting that the level of contact is less than once a month. The learning centres are generally happy that this level of contact is about right (89%). The contact appears to be more commonly initiated by one of the organisations involved in Real (WEA, SE Glasgow, Real Administrator) than by the companies, with companies initiating contact to identify new learning materials or for technical assistance.



In some respects though the feedback was often positive regarding assistance received, a number of suggestions were offered for improving communication between the learning centres and the organisations involved in the delivery of Real. In some respects, though the individual comments can seem contradictory, they indicate a general desire for reform of communication and highlight the difficulties in adopting a one-size-fits-all strategy for communication. Suggested improvements include the following:

- *Just one contact instead of many – very confusing – need to speak to different people about different aspects of Real.*
- *Less Internet, more personal communication – some staff still not confident looking up course information on the Internet or reading bulletins.*
- *Less glossy or slick communication is needed, with greater concentration in keeping the companies and Learning Champions up-to-date with those learning opportunities available.*
- *Can case studies of individuals using the PC and materials be prepared to highlight what staff may be able to achieve for themselves and to generate demand?*
- *Need Internet connection for PC so can access web-site – might be good alternative to visits i.e. some companies appear unaware they have an internal dial-up modem within their hardware specification.*
- *Six-monthly visits by Real representatives to update the staff and management as to what is being achieved elsewhere and to get feedback on training needs would be useful.*

- *Regular Learning Cafés – quarterly to bring up to speed.*
- *Would prefer to get on with it rather than being constantly monitored and prompted to learn. Too much being spent on administration of the project.*

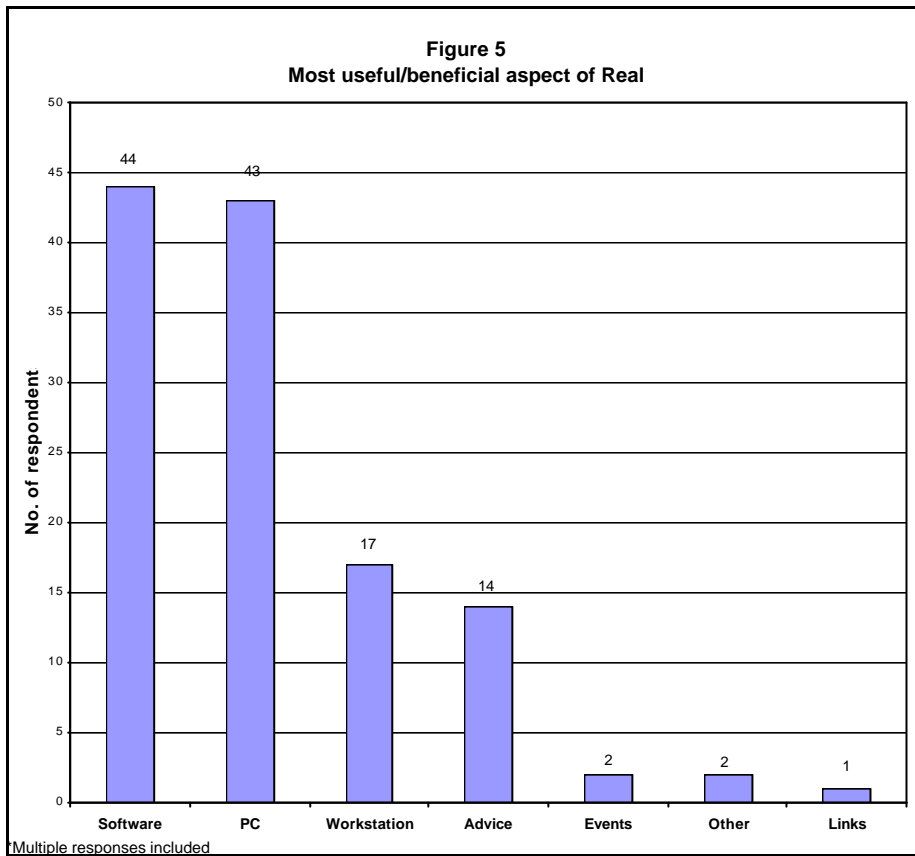
EXPERIENCE OF Real

Respondent's experiences have by and large met or exceeded expectations (33 of the 59 respondents), or 56%. Where Real did not meet expectations, it is mainly because staff have not fully exploited the opportunity to learn for the following reasons:

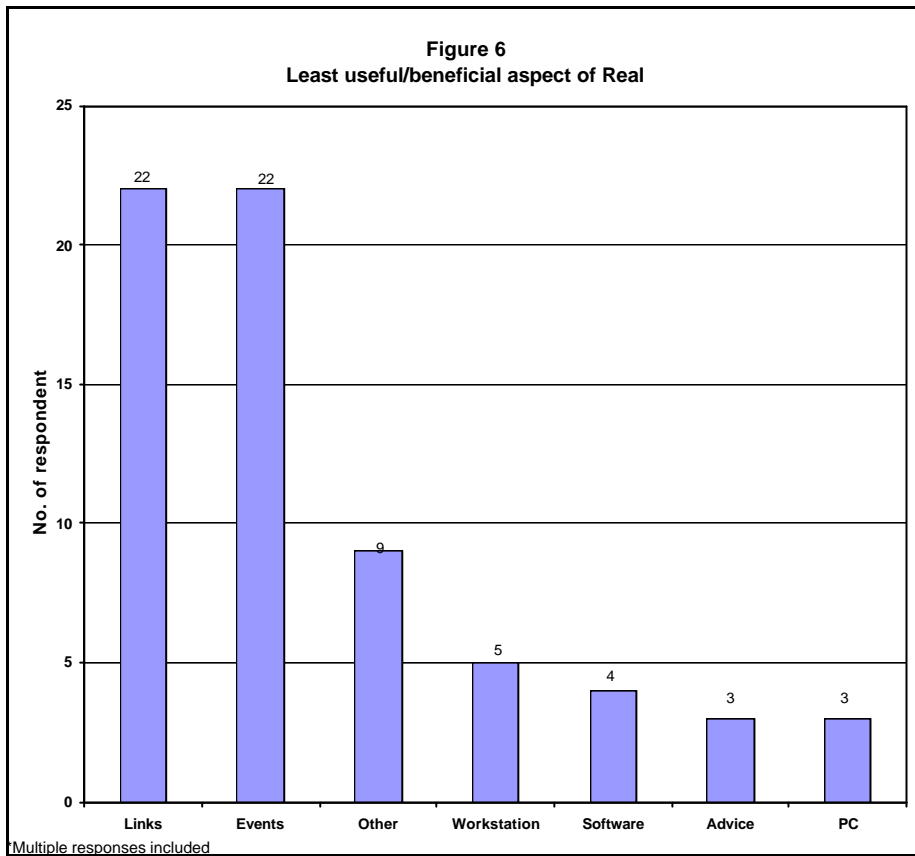
- Time pressure for staff while at work – difficult for staff to get “off-task” time (16 of the 26 companies that felt expectations were not met, cited lack of time as the main constraint to learning activity). However, it must be noted that a lack of job-related learning materials were cited by those interviewed face-to-face as being the key reason why it was difficult to justify staff studying during work hours.
- Failure of business to promote the learning centre internally and so raise profile of Real and other learning in general.
- Inability to get staff cover while another member was learning.

The general observation is that inability to meet expectations is not due to the concept or delivery of the product itself, but to numerous references to the delay in provision of software and lack of new materials acting as a significant brake on activity. By contrast, others cited the lack of staff time, and factors relating to internal and business environments as being more significant, rather than any failing of SE Glasgow or WEA.

Figure 5 shows the aspects of Real that the contacts considered the most useful and/or beneficial. It is clear the provision of software and the PC were rated by far the most popular aspects of the Real initiative.



