lifetime + ciphr

Integrated HR and LMS that transforms career conversations

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About Lifetime Training

Established in 1995, Lifetime Training is now one of the largest apprenticeship training providers in the UK. Over 20,000 people a year choose to learn life-changing skills with Lifetime, which was named top training provider of the year in 2021. It has more than 1,200 staff across the UK.

Key points:

+ Needed an integrated HR, talent management and LMS platform

+ UK-wide workforce of 1,200 'life-changing people'

+ Project focused on delivering a better experience across the employee lifecycle

+ Ciphr customer since 2020

"If I didn't have Ciphr, I wouldn't have time to do anything else other than administration. It's invaluable"

Zyra Dela Torre
System administrator

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What did Lifetime Training need from an HCM platform?

With a sizeable workforce spread across the UK – many of whom work in field-based roles – and a head office in Bristol, Lifetime needed an HCM platform that was engaging and user-friendly, could support the organisation's mission to develop its own people and, crucially, enable the 16-strong HR team to work smarter, not harder.

Its existing HR system was "clunky and no longer fit for purpose; it was mostly just used for core HR administration," admits HR director Tessa James. "About a year before we started looking for a new system, I'd said: 'I can't use that system anymore'," adds senior HR business partner Rachel Delgado. "It simply didn't have the functionality we needed, there was no self-service element, the reporting was poor, and it was difficult to maintain."

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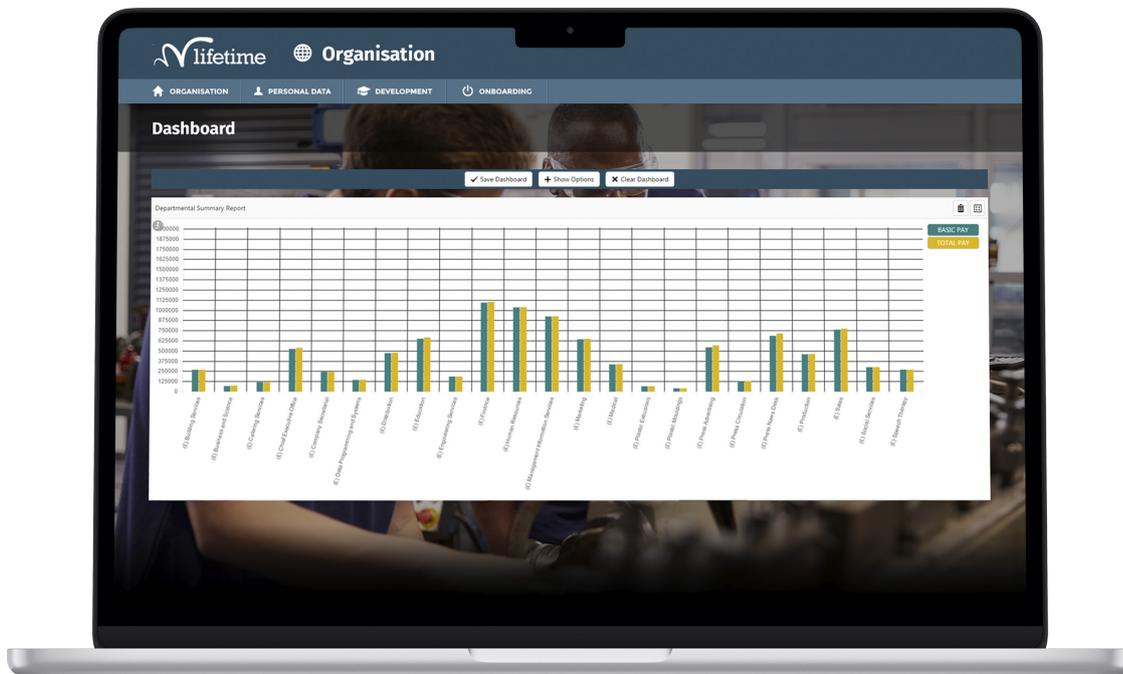
James said Lifetime needed a solution that satisfied four key goals. "We wanted an integrated system that had a real focus on learning and development and talent management, to drive our people capability and competence. We also wanted the system to deliver time efficiencies – not just for HR, but for people managers, too.

