



Gamifying Accountancy Courses to Boost Performance

Kaplan Financial helps learners thrive through the use of engaging course content

Accountants and finance professionals are required to pass high-stakes examinations to progress their careers. To help these learners develop the skills for success, Kaplan Financial leveraged a gamification tool within D2L's Brightspace solution that puts gamification at the heart of learning — inspiring effective studying practices.

Company

Kaplan Financial, the UK division of Kaplan Incorporated, provides training courses for accountancy and teaches over 45,000 learners each year a variety of qualifications including AAT, ACCA, CIMA, ACA and Banking and Finance courses. As well as offering its programs online, Kaplan Financial runs training courses in dedicated learning centers across the UK.

AT A GLANCE

Client: Kaplan Financial

Employees: 500–1000

Learners: 50,000

Industry: Professional Education

Challenge:

- Enhance learning experience across accountancy courses
- Encourage learners to adopt positive studying habits
- Collect and harness data to help improve exam pass rates

Solution:

- D2L Brightspace Learning Platform
- Learning and Creative Services

Results:

- 71% of learners believe gamification has a positive impact on their learning experience
- Inspiring learners to improve their drive, determination and diligence
- Clear correlation between high gamification scores and strong final assignment marks

“We were attracted to the D2L Brightspace Learning Platform because it came packed with many of the features that we were hoping to introduce, such as the badging feature. The D2L team were instrumental in helping us customize the solution to our unique needs too, helping us expand our vision and get our PoC up and running in under three months.”

Stuart Pedley-Smith, Head of Learning, Kaplan Financial

The Challenge

GETTING AHEAD

To progress in the financial service sector, accountants and other finance professionals are required to gain industry accreditation by passing high-stakes examinations. For many workers in this sector, passing these exams can have a positive impact on their lives—opening up new career paths and boosting their earning potential.

For over 70 years, Kaplan Financial has helped accountants across the UK gain the skills they need to thrive, not just in exams but also in the fast-paced world of the financial services sector.

“Studying for a qualification while working can be very demanding,” comments Stuart Pedley-Smith, head of learning at Kaplan Financial. “That’s why we’ve strive to give learners the best chance of success by helping them to stay focused and develop effective studying habits.”

REWARDING LEARNERS

While providing learners with written advice or lectures on best studying practices can help them improve their learning skills, this advice can easily be forgotten and often goes unheeded.

Aware of the benefits of effective learning strategies, Kaplan Financial wanted to take a more proactive approach to encouraging learners to adopt behaviors that are highly likely to improve their chances of passing their examinations.

“Learning is not a precise science and every individual takes their own unique path through study,” says Pedley-Smith. “However, we do know that learners who attend all course modules, who stay exam-focused, who have good organizational skills and who practice all available practice exam standard questions have a higher chance of success in the final assessment.

“To be able identify learners who could improve their learning habits, we knew we needed to first collect and analyze information on candidates’ learning styles. With this data we could then create fun and engaging ways to reward learners not just for achieving good grades, but also for the act of learning itself.”



The Solution

ENHANCED STUDY

Kaplan Financial saw an opportunity to introduce gamification to help learners achieve their goals. The company chose to work with the D2L Learning & Creative Services team to build a proof-of-concept (PoC) gamification tool within the learning management system powered by D2L's Brightspace Learning Platform, a solution Kaplan refers to internally as MyKaplan.

"We were attracted to D2L's Brightspace learning platform because it came packed with many of the features that we were hoping to introduce, such as the badging feature," explains Pedley-Smith. "The D2L team were instrumental in helping us customize the solution to our unique needs too, helping us expand our vision and get our PoC up and running in under three months."

GAME ON

"To make the learning experience more engaging, we worked with D2L Learning and Creative Services to introduce a badging system into the first level of our accountancy qualifications," explains Pedley-Smith. "Each candidate is awarded points for completing certain activities."

As sitting practice examinations can significantly boost the chance of good results in the final examination, Kaplan Financial created a system that rewards learners with five points for completing a mock examination and a further one point for passing this practice paper.

"By making the leaderboard available for all learners on a given course, we can galvanize learners to engage in a spot of healthy competition to spur their learning," says Pedley-Smith.

As well as awarding learners for completing revision tasks, the badging system in MyKaplan rewards learners for exhibiting positive behaviors by giving them a digital certificate and leaderboard points to recognize their effort and determination.

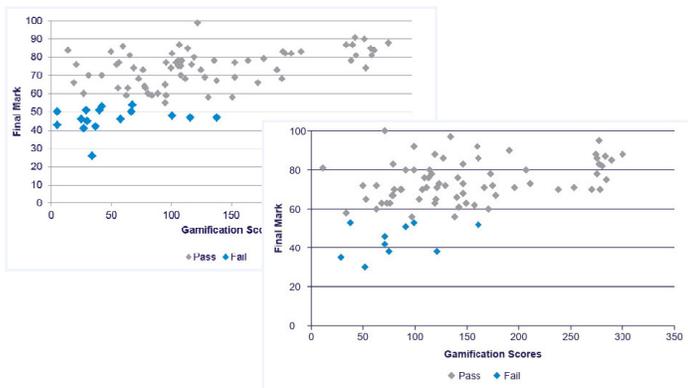
"In recent years, we've seen a rise in the number of learners who take longer breaks before completing the next level of qualification or re-sitting failed papers," continues Pedley-Smith. "Our initial research indicates that waiting too long between exams could have a negative impact on their likelihood of passing. So, we decided to award a badge to candidates who book their exams early or who do not reschedule their exam dates—encouraging learners to stay committed to their studies."

With 71 percent of learners reporting that gamification has a positive impact on their learning experience, it is clear that Kaplan Financial is succeeding in making studying more engaging and enriching.

The Results

TOP OF THE CLASS

While Kaplan Financial is still in the early stages of rolling out gamification across all its courses, the company is already seeing encouraging signs that it is likely to improve learners' chances of securing strong grades. For instance, figures 1 and 2 (below) indicate that there is a clear correlation between learners gaining high gamification scores and then going on to achieve strong marks in their final assessment.



* Charts and underlying data provided by Kaplan Financial

“Being able to collect data that will enable us to understand how a learner’s behavior throughout the period of study impacts their final grade is a huge benefit for us. As we collect more data on learner behavior, we will be able to identify ways that we can help all professionals taking exams to improve their learning skills.”

Stuart Pedley-Smith, Head of Learning, Kaplan Financial

With 71 percent of learners reporting that gamification has a positive impact on their learning experience, it is clear that Kaplan Financial is succeeding in making studying more engaging and enriching.

“We look forward to diving deep into the data that we have collected throughout our PoC to better understand the benefits of gamification,” comments Pedley-Smith. “However, we can already see that the leaderboard and badging system is prompting our learners to apply more drive, determination and diligence to their studies: skills that will benefit them in the workplace as well as the exam hall.”

BRIGHT FUTURE

In the coming years, Kaplan Financial plans to introduce its gamified learning experience into more of its courses.

“We see a great opportunity to continue engaging learners across disciplines and help them to attain the skills and accreditation they need to develop their careers,” concludes Pedley-Smith. “We look forward to continue working with D2L as we grow our business and help more learners pass with flying colors.”