Alternatively, Figure 6 shows the aspects of Real that were felt the least useful and/or beneficial. Links with other training/learning centres and the Real events, for example the Learning Cafés were regarded to be of least use or benefit to the companies. Other criticisms included the lack of software appropriate for the company’s training needs and one learning centre had to employ someone to go over the Real training material as they were unsure of using the material without guidance.



In general, respondents believed the initiative was tailored to meet the needs of SMEs in general, but did not necessarily meet their own business needs. Even so, businesses were still positive about Real and the concept of learning at work and gaining material for basic IT skills. In addition, there was a positive consensus in favour of Real as a tool for personal development, particularly for older workers.

When asked what changes, if any, to Real they thought would be helpful to their company and staff, the contacts suggested a range of changes including the expansion of the content of learning materials to include more advanced learning and which have a greater relevance to particular company needs. Another area for improvement that was identified was the need for improved communication to facilitate more information on the types of learning and training materials on offer, with regular updates a key element of the approach desired.

The vast majority of the contacts regard Real as good value for money for their company (95%), particularly regarding the low cost of the PC itself. One of the learning centres felt that involvement in Real was not good value for money in their case but commented that Real is “A brilliant idea, pity it wasn’t sold well enough – wrong level.”

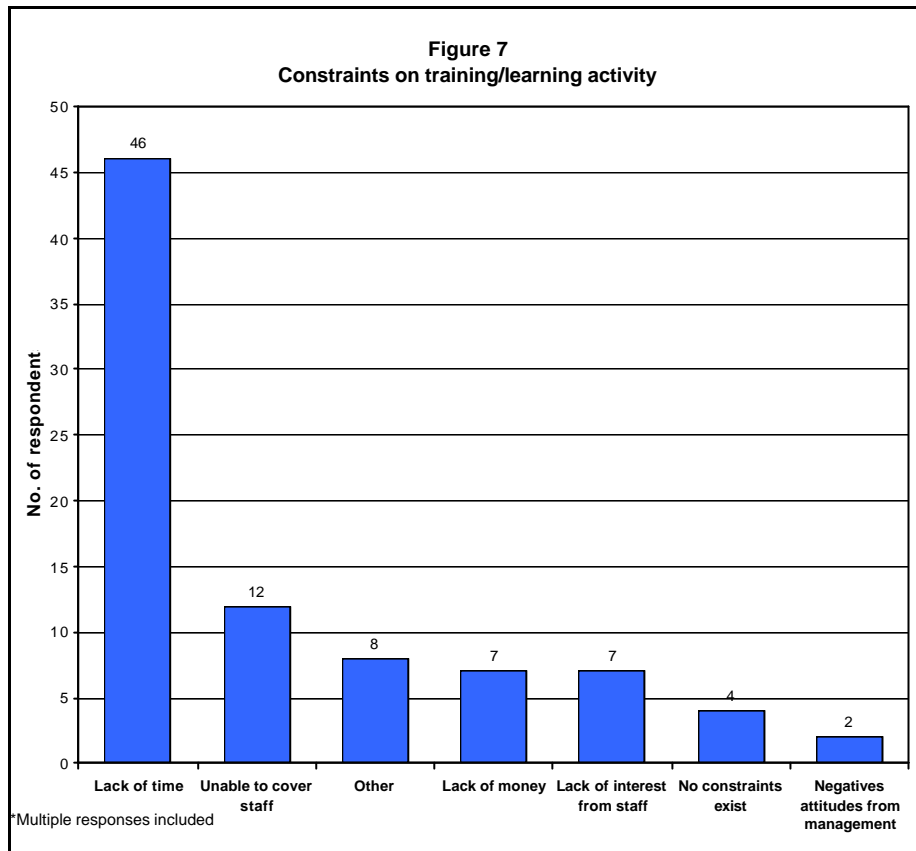
In terms of value for money for the tax payer, 83% of the contacts felt the initiative represented good value for money for the tax payer. Of the remainder, reasons included:

- *All the equipment is currently sitting unused.*
- *Literature has a scattergun approach – lot of resources, but reaching where it should? Too much at wrong businesses.*
- *The amount of money spent on PCs and all the materials does not seem to me to have been used efficiently – lots of staff have never used it and it is all expensively produced.*
- *Too much effort is spent on administration and not enough on materials, but Real has potential to do much more.*

LEVEL OF TRAINING

Since becoming a Real learning centre, most of the respondents indicated that the overall level of training/learning activity in the company had increased (59%). It is possible to conclude that being a Real learning centre has had a positive impact on training in learning for businesses. At the very least, training and learning has stayed the same.

Figure 7 shows respondents' constraints to training/learning activity in their business. Time is the dominant issue with respect to training and learning at work. The time issue also raises some pointers as regard to learning material. One respondent suggested more "just-in-time" learning material, where staff may take 15 minutes to learn a skill as and when they need to put it into practice, so that learning is not taken out of context and is less drain on "task-related time".



TYPE OF TRAINING

Prior to developing Real, businesses undertook the following types of training:

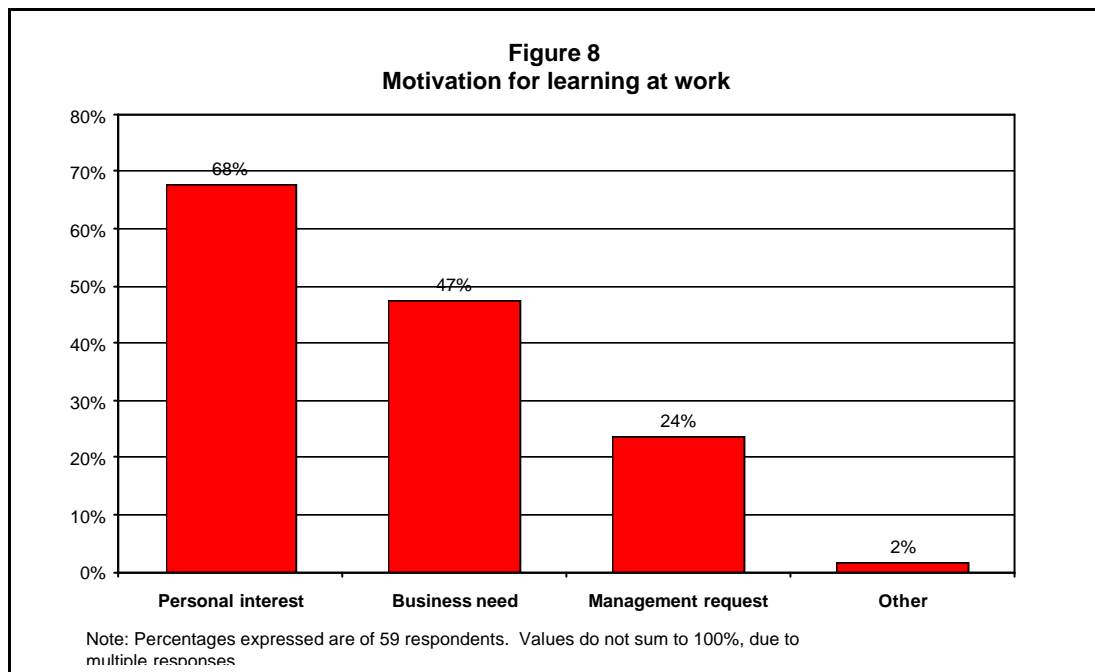
Types of training	Number of responses
On-the-job training/learning provided by colleagues	30
Self-taught training/learning programmes	9
External training/learning courses/conferences	34
In-house training/learning courses	25

*Multiple responses included

The table above indicates that levels of usage of external, in-house and on-the-job training were similar prior to involvement with Real. When questioned regarding the principal mode for training/learning from those listed above, on-the-job and in-house training were quoted as the main vehicles for training/learning activity in the business.

