



Alpha CRC's new training program develops the next generation of localization PMs

Expert project management is at the heart of any successful localization company.

That's why Alpha has developed a specialized new training program to develop Project Managers (PMs) with the skills and experience to thrive in the modern localization industry. It's called the Alpha PM Training Program and the first intake began in October 2020.

We talked to Course Director Charlotte Virgoe about the reasons why it's come about, what the training involves, the aspirations of the program, and the progress so far.

Q: Can you give us a quick summary of what the Alpha PM Training program is all about?

A: It's a nine-month training program with a mixture of training methods, aiming to give our new PMs a thorough, in-depth understanding of the localization industry, project management in this sector, Alpha CRC as a company, and experience working with our range of clients.

Q: Why has it been introduced?

A: We wanted to ensure we have an outstanding "next generation" of PMs coming through here at Alpha CRC. It's structured so that the trainees are well prepared to work in any of Alpha's divisions and are not trained only on one client or set of clients.

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Q: Who is currently taking part in the program?

A: On this first program, we have five trainees. It's a diverse group: we have two trainees from China, two from the UK and one from Italy.

Q: Can you tell us how the training is structured?

A: There are five concurrent training tracks which are aimed at developing both a depth and range of skills and experience. These are: classroom learning, on-the-job training, individual/group projects, placements and assessments.

Q: Can you tell us more about these different training tracks?

A: Classroom learning is particularly heavy at the start of the program. A number of Alpha CRC staff, led by [myself and two colleagues from our Operations department], are providing group education on technical, business and conceptual aspects of the Alpha PM role. The team then gets to put this classroom learning into practice by working on live projects, which forms their on-the-job training. We expect they will learn a good deal by doing.

There are also regular individual/group projects. The trainees will have specific assignments to complete that involve proactively contacting different people within Alpha, carrying out useful research and analysis, and presenting the results.

Placements are another key feature of the program. At various points across the nine months, the trainees will spend a week or so assigned to other departments within Alpha, to learn in more depth what they do and how they work, to broaden their experience and to build better relationships throughout the company.

We have very high expectations of our trainees! Consequently, there will also be regular assessments, on both hard and soft skills, to make sure that we are training them well and they are implementing what we are teaching.

Q: Who is conducting the training?

A: Training so far has largely been carried out by [myself, the Operations managers, and a lead PM], but we would hope for the involvement of very many people through the duration of the program. We have organised for all the managers in [the Cambridge office] to come and talk to the trainees to explain their role.

Q: What have been your first impressions of the program? Have you learnt anything you didn't expect?

A: My first impressions are that the trainees are a great group who are keen to learn, but also that the volume of things to learn is huge! So it's a good thing that we have nine months to cover it all.

Q: So, what has been the biggest challenge so far?

A: The biggest challenge right now is the number of different components the trainees need to understand and implement in order to manage even a very simple project. This might include understanding how to use [various day-to-day software], finding resources, communicating with linguists, etc. There are a lot of different things to learn all at the same time.

Q: What's the most exciting thing about the program?

A: The most exciting thing is the potential of the trainees themselves. It's great to see how hard they are working and how engaged they are, even when it is challenging. It's also exciting to remember all the opportunities Alpha CRC can offer and the experiences we can give them.

Q: What is your overall hope for the outcome of the program?

A: My hope is that the trainees all really enjoy their experience, that they learn a lot and that they develop into taking on exciting future roles at Alpha.

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: The scheme aims to benefit Alpha CRC as a whole in the long run. So far, everyone has been extremely helpful and it reminds us what a great place Alpha is.

For more information on Alpha CRC's services, please contact us at globalservices@thisisalpha.com