

Online portal to ready job seekers



Above: Roy Simkin and Scott Douglas work on a new online portal which is designed to prepare jobseekers for the workplace.

Left: FGM Consultants chief executive Michael Grogan is impressed with the new online portal.



Employment has been impacted in a variety of ways in the current COVID-19 environment, but a Gippsland training provider, has seized the opportunity to introduce an innovative new online portal to ready job seekers for roles and opportunities post pandemic.

Employability Skills Training (EST) plays a role in preparing job seekers for the workplace through interactive learning experiences based around real work settings, and exposure to various work environments.

Gippsland-based training provider FGM Consultants anticipated the disruption COVID-19 would cause, and quickly swung into action to migrate their EST, part of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment Youth Jobs PaTH program, into a digital platform.

FGM connected with Food & Fibre Gippsland to get access to a learning management system already in development and intended for completion by mid-June 2020.

Best described as a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of educational courses, training programs, or learning and development programs, the system has been funded by the Victorian Government through a grant to Food & Fibre Gippsland. It has been designed by the Melbourne based company eCreators.

Using existing FGM created materials and modules, that June delivery was achieved in just 10 days, with the FGM team working collaboratively with eCreators to build an intuitive, easy to use system that allows job seekers continued access to EST support.

FGM Consultants chief executive Michael Grogan is impressed with what has been achieved in a very short time frame and is very encouraged by the quality of participant engagement.

"As the impacts of COVID-19 became clearer, we pretty quickly realised that all of our Employability Skills Training (EST) activities would need to be conducted in a way that didn't involve any face-to-face contact."

The system that has been created has enabled FGM to replicate their face-to-face system program to the new online model, while retaining an engaging, classroom-like interactivity.

"The system allows our trainers and administrators to actively monitor participants' time on screen and course progress, meaning student contact and support can be easily targeted and maintained throughout the program – it's working brilliantly!" Mr Grogan said.

On April 1, FGM hosted an online LMS information session for Job Active providers and a recorded version was forwarded to anyone unable to attend.

Testing for FGM's online capability was conducted five days later and the LMS was launched in time for FGM's first tranche of fully online EST activities as scheduled, on April 14.

An important activity in the Employability Skills Training is connection to real work environments, so to achieve that in a virtual space, the next steps are for FGM to upload videos from employers across a variety of industries.

Via these videos, the employers will be speaking to the course content, providing industry overviews and outlining their expectations of employees, as well as sharing personal experiences about their employment journeys.

FGM is anticipating building a library of industries, people and workplace visits over the coming months that will continue whenever the business returns to normal "face to face" delivery.

There is potential for gamification of some content which will give participants more interactive, formative based learning opportunities. This can help improve information retention as well as task-mastery to position them better to meet the needs of future industries.

Food & Fibre Gippsland chief executive Nicola Pero is delighted with the success of this initial roll out of the LMS. "Being able to collaborate with one of our strategic industry partners on the Employability Skills Training project is fantastic, and as we continue to build these online capabilities and capacity, the positive future flow on benefits to support the training needs for Gippsland food & fibre members and businesses in the region is significant" she said.

In their daily improvement workshops, the FGM team continues to explore new ways to make the LMS a fun learning experience, discussing the "What If's" and "Can We" concepts to see "What can work" and "If Not", "Why Not?"

They're both embracing and enforcing the rule that nothing is off the table, it's just they might not have the answer just yet!

Next item on the agenda is a "My Kitchen Rules - FGM Style" fun engagement contest for all participants, all online, which may be a world first for an LMS.

As a busy RTO pre COVID-19, FGM Consultants has already been investing time and money into migrating many courses online to support their clients, particularly those for whom the face to face contact can be logistically challenging.

With the success they've enjoyed in the first 10 days of this new portal, the FGM team, together with the Food & Fibre Gippsland Workforce Capabilities Project Manager, Julian Hill, believe the possibilities are endless.

"We are definitely on track to be market leaders in providing business options to use LMS and truly streamline training needs for employers, employees and job seekers not just in Gippsland, but around Australia".