Only 6 respondents indicated that Real had been used to undertake courses for accreditation. 22 respondents mentioned other learning opportunities, though few mentioned Learning Café's in particular. However, 26 of the companies did not mention specific Real learning opportunities.

The motivation for undertaking Real learning opportunities is captured in Figure 8. There is a cascading set of responses. Personal interest leads the hierarchy of motivation, followed by business need down to management request at the lowest level. It shows that learning centre contacts acknowledge that self-interest drives most learners to undertake learning opportunities at work or elsewhere.



Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated that the training/learning activities would not have taken place had the business not had a Real learning centre. This indicates a high level of additionality.

The main reasons for the high level of additionality are:

- Time pressures associated with formal courses and release of staff to do on-the-job training; and
- Previous lack of a PC to be used for training and learning activities.

Real PC(s)

Three quarters of respondents indicated the business would not have become a Real learning centre if the PC had not been provided. This confirms that provision of a PC is integral to the Real initiative, with respondents citing that a free standing or dedicated PC provided greater security against viruses for any company IT network and that it prevented company PCs being diverted from productive use during work hours. However, 86% had PC's prior to Real. Hence, we conclude that providing a PC as part of Real in a Box is highly valued whether or not the business already has PCs.

The fact that only 33% of existing PC's were used for training and learning activities further confirms the value of the PC. Moreover, most of the respondents (83%) who already had PC's prior to becoming a learning centre, rated the provision of the PC as one of the most beneficial aspects of Real in a Box. Thus the PC is a strong pull-factor in becoming a learning centre.

Almost half of businesses surveyed stated that their Real PC is used *exclusively* for training and learning. The availability of a dedicated learning resource was frequently mentioned by respondents as important, to encourage staff to access learning. One third of businesses also make use of the Real PC for business purposes.

Prior to Real, existing PCs were used for training and learning by one-third of respondents. This level of use gives some indication of the acceptability of using PC's as a learning medium, but also reflects concerns of staff and employers about inexperienced users being let loose on networked PCs. This solution allows for a dedicated staff resource, at minimum risk to the company. The result is confirmed by the overwhelming numbers (52 of 59, or 88%), that confirmed the PC as an appropriate medium for learning and training in the work place. However, face-to-face respondents, in particular, qualified this assessment by commenting that Real works best as a complementary learning vehicle, rather than supplanting traditional methods of delivery.

IT SKILLS AND CONNECTIVITY

In general, IT skill levels had improved since becoming a Real learning centre. Only 2 respondents indicated that "poor" IT skills remained such since becoming a Real learning centre. The important change in skill level occurred at the lower end of the scale where significant numbers of businesses indicated a move from "poor" to "average" and from "average" to "good". Taking into the account the level of material available through Real, this result is encouraging.

A good majority of businesses related improving IT skill levels with becoming a Real learning centre (63%). There are a variety of reasons for the positive impact of Real, a few are listed:

- Gave staff the opportunity to work on a PC that wasn't a business PC, and so reduce the fear of "anything going wrong" with business files etc;
- Allows staff to work at their own pace and in relative privacy and without pressure to sit formal tests; and
- Some staff have not had day to day access to a PC before, so this has helped develop skills and improve competency overall.

However, 26% maintain that Real has had no effect on IT skills. Bearing in mind that some businesses had a high IT skill base to begin with, this result is not surprising.

Around two-thirds of all respondents had an Internet connection. Those that had no connection cited "no business need" and "cost" as the main reasons for lack of connection. The most common type of connection is the modem at over 60%. ISDN makes up 19% of connections, and ADSL 11%. It should be noted that some confusion has been evident regarding provision of modems, with a small number of respondents being unaware that their PC specification included an internal 56KBps modem.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

Almost all respondents were in favour of continuing public funding of the Real initiative. This ties in with the perception that the initiative offers value for money for business and tax-payer alike. Where the answer was negative, the criticism was usually levelled at internal issues, such as too few staff exploiting learning opportunities or in a rare case, the PC remaining completely unused.

Should the initiative continue, businesses anticipated that learning and training would either remain at present levels or increase. However, some businesses qualified this assertion in that they thought this would depend upon an improved supply of learning materials. Only 7% anticipated decreasing levels. Again this supports the high levels of additionality of Real with respect to learning and training activities in businesses that have become learning centres. It also agrees with the positive impact of Real on IT skills.

Similar responses were elicited with respect to the number of hours-spent training. Only 4% anticipated a fall in the number of hours spent training and learning should Real continue to receive public funding.

OTHER TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The Real learning centre has in general complemented other learning activities. In a few instances, external basic IT courses are no longer used, as staff have the opportunity to learn at work, at their own pace. However, most businesses have not viewed the learning centre, the software and learning opportunities as a replacement for formal business learning courses, external or in-house.

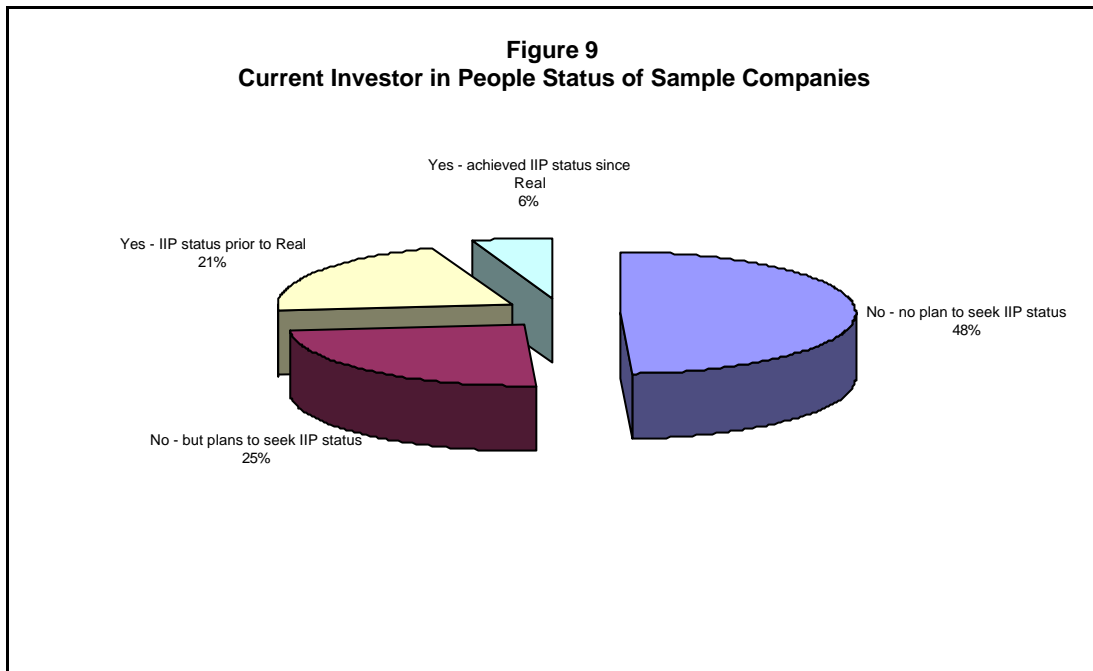
There is some evidence of additional learning and training undertaken since the establishment of a Real learning centre in the business. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. In some cases additional activities are related to IT skills, but in other instances, business related courses have been taken on.

Despite this, more than half of businesses maintain staff are more interested in learning and training activities since becoming a Real learning centre. Around 40% indicate no change in the level of interest in training and learning.

