



Our approach to Virtual Training in 2020

Background

Instil has always supported virtual training, but only on an ad-hoc basis. In the past we would deliver a mixture of local & virtual training when the team in question was split geographically.

In response to the current circumstances we started delivering fully virtual courses this week, using Zoom and a combination of online whiteboards and modelling tools.

However we do not believe any of the standard approaches to online delivery enable us to preserve what is special about our brand of training. The Instil philosophy has always been based around bespoke agendas, tailoring the delivery to the delegates needs in real time and providing individual feedback through one to one coaching.

These are crucial aspects that are at risk when a delivery becomes virtual. With that in mind we have spent the past few weeks searching for a way to 'build a better mousetrap' and preserve what makes us unique.

Our Approach

1. Multiple trainers

Every virtual delivery will be conducted by two trainers. One will be in the role of instructor and work with the group as a whole. The other will be acting as a coach. Whilst the instructor is teaching and live coding the coach will monitor the individual and group chats - responding to queries from individuals and raising issues on behalf of the group. During exercises and project work both instructors will be reviewing code and suggesting changes - but the coach will work more with the delegates at the extremes of the skills curve, whilst the instructor will demonstrate solutions at the average pace. In this way everyone gets individual attention and no one is left behind.

2. Specialised tools

To achieve the interactive coaching mentioned above we're taking advantage of tools like JetBrains Space. Space is designed for distributed code development and provides dedicated functionality for reviewing, critiquing and amending other developers code. A trainer can work on an individual's submissions in complete privacy or critique project work in conjunction with the group. Instil are a JetBrains training partner and they are supporting us to build expertise in the tool and adapt it for a training environment.

3. Flexible hours

Classroom training is typically time limited to 9:30 - 16:30 to allow for commutes and other appointments. But within core hours the delegates can focus fully on the material. Virtual training is very much the reverse of this. As a result we will be partitioning our material down into blocks of 60 minutes or less. This will allow us to deliver a course across whatever timeline suits the group best. For example a delivery could take place over a week's worth of mornings, or via afternoon and evening sessions.

Our conviction is that each of these aspects will reinforce the others. So a developer attending a delivery at their convenience will always have an instructor available to provide tailored assistance and support. Ideally this hybrid of the classroom and e-learning approaches will be superior to both.

Availability

All of our portfolio is already available for virtual delivery, but there will be a gradual conversion to the new approach. We are currently running test deliveries internally and will be running 'shakedown deliveries' with partner companies in April. We hope to have all our major courses converted to the new approach by the end of May.

If you are interested please contact us for further information.

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