"We wanted a system that allowed us to have much better people insights and data that would allow us to shape and drive our people agenda. And, finally, because Lifetime is

Ofsted-regulated, we needed an HR platform that could help us create and manage our single central record."

Reliable, straightforward integrations with Lifetime's existing recruitment system, and its payroll software, were also on the company's wishlist. "We needed those links to be seamless because we were getting lots of queries about missing pieces of data because we didn't have those connections in place," adds Delgado.

"Ciphr's onboarding module helps us communicate our mission and vision before new starters' first day with us"

Tessa James
HR director

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Assessing the market

Before going to market, Lifetime created a matrix document that listed more than 50 core functionalities they needed a new HCM system to cover. This helped it create a shortlist of just two providers.

"We wanted a system that had the core capabilities we needed, but allowed us to make tweaks where we needed to. Ciphr absolutely delivered that for us," says James. "Ciphr's LMS also really stood out: there are very few providers that offer a fully integrated HR and LMS solution." L&D was a key driver for the procurement project because Lifetime's value comes from its people – especially its learning coaches. "We needed to make sure we had the right tool to support our life-changing people, most of whom work remotely," says James.

Ciphr Connect's user-friendliness also made the solution stand out for Delgado. "As soon as we saw the look and feel of Ciphr, it just felt more aligned to our business than the other system we'd looked at. It just felt more inviting, and I liked that we could brand it to match our identity."

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Implementing and launching Ciphr Connect

Lifetime had an ambitious timeframe for implementing its new software. "Our project manager, Bev, was fantastic throughout," says Delgado. "We got some great feedback about lengthening the project's timescales and taking a phased approached to implementation." Working with Ciphr's consultants helped Lifetime translate their ideas for using the new system into "realistic terms", she adds. "Our consultant, Rob, also helped us with the data collection and migration, which was quite an overwhelming task. He was really patient with us and kept making sure we understood what needed to happen and how the system could work."

As part of the run up to launch, the HR team worked with Ciphr to brand their system using Lifetime's palette of colours, and gave the system a unique name: Milo (My Learning and Information Organiser). "We wanted to clearly communicate the system's purpose: it's for much more than just booking holidays," says Delgado. "Milo is where our people do all their HR and learning activities."

The initial rollout phase focused on functionality and tasks that were similar to Lifetime's previous HR system. "Because Ciphr HR is so easy and intuitive to use, the training we offered employees was quite light-touch," says Delgado. After rolling out self-service access, they moved on to other elements such as safeguarding, case management, and automatic notifications. Then came the final pieces of the puzzle: talent management and Ciphr LMS. "And this is where we believed we would add real value for the business," she says.

"The Ciphr platform enables us to deliver a better employee experience"

Rachel Delgado
Senior HR business partner

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Streamlining and improving onboarding with Ciphr Connect

Most of Lifetime's people work remotely, in the field, and the company is taking on around 200 new people each year – meaning recruitment, and successfully onboarding new hires, is a major task for the HR team.

Lifetime's existing recruitment platform integrates with Ciphr's onboarding and HR software. "It's really straightforward: it pulls the candidates' details straight into the Ciphr system, so the HR administrator doesn't have to enter any data," explains Delgado. "It saves time and reduces the risk of human error. We use this information to set up all our IT access, so it's vital that this is correct."

"Ciphr has automated a lot of my workflows – especially for new starters," says HR administrator Zyra Dela Torre "We used to do a lot of that setup manually with spreadsheets, and Ciphr's eliminated all of that." The candidate importer tool saves me so much time; I no longer need to extract information manually from our applicant tracking system (ATS). Having that automation helps drive efficiency in the HR team."

At a time when many people have lengthy notice periods, Ciphr Connect is also helping Lifetime optimise that crucial pre-boarding phase. "There's always a lag between accepting a contract and joining a new company," says James. "Ciphr allows us to really drive that employee experience and engagement before they join us. It allows a lot of the admin and the paperwork to be taken out of those first days of the onboarding period. It's been really useful to ensure that new starters buy into Lifetime – our mission, our vision, our values – understand our proposition, and complete all of that paperwork before their first day with us."

Previously, the HR team would receive copies of important, sensitive documents by email; now it is captured and stored securely in Ciphr's onboarding module – which new starters can access before their first day at Lifetime – and then transferred over to the central HR software. "It reduces the risk of people sending things through to us on email, and that going into the wrong hands. Now it's all securely held in Ciphr."