The wide range of businesses interviewed mean that these businesses participate in a wide range of other public sector training/learning. Below are a few examples:

- European Computer Driver's Licence;
- First Aid, Health and Safety, Fire Safety and Regulation;
- Investors in People; and
- Housing and Social Care, Community Development, Project Management.

Forty-eight percent of respondents did not have Investor in People (IIP) status and had no plans to seek IIP. Figure 9 shows respondents current and future plans with respect to IIP status. Some 21% of respondents were already IIP companies when registering with Real, with a further 6% having achieved IIP since becoming a Real learning centre, while a further 25% were either considering or actively seeking IIP status.



Many respondents found it difficult to attribute the establishment of a Real learning centre to improved business performance. At this stage, less than one quarter of companies considered Real in a Box to have had some positive impact on business performance.

With respect to staff retention, respondents were even more hesitant to link the improved staff retention to the learning centres. Only 15% agreed there was improved staff retention as a result of becoming a Real learning centre.

Interesting and additional comments from respondents recorded at the end of the interview are included below:

- *Access to the opportunity has provoked interest amongst staff. It is a great idea and the company are glad of their involvement.*
- *It will make a difference in the future. The girls who installed the PC and came to discuss it were very helpful.*
- *Real learning is good value for money, allows experimentation and learning in confidence at the right pace. Colleagues can support learners rather than external training courses which are pressurised and learners do not have the same opportunity to make mistakes and learn at their own pace.*
- *Our staff like how it is set up. It is less intimidating than other forms of training.*
- *Poorly delivered, though a great idea. It is aimed at suits and ties, but not delivered at the right level, too basic and badly marketed.*

- *Need more courses, both in new subjects, at all levels, and in existing subject areas at a higher level to broaden the range of opportunities for learners and to stimulate interest.*
- *Real need to co-ordinate a database of requests for materials and when a threshold is reached commission training materials, even at a small cost, or at the very least keep us informed as to when/if they will run. They have come up with good ideas for courses (e.g. digital media) which have not been followed through and we have not been told why.*
- *Small businesses can't afford to let staff have time off to train. Good project in general, but Real should have more involvement after initial set-up, e.g. provide their own external Learning Champions.*

When asked about success stories, there were quite a few specific stories, and some examples are highlighted below:

- A kitchen porter now goes to the library at the college in his spare time – he is accessing learning opportunities that probably wouldn't have otherwise accessed due to Real.
- One learner who lacked basic literacy skills has managed to get through the basic food hygiene course by himself and is known to have found this achievement to be very rewarding.
- A secretary/office manager who joined a small surveying practice from a retail background had only very limited IT experiences. They have now worked through all the MS Office CD-ROMs and basic IT skills courses and is looking to undertake MS Office tutorials at Advanced level, as well as to study material on digital media packages.
- One member of staff has used Real in their own time, and is now able to produce rotas and other work related reports on the PC – she has also been promoted.

Appendix C
Analysis of Learning Champion Responses

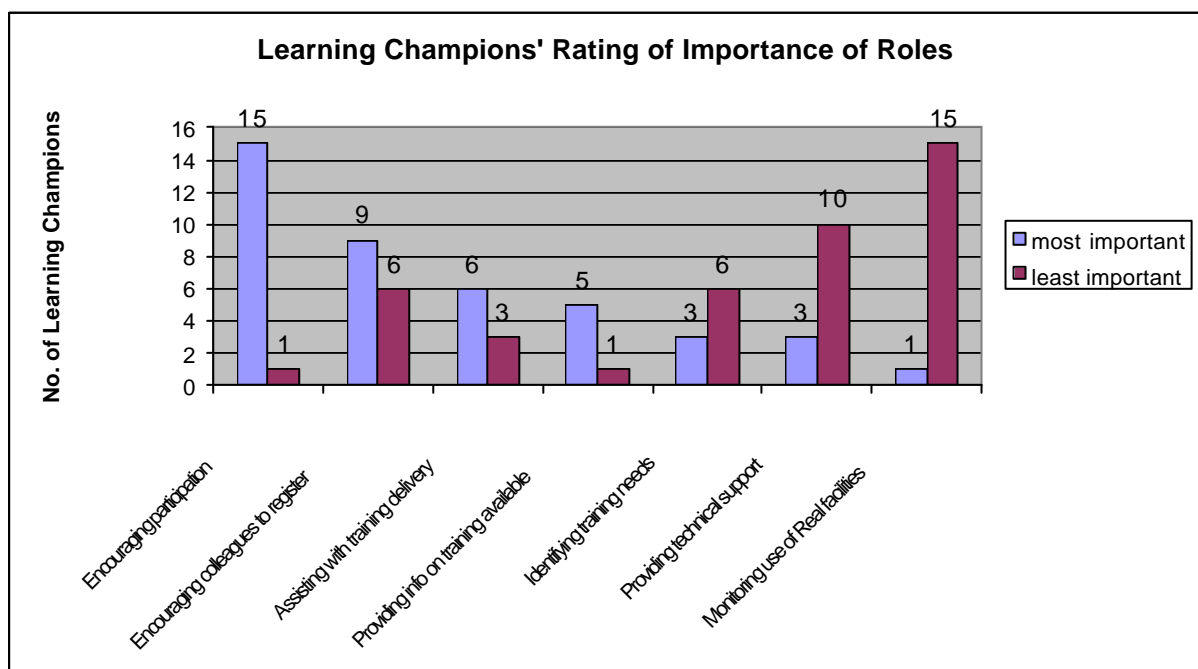
Questionnaires were sent out to all Learning Champions: 64 by e-mail and 92 by post (for those with no e-mail address) on the 19th of September. A further reminder for completion of the surveys was sent on 9th October. By the final closing date, 23 completed forms had arrived (13 e-mail and 10 posted), representing just 46% of the final target of 50, and an overall response rate of only 15%. The responses received were from companies with a total of 313 registered learners.

Role as a Learning Champion

Less than half of the Learning Champions (LCs) surveyed had volunteered for the role (44%), while 35% were asked to undertake the role by the management. The remainder became an LC purely because of their current involvement with the company's training activities or IT strategy.

Only 57% of the LCs felt that their role had been fully explained to them, while just over half were offered training to help them prepare. Of the 12 offered training to help prepare for the role, 10 attended, but only 8 found it sufficient.

The Learning Champions were asked to rate 7 different roles, which they may undertake by order of importance. 65% of the LCs rated "encouraging participation in training" as one of their two most important functions. Encouraging colleagues to register was also perceived as a key role, receiving 9 votes. The tasks of identifying training needs, providing technical support and monitoring the use of the Real facilities were rated as relatively unimportant by the majority of Learning Champions.



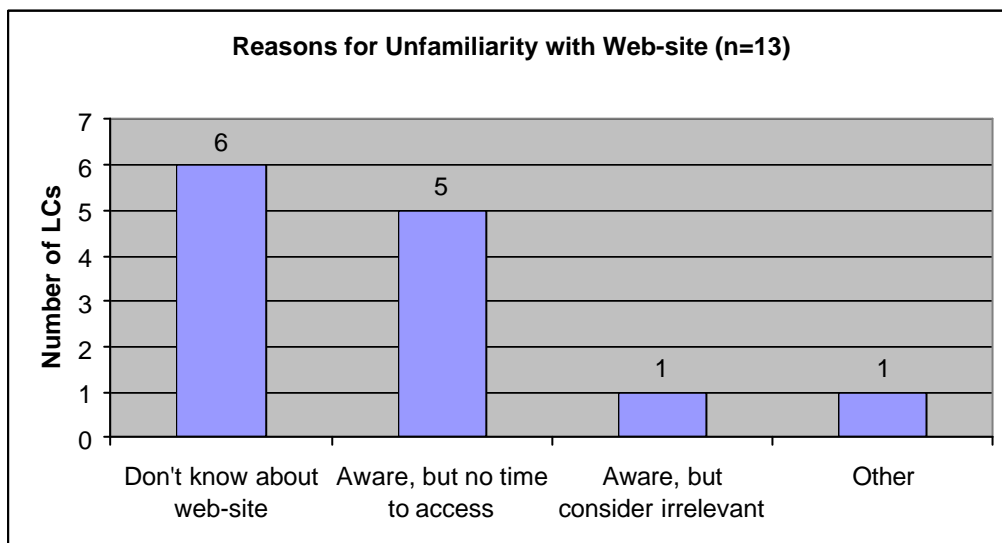
*Multiple responses included

External Support

Two thirds of the LCs surveyed were aware of who could offer external support through Real. Of these, 87% rated the support they had received as either good or excellent. The Workers Educational Association, Scottish Enterprise Glasgow, and Gillian Cowell (the Real Administrator) each accounted for an even share of contact made.

