



## How the Halifax Building Society uses Easy i's computer-based training package

The Halifax Building Society was looking for a cost effective, easy-to-use PC-based training package which staff could use in their own time and which would not require any in-house development. Barry Anderson answers questions on whether Easy i's package, *Handle with Care* provided the answer.

The programme consists of an introductory tutorial and data protection-related games, followed by five main sections of the application:

1. Introduction 2. Making sense of the legislation 3. Key principles 4. Data subject areas and 5. Security.

*Q1. What was the cost of implementation for the Easy i package?*

The cost ranges from £595 for a single workstation licence. However if one wishes to adopt it on a company-wide basis, an appropriate pricing structure is fixed to take into account the size of the organisation and the number of potential users.

*Q2. How long is the sequence of the programme?*

Usually 20 to 30 minutes per section for someone vaguely familiar with the Data Protection Act - about 2 to 3 hours in total.

*Q3. How many people completed the course?*

At the time of the presentation the course was at an early stage and only a limited number of people had completed it. However, the plan is to implement the course in all 2,700 outlets with all 32,500 staff by March 1998.

*Q4. Who monitors personnel to make sure they complete the programme?*

At the Halifax, department or branch managers are responsible for ensuring all employees have adequate training on the Data Protection Act and that they run through the programme. They have, on average, 15-20 staff to monitor.

*Q5. Are there plans for updating the training which employees receive?*

Yes, every year staff must go through Data Protection Act training and managers must sign and certify that staff have been trained. The purpose of this is to produce documentation or proof that staff were properly trained when and if the organisation is prosecuted.

*Q6. How do you ensure that personnel finish the computer-based training sessions?*

The programme compiles and maintains records on an individual basis and is able to report on progress in a specific branch. The computer based training is not the total answer to all training needs. It needs to be implemented as a part of a wider effort to raise awareness of data protection.

*Q7. Since the needs and learning styles of staff are different, are shorter learning periods an option?*

Yes, the package can be modified and customised to shorten the time required for the computer based training course - such as just having the self-assessment test.

*Q8. Are there other similar training packages?*

The Registrar's Office does have a training package not dissimilar from this. It is aimed primarily at students rather than for in-house training and lasts between 30 and 45 minutes.

*Q9 What is the advantage of computer-based training over traditional teaching methods?*

The Halifax Building Society has not researched whether computer-based training is more effective than classroom-based. But most staff do like lectures, with anecdotes and examples, in addition to undergoing computer-based training. In general, staff do not need to understand the law itself to be trained in data protection and to make a correct interpretation. They only need to know what to do and how to behave in certain situations where data protection issues are involved.

**This report was based on a presentation at the Privacy Laws & Business Annual Conference in Cambridge in July.**

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