

Yeo Valley

A growing business

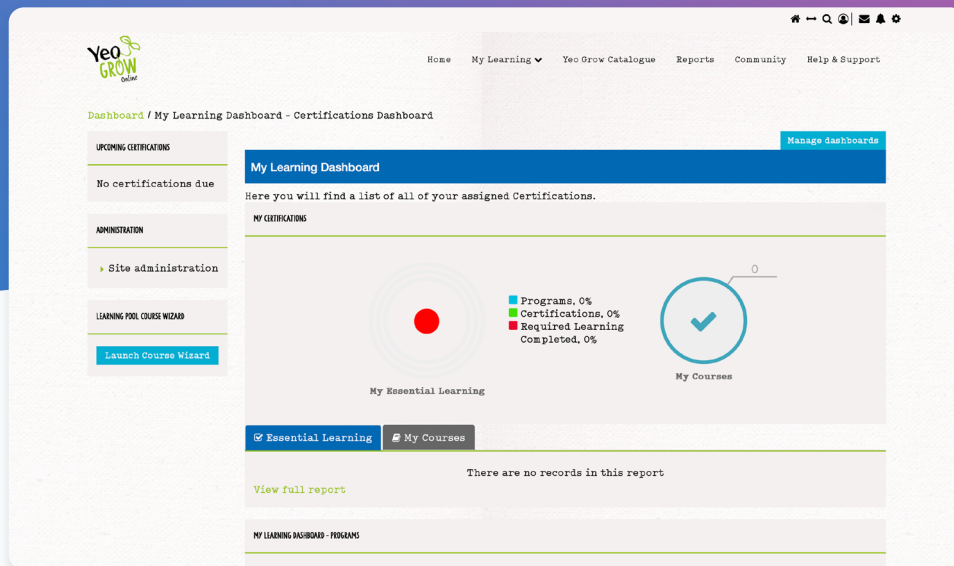
When a small family business grows into a household name, how do you ensure the ethos and mindset that allowed it to flourish isn't lost? How do you make sure every employee knows the value of their role, and understands the important part they play in the business's success, whether there are 100 or 1,000 of them?

Owned by the Mead family for more than half a century, Yeo Valley began life when Roger and Mary Mead took on Holt Farms with 30 cows, a few sheep and some arable crops. The yogurt business came about just over ten years later when they started selling yogurt around the valley in their Morris Minor van, and as they say, the rest is history!

Today, Yeo Valley has sites spanning eight locations across Somerset, Devon and London, and its employees have a wide variety of roles, from hospitality and property management to sales and marketing as well as technical, engineering and dairy operations roles – which is the focus of this case study within Yeo Valley Production Ltd.

Great learning and development are imperative for employee engagement, and learning and development systems and courses play a huge part in this important mix. This impact story shows how LMS is facilitating a wide-scale change for Yeo Valley to improve career development, job satisfaction and employee safety and retention.





Five successful decades

In 2020, as a celebration of the hard work and passion its people shared for the business over its five successful decades, a 20% share of Yeo Valley Production was placed into an Employee Benefit Trust - meaning every employee is eligible for a bonus based on business success.

And yet, as the company grew, its learning facilities hadn't been able to grow with it. There was no structure to learning and development nor a clear plan for career progression, and that combined with the usual challenges of facilitating learning in the middle of a production line had led to falling employee engagement, difficulty retaining great people and the time to competence risk of health and safety standards falling below part.

A commitment to growth

In 2020, Yeo Valley unveiled a new purpose: to Nurture Nourish, People and Planet, and it sought to produce healthy, nutritious food for everyone – and it knew its people would play a key part in this success. And with its historic commitment to its employees through the Employee Benefit Trust, so too came a commitment to ensuring every employee had the chance to grow and have a future at Yeo Valley.

With sights set on a new learning management system (LMS), Yeo Valley found the perfect partnership with Learning Pool to deliver its ambitious strategy and aimed to:

- Improve staff retention, satisfaction and sickness through skill development.
- Improve accident and incident rates (and reporting).
- Improve the chances for internal mobility through promotions and role flexibility.

Additionally, it would:

- Save time and money through reduced hires.
- Free up managers' time to focus on coaching and managing their teams.
- Reduce downtime through upskilling.
- Provide accurate records of learning.

Ahead of the game

What Yeo Valley couldn't have foreseen was that the day after it signed contracts with Learning Pool, the UK went into its first COVID-19 lockdown. Meaning the entire design and development of the LMS had to be completed remotely. A new layer of importance and urgency was placed on delivering a solution to its army of key workers who found themselves responsible for keeping up the supply of food to the UK's empty-shelved supermarkets. Unphased, the partners worked together to get ahead of the game, launching the LMS within just two months.