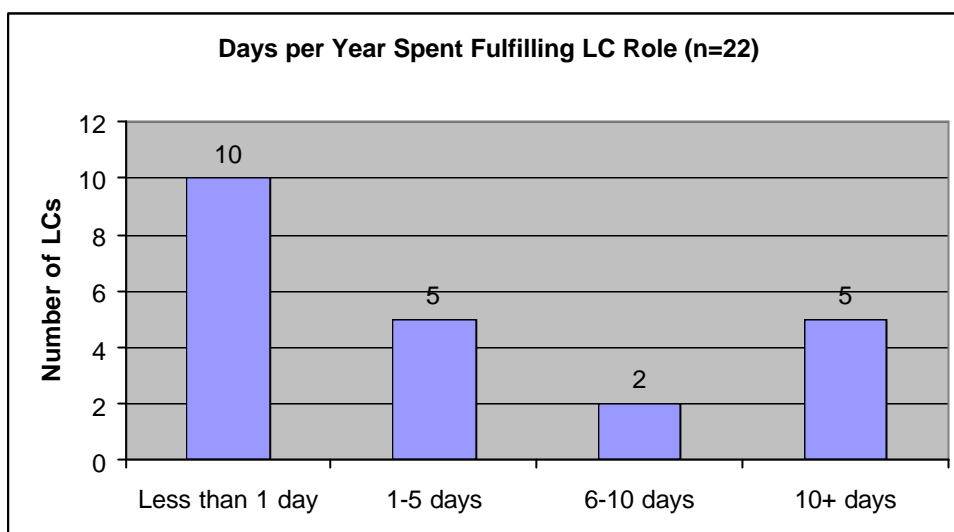
87% of those who had received support said that the level of contact was about right. Only 2 interviewees were unhappy with the level of contact from the support services, one saying it was too infrequent, and the other saying too frequent.

Significantly more than half of the Learning Champions (61%) said that they were unfamiliar with the content of the Real web-site. These were split relatively evenly between those who were aware, but found it irrelevant or had no time to access it, and those who did not know anything about it.



Only 1 of the interviewees said that they were a reluctant PC user when asked about IT skills. The remaining 96% had listed themselves as either reasonably or very confident.

10 of the 23 Learning Champions spend less than 1 day per year fulfilling their role, while a further 5 spend under 5 days. Only 5 LCs (22%) had spent more than 10 days over the previous year.



Activities as Learning Champion

Communication with learners was informal in the case of 70% of the LCs, whether regular or irregular, as they felt themselves unable to find the time required to fulfil the role. Again, only 4 stated that they maintained regular, formal contact with their Real learners, either written or through meetings.

The following table indicates the aspects of the LC role most frequently required by the Real learners. Surprisingly, technical support in using the PCs was the most common response, a function that only three of the Learning Champions thought as one of their most important roles. Few Real learners seemed to require information on registering or help in undertaking courses.

Aspects of role most frequently required by colleagues		
	No. of LCs	%
General info on Real	9	39%
Technical support in using PC	9	39%
Information on courses available	7	30%
Information on registering as a learner	4	17%
Other	2	9%
Help in undertaking courses	1	4%
*Multiple responses included		

The Learning Cafés were only attended by a third of the Learning Champions, while another third were not aware of them and had never been invited to participate. Of those invitees who did not attend, inconvenient timing was the main problem, as opposed to a lack of interest. Only 1 of the Learning Champions had found the event helpful in fulfilling their role, while the remaining 6 had found them of limited relevance. 9 of the LCs mentioned interest in attending future events of this nature.

Learning Café Responses			
	Aware of Events	Invited to Attend	Attended Café
Yes	16	14	7
No	7	-	7

Attitudes of Employees

Initially, 65% of the LCs said that the employees seemed unsure about the benefits of the scheme and were therefore uninterested in registering. Thirty percent were eager / keen to find out about the opportunities available, but only half of those were interested in registering.

The registered Real learners have demonstrated a generally positive attitude regarding Real. 4 of the Learning Champions stated that the centre was so new they hadn't had a chance to use it, but of the remaining 19 who answered the question, 2 reported that learners were very enthusiastic, 9 were generally positive, and 3 others had found some benefits. The remaining 5 respondents reported that Real learners had found only limited benefits, but in general were still supportive of the Real initiative. None of the respondents said that the Real learners had been very critical of the project and found no benefits.

Level of Training Activity

Fourteen of the Learning Champions interviewed said that more training and learning activity should be undertaken in their company, while 8 said that the current level was sufficient. No respondents said that the company was involved in too much training.

According to the LCs, two thirds of Real learners spend less than a week per year engaged in training or learning activities, including non-Real activities. Just 5 LCs said that the Real learners spent more than 10 days training.

Usage of the Real Resource

The main reasons given for using the Real PC is business related learning (61%), while personal interest accounted for a further 30%. Sixty-one percent of the Learning Champions said the Real PC was used at least once per month for training purposes, with 35% using weekly. As stated above, 4 LCs said that the Real PC had never been used, as the centre was new.

Learning Bites were the most regularly used resource, having been used by 48% of the centres, while just 9% said that the main use was for courses aimed at gaining qualifications. The remainder concentrated on other resources, such as the CD-ROMS provided for general interest. 13 of the LCs suggested additional materials that they would like to be supplied with, each of which was specific to the individual business.

Examples of additional materials they would like included: courses geared more towards small businesses, customer care courses, language software, web design courses, Sage Accounts, CIPD, Dreamweaver, Autocad and Illustrator.

Future Usage

Just over half (52%) mentioned that the usage of the Real PC was likely to increase in the future, compared to 9% who thought it was likely to decrease. When asked about future registration of users, 6 LCs said that they planned to actively encourage wider participation, while 5 thought that the existing learners were enthusiastic enough to promote the scheme to their colleagues. The most common answer however (48%) was that all those in the company likely to register have already done so.

74% thought that future usage might increase if the Real learners had more time to devote to learning activity. A significant proportion of the companies also said that provision of more appropriate materials (or better awareness of existing materials) would promote higher usage. Relatively few companies thought that advice/regular visits from a person with human resource training would prove beneficial.

Factors which might generate greater usage of Real for learning purposes		
	No.	%
More time to devote	17	74
More appropriate materials	14	61
Better awareness of materials available	10	44
Greater motivation towards training and learning amongst staff	7	30
Regular visits from someone with HR training	6	26
Availability of more PC's for training and learning	5	22
Greater encouragement from management	3	13
Advice from someone with HR training	3	13
* Multiple responses reported		

Other Comments

In general, the Learning Champions thought that Real was a good idea, but that their learners had not fully exploited the opportunities available due to time constraints. Some had found that the Real learning materials provided were not particularly tailored to their learning needs, and had therefore not been utilised.