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Empowering people to have better career conversations

Having an integrated HR and LMS means that Lifetime's employees only need to go to one place for all their development needs. Delgado explains: "Let's say you've had a one-to-one conversation today and reflected on your performance. You've thought about what you might need to do differently, or the direction you'd like your career to take. You can refer to the one-to-one form, and then go straight into the LMS and see what activities and resources are immediately available to help with your role or career aspirations."

"It's so easy to search in the LMS for what learning materials and activities are available. You can also look at career pathways and internal apprenticeships – it's all there."

Before implementing Ciphr HR, the outcomes of development conversations were captured in Word or PDF documents, and stored locally on individuals' computers – creating difficulties with version histories. "It was really hard to get access to old documents, for example if a manager left a company," says Delgado. "We needed to have consistent forms, and to

be able to see the history of performance and development conversations in one place."

The old method of recording performance conversations also meant that Lifetime's HR team was excluded from the process. "Now with Ciphr HR, we can sample the quality of conversations – we can see what information managers are capturing, relate them to successes or improvements required, and provide recommendations and training to our managers about how to hold those conversations," says Delgado. "We can also understand what additional training resources we might need to add into the LMS. There are so many benefits to having everything in one place in Ciphr."

Feedback and engagement with the systems from managers has been positive, she says. "Our initial group of testers loved it, which reassured us that we were on the right track. In our most recent round of 'Evolves' [Lifetime's appraisals], 95% of people completed it via Ciphr – a great improvement on what happened previously."

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A year on from introducing Ciphr HR and Ciphr LMS, "we're starting to see real measures of success through our engagement surveys," says James. "The perception of personal growth has increased by 10% since we rolled out Ciphr LMS. We've also seen an uplift in the perception of constructive career conversations and development with line managers."

Delgado adds: "The Ciphr platform is enabling us to deliver a better employee experience. Our people no longer have to worry about the administration around performance conversations – they can concentrate on the quality of that conversation and on helping someone reflect on their performance and their career aspirations. We've not been able to add that type of value to the business before."

"There are so many benefits to having all our people data in one place, in Ciphr"

Rachel Delgado
Senior HR business partner

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Unlocking insight with data and reporting

A need for robust people data was one of the key drivers for Lifetime's HR systems project. "We were almost operating blind before we implemented Ciphr HR," says James. "We're still working out how to use it to the best of our ability, but we are beginning to pull together data from across the employee lifecycle; from attrition data to talent mapping, development needs and company objectives through to usage of learning resources.

"This insight is enabling us to understand where we need to put more time and resource into our people, and what's working and what isn't working so well. We can pull out those touch points, layer them on top of our attrition rates, and begin to drive our people agenda forward."

James adds that Ciphr enables Lifetime's people team to better pull together its "big data reviews", which are compiled quarterly. "We can surface and pull out our people data in a much clearer and more insightful way. It's allowing us to identify where in the employee lifecycle we need to intervene."

Delgado is also using Ciphr's reporting functionality to dive into aspects of people management that Lifetime previously hasn't been able to analyse. "I've just started to look at sickness absence data; we didn't have robust data on that previously, and now we can understand why people are off sick and for how long," she says. "Knowing and understanding the reasons for sickness helps us think about the wellbeing interventions and initiatives we have in place, and if there's anything else we need to introduce."

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Using Ciphr HR to produce the single central register

As an Ofsted-registered company, being able to demonstrate that all safeguarding requirements are complied with, and being able to produce a single central register (SCR), was critical for Lifetime. "Previously, we held all the relevant information in various shared drives and spreadsheets," says Delgado. "Now with Ciphr HR, we have it all in one place, which makes it easy for us to identify if training or a background check for a specific person needs updating." It also makes it easier for the team to collate relevant reports, she adds. And Ciphr HR's automatic notifications functionality

means the HR team no longer has to manually chase information when it's due; automated emails take care of this for them. "That's reduced our workload a lot," says Delgado.

She adds: "We were audited twice in the past six months for safeguarding purposes and both of those went really well because we are confident that we have all the information we need in Ciphr – both through the reporting we can do, and through the single central register check."

