

Training from Kelros experts creates the difference for Ecclesiastical Insurance.



Ecclesiastical Insurance Group is a highly profitable, UK owned, specialist insurance and investment management company, that balances a strong commercial focus with a social conscience. They were founded in 1887 by Churchmen largely to protect churches from the consequences of fire. Today they are a broad financial services organisation offering financial products and insurance for individuals, families, groups and organisations such as schools, churches, care homes and charities. Ecclesiastical is also one of the UK's Top Ten Corporate Donors, having donated almost £48 million in charitable grants over the past 15 years. With this pedigree it is no surprise that Ecclesiastical places emphasis on the quality of its operations across the board. From the technology deployed to run its applications, to the skills of its IT professionals the focus is on providing great service and working with best-in-class suppliers. For the past three years Kelros has been the sole supplier of IBM Lotus Notes and Domino training services to Ecclesiastical.

The Training Requirement

Ecclesiastical's application development teams are multi-skilled professionals with responsibility for every aspect of the applications. The teams incorporate a range of skills among the Application Managers, Senior Developers, IT Developers and graduate trainees. Training delivered to the teams must be flexible enough to accommodate the different skills and knowledge requirements. Ten percent of the IT professionals at Ecclesiastical are IBM Lotus Technology experts, these are roughly split 50-50 between application developers and support staff.

During the run-up to Y2K Ecclesiastical started to look for a dedicated training resource for its Lotus Notes and Domino applications. They took the decision to look for a supplier which used IBM Lotus Technology in its work, rather than a generic training company. The rationale behind this, as Jenny Beekingham, an IT Developer with

Ecclesiastical explains, was to ensure that the trainers were actually using the technology on an ongoing basis. The company approached a number of potential suppliers and adopted Kelros as the sole provider. "We wanted training from a company actively involved with the technology on a daily basis. We knew that we would want to ask questions and adapt courses pragmatically, on the fly." Having experienced training courses where the trainers had to refer back to an expert to answer questions, we were determined to "have the experts there, in front of us, to answer our questions," says Jenny. This is a strategy that has certainly paid off.

The Kelros Solution – Technical Expertise and a Personal Approach

As an IBM Premier Partner focusing on IBM Lotus Domino products and services, Kelros bases its business on developing



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and supporting IBM Lotus Notes and Domino applications. The training it provides is delivered by Certified Lotus Professionals, who use the technology to deliver strategic advantage for its prestigious customer base. This means they are ideally placed to answer the questions of Ecclesiastical's trainees, as Jenny explains, "The trainers from Kelros are never thrown by any questions and can quickly adapt the course to meet the particular needs of the students. For example," she continues, "if there is something that we're not using, we can study it in less depth and focus more on areas of value. You can't do this with someone who is working from a script, or who doesn't have in-depth knowledge of the product."

Knowing the technology to this level also helps the Kelros trainer to establish the best pace and level of detail to cover in the course. Jenny adds, "The trainers will come for lunch with the students, which helps us all get to know each other, it also helps the trainer understand the experience and knowledge levels within the group, so the course can focus on key areas or the trainer can suggest other areas to look at."

The training is reinforced by materials provided by Kelros. These help fix the content of the training courses in the students' minds. The training is hands-on, and the printed manuals are very comprehensive, containing examples and exercises that students can work through at their own pace. This demonstrates, again, the level of flexibility that appeals to Ecclesiastical.

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Ecclesiastical's IT Technical Training Consultant, Julian Thorne, agrees that the quality of the trainer makes a significant contribution to the success of the training strategy. He points to other qualities that single Kelros out as a preferred training provider. Kelros was already providing IBM Lotus Notes and Domino training when Julian joined the company in 2005. He saw no need to look for an alternative supplier. To put this in context, Julian explains, that training in other software has to be delivered by three or more suppliers in each application or development tool – because no single company has delivered the standard that Ecclesiastical has come to expect from Kelros.

In particular Ecclesiastical values flexibility and accommodation, "Kelros recognises that we operate in the real world," Julian explains, "and IT people can be drawn into projects that have implications for the business as a whole as well as the IT department's targets. This may involve rescheduling a training course at the last minute. Kelros is flexible enough to be able to accommodate this."

Strong Relationships

The strength of the relationship between Kelros and Ecclesiastical has developed over the years. The level of continuity offered by Kelros is valued by Ecclesiastical, as Jenny Beckingham says, "We regularly see the same people and the whole relationship is managed very well by our account manager, who always takes care to introduce the trainer." Kelros has become familiar with the business requirements of Ecclesiastical and how it operates. Jenny continues, "Kelros isn't a huge, impersonal company, they know us as individuals and provide a personal service, along with confidence in their training as they know the technology inside out."

For Ecclesiastical, and many of the companies that Kelros trains in IBM Lotus Notes and Domino skills, the quality of training provided by Kelros is unmatched by those offering prescribed training courses leading to certificates. Jenny says, "Whether you are an administrator or a developer – the value lies in being able to understand the technology in order to do your job. This goes beyond the scope of most formal certification courses offered. Kelros understands this and the pragmatic approach of the skilled professionals is of higher value to us than a certificate."

Kelros and Ecclesiastical enjoy a strong and enduring relationship, based on respect and confidence in the training Kelros provides. The future for both looks healthy.

Built with IBM technology, Kelros solutions are easy to deploy, customise and use. Currently accessible from the IBM Lotus Notes client and the Web, ongoing initiatives will take the Kelros modules onto both IBM WebSphere Portal and IBM DB2 to provide customers with greater choice. Kelros' application licensing model ensures all solutions are sold on a per company basis rather than a per seat basis. Kelros applications are certified to run on Linux.

Kelros is an IBM Premier business partner, provided with technical and marketing support to help meet information technology needs of SMB companies. Kelros is an Optimised member of IBM's PartnerWorld Industry Networks (PWIN) for ISVs providing solutions that integrate enterprises, customers and supply chains. The PWIN initiatives accelerate teaming between Kelros and IBM to provide leadership in this growth arena.

For more information about Kelros visit: www.kelros.com

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