Some of the original Learning Champions had left the company and their replacements seemed unsure of their role and required more guidance. One mentioned that there should be a Real Learning Champion course to teach them their role, while two others thought that an external LC in regular contact would be a beneficial development.

Success stories:

- *“2 / 3 people working towards ECDL. Others developing an interest in computers and the Internet”;*
- *“One learner “had no experience in catering. Through Real she is now in charge of our functions department and has many new responsibilities”;*
- *“I had never used a PC before and Real taught me all the things I know now to be able to do my job”;*
- *“One member of staff who was unable to use the PC correctly last year is now fully literate in loading and operating new software packages which has greatly assisted our business”;*
- *“People have learned from the Real training and it has helped them improve skills to get a better job or a higher position within their company”.*

Appendix D
Real Learners

A survey was undertaken with all of the Real learners that are registered with the initiative through the various Real Business Learning Centres. The survey methodology comprised an e-mail and postal survey. Questionnaires were sent out to all Real learners in September 2002. Initially, a total of 470 questionnaires were sent via e-mail and a further 290 by post.

The e-mail survey was hampered by the poor quality of information regarding learners' personal e-mail addresses. Approximately 120 e-mails were returned as delivery failures shortly after the survey was sent, as many e-mail addresses were no longer active. This delayed the process, as we had to identify which learners were affected in order to send out a postal version of the survey.

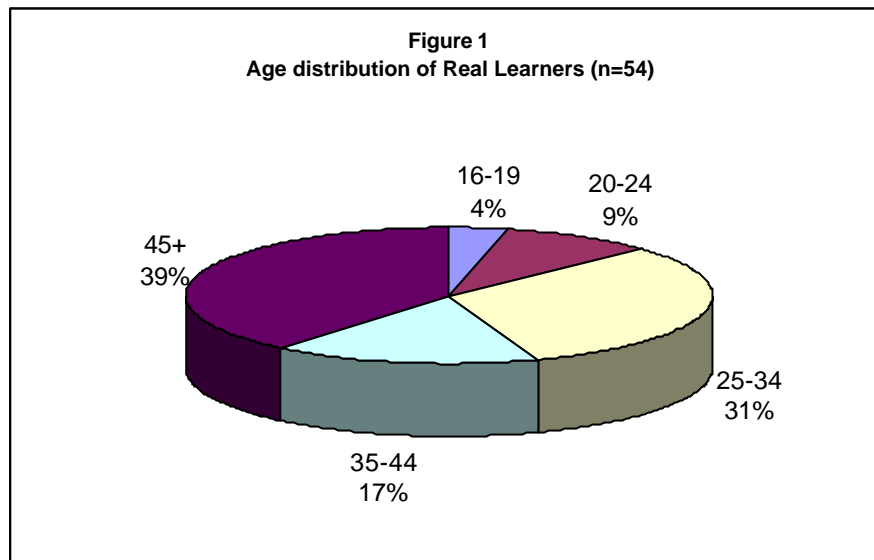
The Real learners were asked to return the completed questionnaires by 4th October 2002. By this closing date, 29 responses were received. A reminder letter was sent out on 9th October 2002 which resulted in a further 25 responses being returned. Overall, there was a very poor response to the Real learners survey. The total returns represent a response rate of only 7% and 12% of the target number.

There are a number of possible reasons for the low response rate. The learners receiving e-mail surveys may not have had the IT skills to enable them to complete the questionnaire on-screen. Furthermore, the survey might not have reached them either due to their e-mail address having expired or the lack of frequency with which they have access to a PC to check their e-mail.

One of the findings of the survey was that usage of Real by the learners appears to be low which may also explain the poor response rate. People are less likely to take the time to complete a questionnaire if they have no direct experience of using the Real resources.

Background Information

The gender split of Real learners responding to the survey was evenly split with 25 male and 29 female. The age distribution of the respondents is shown in Figure 1. A significant proportion of the Real learners who responded were aged 45 and above.



Previous Learning

The Real learners were asked about any barriers to learning they faced prior to registering as a Real learner. Table 1 shows that the most common barriers to learning cited by the Real learners were lack of time and costs. Problems in accessing training and learning facilities and lack of awareness of the opportunities on offer were also barriers to several learners.

Barrier	No. of learners
Lack of time	39
Costs	22
Difficulty in accessing training/learning facilities	17
Unsure of training/learning opportunities	11
Unaware of benefits of training/learning	10
Lack of interesting courses to undertake	9
Not aware of any relevant courses to study	8
No support available if I were to take part in training/learning opportunities	8
Not confident about trying training/learning options available	4
None	4
Not enough qualifications to undertake courses of interest	4
Peer pressure against training/learning	1
Difficulty with reading or writing	0
Other	0
*Multiple responses included	

Impressions of Real

The main purpose of Real in the eyes of the Real learners is to gain skills to help them in performing their current job (42%). A further 38%, of the learners, felt the main purpose was to improve computer skills, while 13% rated learning for personal interest as the main purpose of the initiative.

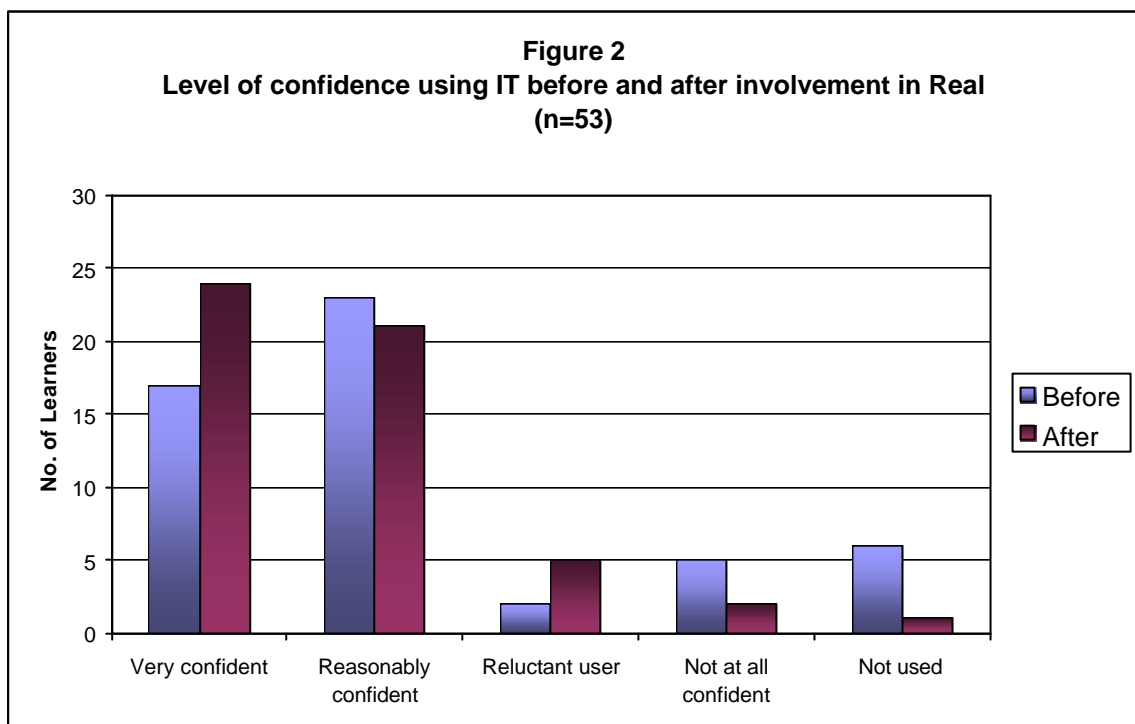
When asked about their initial attitudes towards Real, 44% reported that they had been eager to find out about Real and keen to register and take up learning opportunities. A further third had been interested to find out more although had not been immediately keen to register.

