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# Case Study

## Microsoft 365 Training Program at Manawatū District Council



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Executive Summary

In response to identified digital skill gaps, Manawatū District Council (MDC) launched an organisation-wide Microsoft 365 (now referred to as ‘Microsoft 365 Copilot’) training program in late 2024 to lift digital literacy.

The initiative began with a staff survey that confirmed strong interest in in-person, practical training. MDC partnered with ALGIM and trainer Derek Bradshaw of knowitinc to deliver a two-part program: an online Microsoft 365 overview, followed by onsite sessions tailored to specific applications. Over 120 staff attended 15 sessions, generating more than 350 individual registrations.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Staff praised the engaging facilitation, practical tips, and real-world relevance. Three months on, 96% of respondents reported feeling more informed, 82% felt more efficient, and 100% wanted further training. An unexpected but significant highlight was the heightened sense of team connection.

MDC now plans to expand training to offsite teams and offer advanced sessions, continuing to build on the success of this highly impactful initiative.

## Introduction

In July of 2024, all staff at MDC were sent a survey with the goal to understand the knowledge gaps that existed with selected core Microsoft applications including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Teams. The survey focused on frequency of use, current skill and comfort levels and asked some generic questions about training preferences and their current support or approach when they need help.

The survey responses showed that people were supportive of Microsoft training at MDC and a general theme of ‘doing things better’ emerged with phrases and words like ‘tips and tricks’, ‘short cuts’, ‘capability’ and ‘productivity’ being used.

Digital literacy is the ability to confidently find, consume and create digital content, and share and communicate it effectively. Our belief is that by undertaking an organisation wide training program we are lifting our collective digital literacy, and we will see efficiency gains and greater job satisfaction.

## Initial Approach

Within the Information Services space, we often turn to ALGIM when looking for best practice or support. We were aware that ALGIM was offering online training on Microsoft 365, and we selected several people to trial a few of the sessions on offer based on their needs. 75% of survey responses indicated that people wanted instructor led in person training, but we wanted to get a feel for both content and the trainer – Derek F Bradshaw from knowitinc, who was delivering these sessions.

Feedback regarding Derek and the content of his courses was fantastic:

*“It was excellent. The facilitator was enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and engaged really well with the group. I’d recommend rolling this out to the organisation if that’s an option.”*

*“The training absolutely blasted me away. I have learnt so much. The trainer Derek Bradshaw was excellent and very professional.”*



*“Our trainer Derek was awesome. He was very knowledgeable and energetic, and he took time to listen to our problems and answer any questions.”*

Based on this feedback we felt confident that we would be in good hands, and we approached ALGIM to discuss the option of training at MDC for as many staff as possible. ALGIM connected us with Derek, and we got to planning our M365 Training Program.

## Council Staff Overview

Like all Councils, MDC staff cover such a diverse range of roles and with that comes a huge mix of skill sets and levels of comfort with technology. Some staff had been using Microsoft products for up to 40 years, with some staff only just beginning their Microsoft journey. We had executives and senior leaders, new graduates, field staff and everyone in between take part in the training sessions. The Skills Booster sessions especially offered value and insight for everyone, whether new to M365 or just getting started.

## The Training Program

We worked with Derek directly to plan our training program, which was beneficial. Derek was accommodating to our requests and flexible with what we offered and when. Based on what our staff wanted we selected the following courses:

- Microsoft 365 Overview
- Word Skills booster
- PowerPoint Skills Booster
- Excel for Beginners
- Excel Skills Booster
- Excel Calculations Basics
- Excel Formulas and Auditing
- Excel Lists and Pivot Tables

## Microsoft 365 Overview (Online)

We tailored the Microsoft 365 overview to suit our staff and held these sessions online before the onsite training, in early November 2024, to raise awareness and get people excited. These sessions are well suited to be held online and were more of a ‘show and tell’ experience. Learning about the productivity apps gave our staff an overview of what's available and many people across the organisation are now using tools such as ToDo, Planner, Whiteboard and Forms confidently.

Derek confidently led the online training and kept people engaged – not always an easy feat while training big groups online.