Managing employee relations cases through Ciphr HR

Before introducing Ciphr HR, Lifetime stored information related to employee relations cases in a spreadsheet. "Often, there were details missing, and it was hard to report on trends and themes," says Delgado. "Ciphr's made it so much easier. I can manage the team more effectively – the volume of cases

assigned to each person – because I can see all that clearly in Ciphr." At the moment, only HR users have access to cases in Ciphr HR, but, she says "we know the system has that extra capability for us to open up access to managers and employees, which we will use at some point."

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Integrated HR and payroll systems

Introducing Ciphr Connect also created an opportunity for Lifetime to link its payroll system to Ciphr HR – generating time efficiencies for the HR team, and improving data accuracy and security. "With Ciphr's paylink, all the information we're inputting in the HR system goes directly to the payroll system," says Delgado. "We have a new, better way to check the accuracy of the information – which has really helped me with my monthly checks. Before, it would probably take me a full day to check all the data; now, it takes just a couple of hours. The different reports we can run enable us to easily see new starters, leavers, changes and internal moves, too."

Working with Ciphr

Alongside Ciphr's typical customer support – which includes implementation support, a customer success manager, and access to the customer care team – Lifetime training also purchased a Ciphr Service Package (CSP), which comprises unlimited training, on-demand services, and regular system consultancy sessions.

"The Ciphr Service Package has made the project a real success," says Delgado. "At first I was sceptical, but it quickly became apparent that it offers great value: there's ongoing additional training, but also consultancy hours where we can sit with a Ciphr expert and discuss how we can set up the system." Configuration that Ciphr has helped with includes setting up additional notifications, bespoke reports, and a regular system optimisation check. "It's really beneficial to have someone study how you're using the system and offer feedback," she adds. "These suggestions help us to reflect on how we can get the most out of the system."

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Delgado adds: "It's important to remember that any HR system is a living, breathing thing. You continually have to work on it and put effort into it. You can't think that you're going to implement a new HR system and that's it, you'll get a great return on investment. You constantly have to assess how you are using it, and how you want to use it." "Any HR system is only as good as how you build it and make it work," says James. "The CSP has allowed us to keep developing how we use Ciphr HR."

The CSP includes access to unlimited training via the Ciphr Academy. "I've not seen a platform like that from another system vendor," says Delgado. "The advice is all really easy to follow, and it means we can look into how we can resolve issues ourselves. It's great to have as a resource, in addition to the Ciphr customer care team."

System administrator Dela Torre also appreciates the system's ongoing flexibility. "Ciphr HR stands out because we don't have to do a lot of customisation work while, at the same time, it is flexible enough to adapt to our business processes."

She adds: "If I didn't have Ciphr, I wouldn't have time to do anything else other than administration. It's invaluable."

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Helping Lifetime deliver a consistent employee experience

"I'd recommend Ciphr because, first of all, it's easy to implement," says Delgado. "There's a lovely team who'll support you, not only with implementation, but also with the ongoing maintenance of the system. I feel like Ciphr really wants to understand how you work and help you get the most out of the system."

James says the Ciphr team feels "culturally aligned" with Lifetime – helping the two companies build a long-term working relationship. "All of Ciphr's experts have been helpful and readily available," she says. "I really like that Ciphr is open to suggestions; they listen to and explore our feedback.

"What makes Ciphr stand out for me is that it covers the whole employee lifecycle, which very few HR systems do. From the moment someone joins Lifetime to the moment they leave, that experience is consistent and it's delivered and managed through Ciphr HR."

Delgado adds: "Ciphr HR takes away all the bureaucracy and administration when it comes to filling in forms. It helps to reinforce the relationship between the line manager and employee by setting out the processes

managers need to follow. They also have the LMS right there, with bite-size learning activities at their fingertips."

Delgado's favourite aspect of Ciphr HR? "For me, the best thing is that it's easy to set up and maintain. That doesn't sound too exciting on the face of it, but, day-to-day, that's really important. It means I have more capacity to add value to the business, because the compliance and administration aspects of HR are easier to take care of."

> "We absolutely love using Ciphr and look forward to being able to develop it even further. It's a brilliant tool for us as a business"
>
> Rachel Delgado
> Senior HR business partner

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Want to find out how we can help streamline your business?

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