While the level of initial interest in Real as indicated above is encouraging, around one in five Real learners (21%) said that they had felt unsure about the benefits of Real and uncertain about registering. This suggests that there could be more support or information provided to allow potential Real learners to be confident about the benefits of Real and the opportunities on offer upon registration.

Once the initial attitudes of the learners to Real had been established, the survey sought to investigate the attitudes of their learners once they had gone through the registration process. Around a third of the learners (34%) reported that they have not yet used any of the Real materials. On the other hand, 23% felt generally positive about Real and have found some benefits, while a further 15% described their attitude as enthusiastic and had found Real beneficial. A further 15% percent of the learners responding said that, while they had some criticisms of Real, they had found it mostly beneficial.

	No. of Learners	% of Learners
Enthusiastic & found beneficial	8	15%
Generally positive & found some benefits	12	23%
Some criticisms but mostly beneficial	8	15%
Some criticisms & limited benefits	2	4%
Not yet used any Real materials	18	34%
Only recently registered as a Learner	2	4%
Other	3	6%
Total	53	100%

In order to establish whether the Real initiative has had any impact on the IT skills of the Real learners, the survey asked them to rate their level of confidence in using IT at time of registration and at the present time. Figure 2 shows that there has been a marked improvement in the overall levels of confidence among the learners with the number of people classing themselves as very confident rising and the number of people who were previously not at all confident or had never used a computer falling.

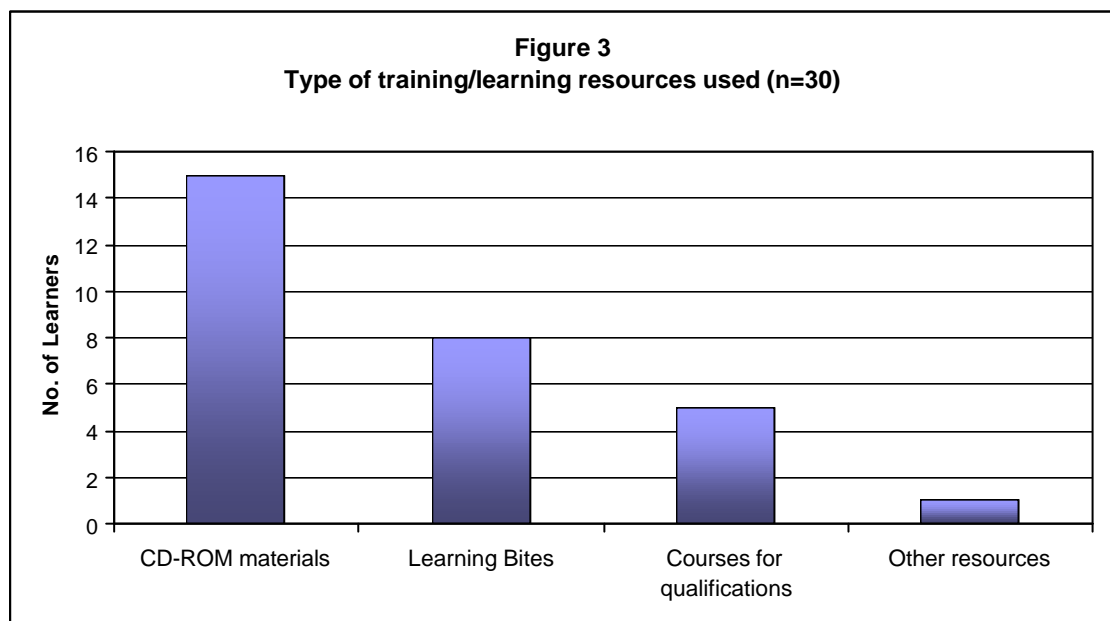


87% of the learners had been encouraged to access Real and take up a training or learning opportunity by someone within the work environment. For just over half of the learners (55%) the source of encouragement had been the management of the company. Only around one in 8 learners had been encouraged to participate by a Learning Champion. The remaining 21% of the learners had been encouraged by a work colleague other than a Learning Champion.

Usage of Real

The current level of usage of the Real PCs for training/learning purposes is low with 43% of the learners responding to the survey having never used the Real PC. Of those learners that said they had used the Real PC, most had used it less than twice a month (34%). Furthermore, of those who had used the PC, the number of hours spent per month using Real for training or learning purposes averaged just under 4.5 hours.

The main reasons for using Real according to the learners are for personal interest/development (42%) and for training/learning of relevance to their current job (36%). Figure 3 shows the Real training/learning resources used. CD-ROM training/learning materials appear to be the most popular learning format, with a smaller number of learners making use of Learning Bites or undertaking courses aimed at gaining qualifications.



Use of the Real web-site is fairly low with only 42% of the learners having accessed the resource. However, while a further 29% have yet to access the web-site, they are aware of its existence as a resource.

The majority of the learners using the training/learning resources feel that they are pitched at the right level (89%). However, around 1 in 8 learners believe the materials to be pitched at too low a level. In terms of the relevance of materials, the Real resources are rated favourably with a quarter of learners believing the materials to be very relevant and a further 61% mostly relevant.

The learners making use of the Real training/learning opportunities were asked whether they thought that they would have undertaken training/learning opportunities if Real had not been available in their company. Seventy-two percent of the learners felt that they would have undertaken training/learning elsewhere either during working hours or outside of working hours. The remainder of the learners felt that they would not have undertaken training/learning opportunities due to factors including cost and lack of confidence in using computers in an unfamiliar setting.

It is encouraging that 41% of the learners involved in Real training/learning have since gone on to further study elsewhere and a further 30% have not but have plans to undertake a course. The Real initiative appears to have had some success in encouraging people into taking up training and learning opportunities in a wider setting.

Particular courses or materials that the learners would like to see become accessible through Real include the following:

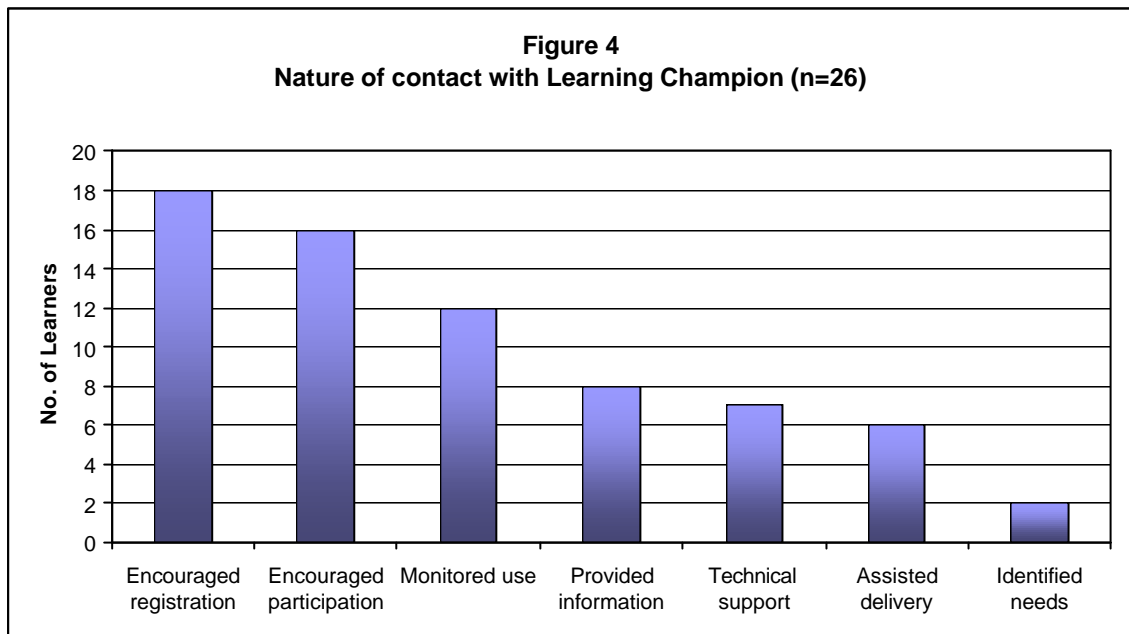
- *Desktop Publishing;*
- *Wider range of subjects to choose from and more on Internet use information;*
- *Training related to counselling; and*
- *Navigation, spreadsheets & tables, official work related documents.*

The majority of the learners (80%) are aware that Real resources are available through the Glasgow City Council community libraries. However, more than three-quarters of the learners have not made use of these facilities (79%). Only 10% of the learners said they used the facilities in the libraries regularly and another 10% have used them once.