## M365 Training (Onsite)

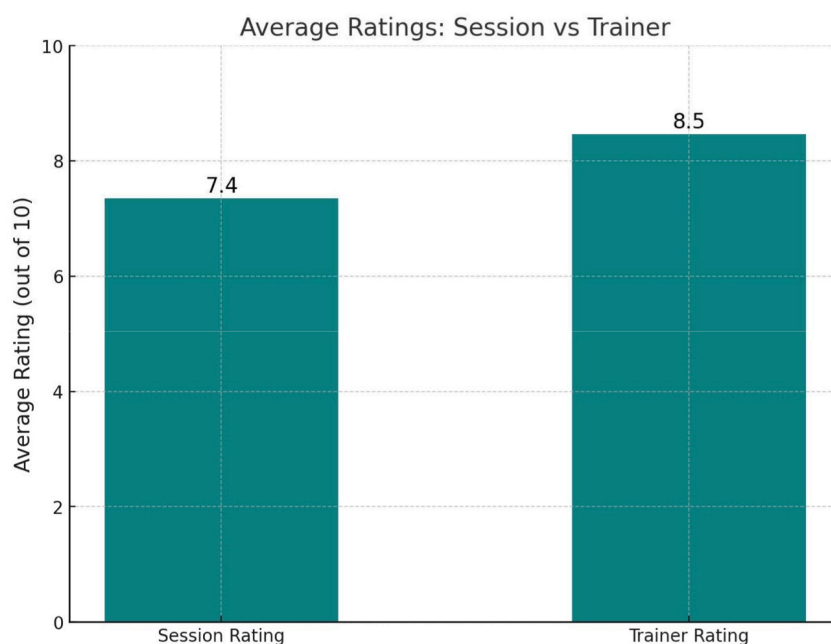
Seven different courses were offered across one week, in late November 2024, where Derek joined us onsite. 15 sessions in total, 2.5 hours each, it was a massive week, but the buzz generated through the office was something we hadn't felt at MDC for some time.

Derek delivered his acclaimed Word Skills Booster session first – a deliberate choice to create training 'evangelists'. This worked! People became vocal advocates for the training and encouraged their colleagues to attend the sessions. We already had good numbers but had to bring in extra chairs and shuffle attendees to make room for extra participants. This is a testament to Derek's enthusiasm and ability to engage with people in his sessions.

Derek engaged with participants from the get-go, asking about Microsoft experience and forming connections. **Even staff with 20-40 years' experience were audibly amazed within a few minutes, learning simple, time-saving tricks they hadn't come across before.**

## Staff Feedback

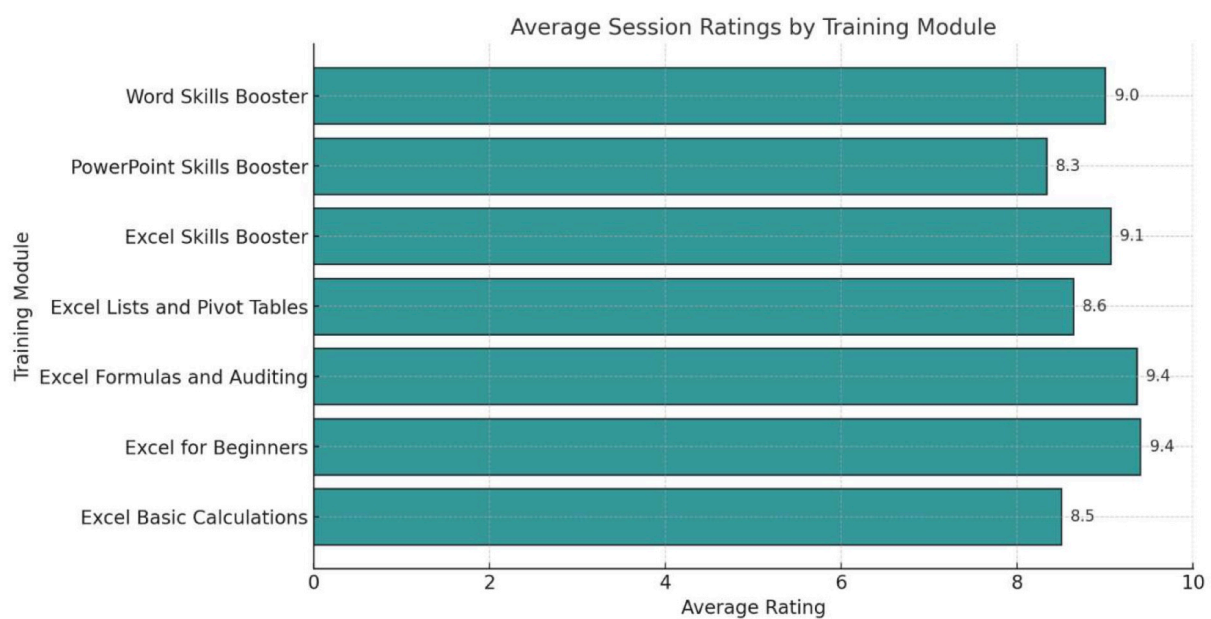
### Microsoft 365 Overview (Online)



- **General Praise:**
  - A lot of great information was covered, it was informative and helpful.
- **Highlighted Benefits:**
  - Increased awareness of the range of M365 apps and their functionality.

- Practical insights into how tasks and tools integrate across the platform.
- **Trainer Feedback:**
  - Engaging trainer who covered a lot of information without being boring or repetitive.
  - Great trainer but felt a little rushed towards the end.
- **Future Requests:**
  - “Looking forward to the next sessions” (this refers to the Word, Excel and PowerPoint training that was scheduled for a few weeks after the 365 overview).
  - Expressed interest in more sessions for deeper exploration of M365 tools.

## M365 Training (Onsite)





**Trainer rating:** The overall average rating for the trainer across all sessions is **9.4**, reflecting consistently excellent feedback.

