



making IT personal

joining the DOTs

Making IT Personal:
Joining the DOTs is a scheme which creates Digital Outreach Trainers (DOTs) from volunteers.

DOTs deliver informal mentoring in digital technologies in a work, community or home setting.

The DOTs scheme is a European Commission funded initiative to address digital inclusion.

DOT Story – Iain Milner



Iain Milner is an accounts administrator and single parent who has discovered IT and digital technology during his working life and has developed a keen interest. Becoming a Digital Outreach Trainer (DOT) has allowed him to build on his enjoyment of helping others and to explore opportunities that would otherwise have been inaccessible to him.

Iain has been a DOT since March 2010, and this opportunity came at a time when he was considering what further education possibilities were open to him. He explains, “I was thinking about doing something in finance, or perhaps IT or even management—I couldn’t make my mind up which direction to go in, and having a full time job and responsibilities at home, I couldn’t find anything suitable.”

The DOTs scheme demonstrated a way for Iain to work towards accreditation and qualifications without making any drastic alterations to his life, and in an area he already had some knowledge about: “Computing and mobile phones are things that I’ve picked up myself, or from other people showing me in the past. It’s something I enjoy, so I was most of the way there already.”

“What really sold the DOTs scheme to me is that there is no regimented study period and no need to be at a certain place at a certain time. You just fill your diary in when you want, from things you do everyday, which allows you to structure it how you want.”

“It’s in my nature to help people if I can, so filling in my diary was just a case of documenting what I was already doing. So if you like helping people, you end up with a qualification really easily.”

Iain has since become an approved DOT with OCN level 2 accreditation, an accolade he acknowledges was in part due to gentle encouragement from his e-mentor, assigned to each DOT from the outset of their participation.

“Even though I’ve never met my e-mentor face to face, we’ve had a lot of contact over email, and I’ve felt comfortable with her from day one. I found her incredibly approachable. Her emails have always given me a lot of encouragement, and she has always been positive when advising me on filling out my diary entries.”

One of the most important things that Iain identifies as having learnt from being a DOT is how people can learn from your experience: “When a colleague at work first started, they were not very IT literate and I showed them how to set up their email software and how it works—how to do a signature, attach documents, and everything they needed. Before I was a DOT, I would have just taken it away and set it up for them, but that would usually result in a lot of questions afterwards as they’d no idea what I’d done. Now I’ve learned to work with people who need help and point them towards what they want to do, and to let them do it.”

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Sometimes, helping people can take a little longer, as Iain found when advising an elderly neighbour with online payments: “My next-door neighbour broke her hip, which meant she couldn’t get out to pay her rent every week. She didn’t know about doing it online, so I took my laptop round and started showing her how to set it up using her debit card. She had never used a computer before, so getting her to learn took quite a long time, making once weekly payments, but after a while she got her own laptop and was able to carry on paying the rent herself.”

Finally, in the wider scenario, Iain sees the spread of knowledge and skills encouraged by the DOTs scheme as important to long-term employment, especially at a time of economic uncertainty: “IT skills are transferable, and can open up your prospects for employment. Being a DOT shows people that what they already do at work, or at home, with technology is a skill they can build on for the future.”

Find out more at www.makingitpersonal.eu