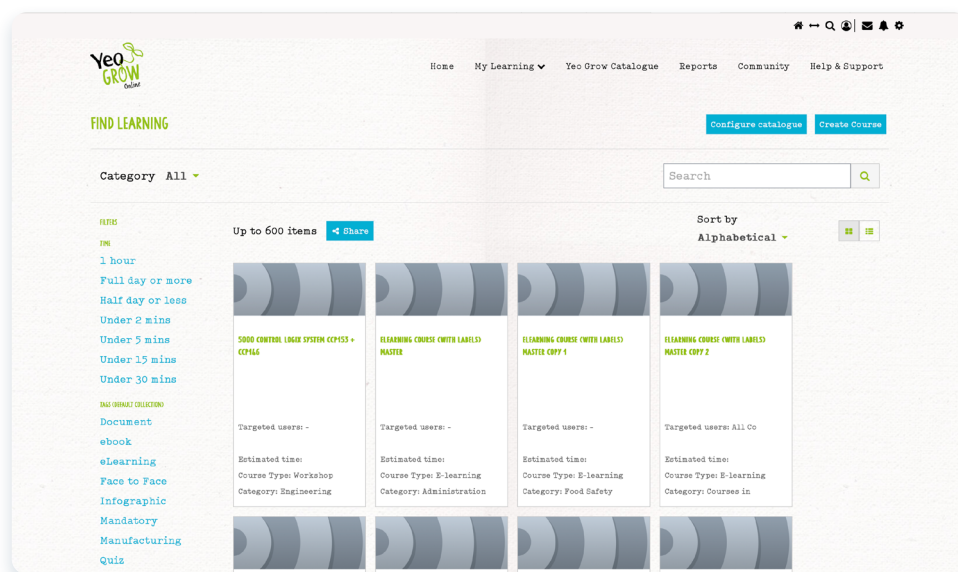
A perfectly timed solution

Though a pivot from its original plan to launch compliance training, COVID-19 allowed Yeo Valley to release the LMS with vital support for its workers, from dealing with stress to coping with COVID – they were able to package up help and support to give the employee base the opportunity to get to know the LMS without the expectation of assessed learning – whilst providing invaluable support through a difficult time. It also allowed the business to understand the learning styles and personas of employees across the company, before a full launch.

Facilitating career pathways

On a mission to grow its own, Yeo Valley set up career pathways to give employees a clear view of their options for career progression – along with specific training programs to facilitate promotion. As well as creating new roles and a competency-based framework based on employee feedback, Yeo Valley now uses a blended learning approach including online content, workplace learning both on and off the job and a mixture of in-house and external certifications and qualifications. As a result:

- Management and technical roles aren't such a big jump as Lead and Technical Operators have enhanced management or mechanical aspects in their roles.
- Efficiencies are improved as Technical Operators have been upskilled to fix entry-level mechanical faults (freeing up engineers to focus on machine maintenance etc.).
- Accident rates continue to fall as operatives across the board are trained to greater extent, have more experience and are more engaged with incident/near-miss reporting.



Tailored to its audience

When over 75% of your workforce doesn't have a company email address, many have English as a second language and the vast majority of their working day is spent keeping to strict production schedules, online learning can pose a real challenge. The LMS was built with the capability to overcome this, e.g., joining instructions and manager approvals being copied into managers



“We’re seeing more internal promotions. I can think of a woman who was quite quietly spoken and didn’t necessarily put herself forward for things. But since going through the career pathway, she’s been able to identify leadership and management skills and has been promoted to Lead Operator. Seeing her grow has been really great. People being recognized for the work they are doing is brilliant!”

The impacts

Yeo Valley is committed to ensuring all its employees have the chance to grow, and the implementation of the LMS has now seen;

An increase in employee engagement

(Yeo Valley Employee Engagement survey responses) show:

- A 3-point increase in “my manager develops people skills and knowledge”.
- A 12-point increase in “I have had a discussion with my manager about my own personal development”.

As a result of this improved engagement, Yeo Valley has also seen an increase of 50% in internal promotions.



50%

Increase in internal promotions

Complaints

The number of complaints caused by human error decreased by 8% within the first 8 months.

A decrease in slips, trips, and falls reporting and incidents

Since the implementation of the course (June 2022) and subsequent completions of the course across the business, Yeo Valley has seen the awareness of reporting hazards increase in tandem with completions and more importantly, since Feb-2023, the percentage of incidents relating to slips has reduced to zero which has been maintained since that time.



8%

Decrease in complaints



This case study was written in partnership with the team at Learnovate Research Centre, a not-for-profit research center focused on learning technologies. We used Learnovate's PEAS model to structure the consultancy with the customer.