- **General Praise:**
  - Many participants appreciated the welcoming and approachable environment.
- **Highlighted Benefits:**
  - Learning "hidden" features and tips in Excel and Word was particularly appreciated.
  - Real-life applications, like using Pivot Tables for efficiency or Formulas for existing spreadsheets, were well-received.
- **Trainer Feedback:**
  - The trainer was engaging, clear, and made learning fun.
  - The trainer received high praise across all sessions, with requests to retain this trainer for future sessions.
- **Future Requests:**
  - Advanced sessions (e.g., Word formatting, mail merge).
  - Consolidation of overlapping content in Excel sessions.

## Impact of Sessions

- **94% believe the sessions have positively impacted MDC.**



- **6%** expressed uncertainty, indicating potential room for clearer demonstration of long-term benefits.

## Interest in Future Training

- **96%** expressed a strong desire for more training like this in the future.
- The other **4%** still wanted training opportunities in the future but expressed interest in other applications.
- Additional comments included interest in advanced courses and requests for spacing out sessions for better learning retention.

## Overview of Feedback 3 Months On

We felt it was important to understand the benefits discovered and staff sentiment regarding the training after some time had passed. So, three months after the training was completed, staff were sent a survey.

- **96%** of respondents still thought the training was worthwhile 3 months on.
- **100%** of respondents would like more training like this in the future.
- **96%** feel more informed/knowledgeable about the Microsoft apps.
- **76%** feel more productive.
- **82%** feel more efficient or have saved time.

## Key Takeaway from Staff

These results highlight the value of the training sessions, with widespread acknowledgment of their impact and strong enthusiasm for continued learning opportunities, even after the initial ‘high’ has worn off.

## Outcomes and Benefits

Over 120 people attended the sessions, with over 350 individual registrations across all offerings. From the above staff feedback, the training at MDC can absolutely be considered a success. The way Derek connected with our organisation meant he didn’t just teach us the technical aspects of the tools, he made us feel empowered.

From a change management perspective, having training onsite and instructor led removed barriers to training uptake. It was a positive experience that lifted our digital literacy but also gave us collective purpose – learning together, being inspired together and feeling that sense of Team MDC was powerful.

MDC’s General Manager – People and Corporate Frances Smorti had this to say about the training:

*“Our recent Office 365 training has been a fantastic success, equipping staff with practical skills that are already improving efficiency and confidence across the organisation. The*

*overwhelmingly positive feedback demonstrates the value of investing in staff development, and I'm thrilled to see such enthusiasm for continued learning opportunities."*

## Next Steps

Word of the training spread to our offsite teams, who were invited but don't all work standard office hours and often need to be on call or attend emergencies. We are working to create a similar program for them, held at their offices and in smaller chunks to fit in better with their more diverse schedules.

We are looking forward to hosting Derek again in the future to provide Teams training for all staff and Power BI training for a smaller group of staff. Finding a trainer that suits our organisation and works alongside us has been beneficial – Derek's deep knowledge across the Microsoft suite means that he can easily adapt to the audience and create a session that connects with people at various levels. Many staff commented that Derek was the best trainer they had ever learnt from and requests were made for future training sessions to be held by Derek.

This training program showed us the benefits of togetherness and this has inspired us to think about future training opportunities and the way we deliver them.

## Personal Take and Observations

When I first began organising this training program I was a little overwhelmed at the idea. I hadn't worked with a trainer individually on this type of thing before. ALGIM had insightfully connected with Derek to provide training to Councils in areas that our survey showed our staff were really keen to gain knowledge. I knew from the survey what our team wanted – they wanted to better use the tools we have and use every day, boost their productivity and have training in person. They liked the idea of carving out time and connecting with their team mates. Many staff have told me before that they don't follow through with self-paced learning as it's too easy to get distracted.

Derek was fantastic to work with from the get go. We worked together to take what I had learned from MDC staff via the survey and discuss what would work best for our organisation. We tailored the Microsoft 365 overview session to suit our needs and created a unique timetable for the onsite training that addressed the skill gaps MDC staff had acknowledged. Derek was receptive to our needs and showed true passion for helping us get the most out of each session and the program as a whole.

While the training sessions took place, I wrote down a number of comments I overheard and I couldn't believe the amount of times people gasped and shrieked with excitement!

*“No wonder my wife gets so excited about Excel spreadsheets”*

*“Hallelujah”*

*“Mind blown”*

*“I think he’s changed my life”*

*“Whhhhaaaaaaat” \*in amazement\**

*“I feel so empowered”*

## Conclusion

Partnering with Derek from knowitinc was one of the most impactful decisions we’ve made in the training space. His ability to connect with participants, deliver tailored content, and inspire genuine enthusiasm for learning has set a new benchmark for training at MDC. For any organisation looking to close IT skill gaps and drive meaningful productivity gains, MDC cannot recommend knowitinc and Derek highly enough. Our investment in Microsoft training has given people a fresh perspective on tools they use every day, exposed the team to new tools to help with personal productivity and brought a sense of connection and shared learning to MDC. As a result, staff feel valued and we have elevated our collective digital literacy.