Tech-Enabled Change Management: How University of Pretoria Embraced Adopt to Improve the Learner Experience

By connecting learners and faculty with detailed help resources, Anthology® Adopt played a crucial role in UP's successful LMS migration.

An Education Powerhouse from South Africa

When the University of Pretoria (UP) first opened in 1908, a mere 32 students came through the doors to pursue their dream of further education. Fast track to today and UP is now home for over 54,000 learners, having firmly established itself among the top echelon of global institutions. UP's vision, as outlined on their website, is "to be a leading research-intensive university in Africa, recognised internationally for its quality, relevance, and impact, as also for developing people, creating knowledge, and making a difference locally and globally."

Embracing digital learning has been central to UP's ascension. It first adopted learning management system (LMS) technology as early as 1998 and has long been a leader in developing and promoting best practices for digital instruction. UP's dedicated E-Learning team, comprised of 16 passionate professionals, works in close collaboration with faculty to ensure that courses are optimized for online and hybrid learning, and to promote the use of technology to advance student outcomes.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:
PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

STUDENTS:
54,000

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:
Blackboard
Anthology Adopt

The Challenge

To Support Students and Faculty through the Transition to Blackboard's Latest Version

The University of Pretoria decided to upgrade their Anthology® Blackboard instance to Ultra to provide the most modern learning experience to their vast community. With a large student body and faculty, UP set about building a plan to communicate the process and benefits of modernizing to Ultra without interrupting the learning journey.

Dolf Jordaan, deputy director of the E-learning division, was aware of the value of adopting change management best practices during times of technological change. "Change management is something you can read about, you can think about, but ultimately you need to do it to truly understand it. Through the process of updating our LMS previously, we knew about the importance of change management and communication," Jordaan explained.

Jordaan and his team also understood that technology plays an important role in managing change, and that communication within the LMS is an effective way to reach both students and instructors. They had previously piloted IMPACT by Instructure for this purpose but found the support and pace of development lacking for Blackboard institutions. "We were looking for something simple that gave us control over messages to users, and that provided responsive, localised support," Jordaan said.

The Solution

A Collaborative Approach to Quickly Adopt Blackboard

When Anthology Adopt launched in 2023, UP leapt at the opportunity to implement it as a support for their change management plan. Powered by Pendo, Adopt provides simple workflows, engaging and tailored in-app communication formats, and detailed reporting, which allowed the team at UP to broadcast the benefits of Ultra at scale to both students and faculty.

Dolf Jordaan and his E-Learning team developed award winning professional development courses supported by incredible training resources to ensure a smooth transition to Ultra. The **clickUP Ultra Help Site** was developed to place valuable information at users' fingertips. Communications from Adopt, delivered contextually within Blackboard, connected users to the help site, complementing external training initiatives to increase visibility for key information.

The Results

Improved Communications and a Smooth Transition

UP found Adopt extremely beneficial in supporting the modernization of their Blackboard instance. "We immediately used the system to present users with information where and when it is needed, indirectly improving adoption using Adopt," noted Jordaan, laughing at the unintentional pun. "Adopt is a great tool to help with change management. It is prominent, real time, and most importantly of all, contextual."

Beyond connecting users with the clickUP Ultra Help Site, UP have also used Adopt guides to alert users to new features when they are released in Blackboard. In many instances, this goes beyond explaining how to use the tool to also touch on why it is valuable, how it fits within UP's approach to learning and the culture of the community it serves, and how each feature embraces pedagogical best practices. "When Blackboard first launched AI capabilities, for example, we wanted to shift the focus from the technology to the pedagogy. We used Adopt to ask instructors to consider how these can best be used in an education setting, to ensure the technology was positively impacting student outcomes," said Jordaan.

Adopt's reporting capabilities have provided UP with crucial insights to apply in future communication initiatives. These include the optimal frequency of messages to gain attention without causing interruption, language and wording differences for students and instructors, effective calls-to-action for different content pieces, and the importance of involving varied perspectives to make strategic decisions.

Finally, UP has participated in the Adopt User Group in the **Anthology Community**, and has been able to leverage best practices from other institutions. While no university is the same, and each serves a unique body of learners, the ability to learn from others has enabled UP to quickly implement Adopt and draw value from its functionality.

📖 Epilogue

Anthology thanks Dolf Jordaan and the full team at University of Pretoria for their partnership, which spans many years and several of our EdTech solutions. Their exemplary migration to Ultra was rewarded with a **Catalyst Award in 2024**.

> To learn more about what's new in Blackboard, <u>check out the Anthology blog</u> or see for yourself with a <u>free 30-day trial</u>.

Anthology

Learn more at **anthology.com**