Role of the Learning Champion

Awareness of the Learning Champions in the companies is surprisingly low with 50% of the respondents stating that they are not aware of them. The Learning Champions could clearly be more visible to the Real learners as a source of encouragement and support.

The learners with an awareness of their Learning Champion were asked about the nature of their contact with them. Figure 4 shows that the Learning Champions appear to have taken on the role of encouraging involvement and participation in the Real initiative and monitoring the level of this involvement rather than becoming actively involved in the delivery and support of the training and learning opportunities.



*Multiple responses included

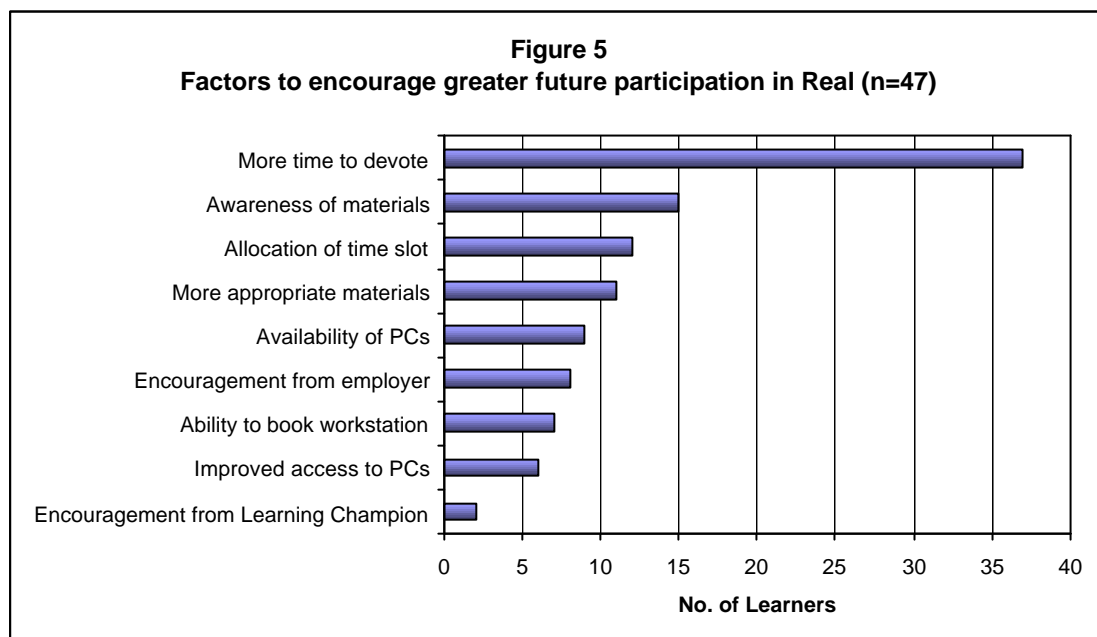
The learners that have contact with their Learning Champion generally rate the support they receive highly: 26% feel it is excellent and 52% rate the support as good. However, in terms of the frequency of contact, while around three-quarters of learners feel the level is about right, the remaining quarter feel that the contact with their Learning Champion is too infrequent. The form of contact is most often informal with 46% of learners describing this informal contact as regular and 38% as irregular.

The learners were asked how the Learning Champions could better support their training/learning. 48% of the learners felt they had no need of any additional support from their Learning Champion. Around a quarter did however feel that they could receive more encouragement from their Learning Champion to participate in Real. 24% of the learners said they could be better supported through more information on the opportunities available and more help in identifying their training and learning needs.

Future Usage of Real

It is encouraging that half of the learners think that their usage of Real is likely to increase in the future and 43% think it will remain at the same level. There does not appear to be any intended drop-off in usage of the Real training/learning opportunities, however, it should be remembered that the level of usage is currently fairly low.

To identify potential areas for development to encourage usage of Real, the learners were asked whether a range of potential factors might encourage greater personal usage of Real for training/learning purposes. Figure 5 shows that having more time to devote to training/learning would generate greater usage of Real among the learners. Having a better awareness of the range of training/learning materials available would also improve usage in the opinion of the Real learners.



*Multiple responses included

The learners were asked for any further comments they wished to make regarding Real and a range of views were expressed both positive and negative:

- *I am grateful to Real for the confidence to use computers and to go on to college to further my knowledge and skills.*
- *Real is a good idea in principle and the learning centre PC is useful – it is a pity though that workloads tend to determine when I get to make use of them and not.*
- *Due to lack of support/time at work, I intend to pursue Real learning at my local library.*
- *It has been very helpful to me in getting over the initial lack of confidence in using computers. The materials have been useful and easy to follow.*
- *Since registering as a Real learner I haven't used it once. I find that due to my job I have no time to use it. Break times are short enough and during these I have other things to do. After work I have family commitments.*
- *The facilities are excellent. Wide range of courses available – not necessarily work related. The problem is devoting time to use the facilities in work.*

Appendix E
Developments On-going within Real

In partnership with ORACLE, a system will be designed and developed to provide learners with information on learning and education opportunities and also to deliver e-learning from the various partners through a common portal. There are three strands to the development of the solutions required:

- The tagging of existing learning resources to allow ease of access to learners. This will be achieved by allowing learners to search for learning based on a variety of criteria such as interests, skill requirements, themes and competencies.
- The development of a multi-faceted entry portal that provides learners and partners with access to learning resources and information, while at the same time providing the opportunity to contribute and add to these resources.
- The migration of current membership information into the new system.

At the heart of the system will be a digital portfolio owned by the learner, rather than any particular institution. This will provide a 'passport' for the learner to use various facilities and learning throughout the city and to record their learning on-line. Through the development of an integral learner information system the capabilities of partner organisations to deliver training and education will be greatly enhanced.

A number of partners in Glasgow, including Strathclyde University, Glasgow Caledonian University, The Lighthouse and the City Council have expressed interest in developing a state-of-the art public access 'learning laboratory' with the possibility of it being located within City Science. The 'lab' will develop new approaches to learning that exploit technology and encourage more people to take an interest in science, technology and creativity.

The Real rollout programme is establishing learning centres in all of Glasgow's 32 Community Libraries throughout the city, but there are still areas that do not have easy access. BT Scotland, in discussion with Scottish Enterprise Glasgow advised that they were keen to sponsor an outreach facility in connection with promoting Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to the citizens of Glasgow. They agreed that their sponsorship should build on the success of the Real Partnership in developing integrated learning environments. Real on the Road has been developed funded primarily by BT Scotland. It is a state-of-the-art interactive multimedia mobile learning centre that will help bridge the gap between those in society who have access to and are able to use ICT competently, and those who do not. The most excluded groups can still perceive entering a public building as a barrier and the mobile learning centre is intended to overcome this. Real on the Road will be taken out to schools and colleges, shopping and community centres and housing estates. Mobility allows us to target specific audiences.