



Customer story



Saran Reed

Learning & Design Manager, Upskills

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Making online learning **engaging** and **accessible** fosters digital equity for Upskills

[Upskills](#) is an award-winning New Zealand-based workplace training company that enables workers across the country to unlock their potential.

Founded more than 10 years ago to fill a market gap around the delivery of high-quality training and learning experiences to New Zealand's operational workforce, Upskills provides award-winning, tailored solutions that combine engaging learning that sticks. It's a unique approach, the company says, and one that drives behavioral change as it grows the potential of individuals, organizations, and communities.

"We wanted to bring quality and passion to the work," says Sarah Balfour, co-founder "Our head office is in Auckland, but we're nationwide. So, we deliver training all around the country through our network of experienced professionals."

In addition to sharing its passion for innovative and high-quality learning, Upskills is committed to its training — and organization — being sustainable and culturally inclusive. The Upskills team embraces a culture of collaboration, sharing ideas and materials to best support each other, their clients, and their learners. “We don’t like boring learning,” says Saran Read, learning and design manager at Upskills. “So, we’re very innovative. And we’re supportive of each other, that’s one of the strengths of how we do things at Upskills.”

While primarily focused on operational workers, the goal of Upskills training is to unlock potential so once core skills are learned, it creates a path to leadership. As a result, the company tailors programs for different organizations depending on their goals for success. One of Upskills’ primary differentiators is in establishing clear key performance indicators (KPIs) at the beginning of programs to ensure success and show tangible returns on investment.

Although the company’s training is primarily face-to-face, digital learning solutions play a major role both during in-person training and for online refreshers and other activities. This includes videos, drag-and-drop activities, and scenarios to ensure knowledge retention. Its Learning Management System (LMS) also serves to aid in its mission of digital equity, building technology and online confidence and competence that will help learners thrive in today’s world, Balfour says.

“Because our learners are foundation learners, we need to include digital confidence in the mix, and Absorb really helps with that,” she adds. “As we bring our normal dynamic, experiential learning model from face-to-face to an online environment, we challenged ourselves to ensure it remains very experiential. We took a long time choosing our LMS platform and are excited that Absorb can offer us that functionality.”

A quick shift to online

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns fast-tracked Upskills to pivot to online learning while retaining its dynamic, interactive approach. It became quickly apparent that reaching out to provide learning and connection to essential workers at this time was an important part of wellbeing. Upskills needed an LMS with enhanced scalability, mobile accessibility, and an improved user experience. It also needed one that could streamline enrollment processes and export content easily, to ensure clients retain access to learnings. After an extensive review of solutions, it selected Absorb LMS.

“Our strategy was driven by wanting to provide a high-quality learning experience accessible to everyone, not just corporate. And that’s definitely our strategic pillar around accessibility and level of engagement,” Balfour says. “So, the goal this financial year (ending in 2025) is to have all users engaged in and enrolled with Absorb.”



Moving to Absorb

To meet its emerging online learning goals, the company implemented several Absorb features within its LMS, including Absorb Create, Enrollment Keys, and Reporting and Analytics.

Upskills has strategically deployed a range of learning modules through Absorb that run alongside and support its face-to-face classes. Read says learners explore modules in Absorb before sessions to boost their confidence or understanding, and after them to review information.

The use of Enrollment Keys has simplified the enrollment processes, as users can easily scan a QR code and complete digital forms. This has **streamlined processes for learners and administrators, reducing workloads behind the scenes**, Read notes, "It's a real time saver."

The company is using Absorb Create to build and publish interactive courses. Using customizable templates and interactive features, Upskills has been able to easily produce engaging digital content. Creating and delivering dynamic, interactive course content is easier, and Absorb makes it simpler for users to find resources.

"Learners have found it quite easy to navigate, to be able to see all the learning modules we've created using Absorb Create," Read says. "And we've created quite a range of content and are adding to it all the time."

Aiding in its commitment to producing tangible results and KPIs, the **Upskills administration team uses Absorb's reporting and analytics functionality to effectively track and report on learner engagement and progress.**

Aligned with the **strategic vision**

Support from Absorb has been a strength, Read notes, both during implementation and for any issues the Upskills team might have with their LMS.

The platform aligns perfectly with Upskills' strategic vision of providing high-quality accessible learning to learners of all levels — anywhere. It's also supporting the company's knowledge retention and learning sustainability goals.

“We're quite excited about the ability to export SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) files because we're all about the sustainability of learning and leaving a learning legacy with organizations that we work with,” Balfour says. “We've already been able to offer that to some clients, which is being received as a genuine benefit.”



Interacting with Absorb — navigating material and uploading documents — is helping provide Upskills’ learners who may have minimal technical skills with the digital foundation they’ll likely need in management. “If you’ve just been working on a factory floor for years, it’s quite a step up to be suddenly expected to write emails, add attachments, and download things,” Read says. “Absorb features allow them to practice in a safe space. It’s a good feature for our learners.”

While early in its Absorb implementation, Upskills already has plans to build on its LMS platform: enrolling more learners and increasing engagement; greater use of analytics to measure impact and refine strategies; and expanding its high-quality, interactive content library with Absorb Create.

“We know there are loads of features that we haven’t used yet,” Read says. “But now that we’re up and running with learners engaged on Absorb, and getting good feedback, it’s just a matter of time.”



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