

How BMW leverages technology to provide a more dynamic learning environment

Introduction

Emotional intelligence and deductive skills are highly valued and considered to be of prime importance to the kind of staff BMW want to employ and develop in its dealership network in the UK. Customer satisfaction with the dealer network as well as profitability and continuity are drivers for the BMW engagement with its dealership.



BMW has a learning culture that it seeks to embed and develop within its dealer network. Opened in May 2006, the new BMW Group Academy UK is located at Wokefield Park, Berkshire, just off Junction 11 of the M4. The setting is unique among automotive manufacturers – set within the grounds of 250 acres of parkland, with swimming pool, health club, jogging trails and ropes course for team building. The Academy itself is located next to an 18-hole golf course creating a superb environment in which to learn. The whole facility offers a wireless network that even allows learners to study from their hotel rooms. A bank of 55 laptops allows all course delegates to study on demand even when the course has finished for the day – this is part of BMW's learning culture. Wireless head units are also used by apprentices and technicians to work on all the models in the BMW range, each dealership workshop must have a LAN system installed in order to re-programme the software on the complex product that makes up the BMW model portfolio. There is access to diagnostic systems and tablet PCs are used to access the central server with all technical and support information.

Within the Academy there are practical workshop bays, training rooms, syndicate rooms and showrooms to simulate working dealer environments – all designed to ensure that customers continue to receive a standard of service to match the quality and substance of the BMW products themselves. In total, there are 32 workshop bays and 10 attached training rooms, featuring cutting edge IT and world-class audio visual equipment.

There are a further 12 training rooms, simulated BMW, Motorrad and MINI showrooms and 10 syndicate rooms. Each training classroom uses the latest training equipment, including AMX wireless AV controller, wall-hugging projectors, integrated sound, DVD/CD players and as mentioned earlier wireless LAN connections.

The media rich e-learning courses available are part of a bigger blended approach being developed, incorporating face-to-face and pre-course workbook activity – all adopting the BMW Group Academy UK learning philosophy.

This approach makes the best use of new e-learning distribution technology and learning approaches and ensures that dealership training is linked directly to delivering exceptional service to customers and to the overall success of the dealership and BMW UK.

The infrastructure is designed to bring the theoretical environment together with the practical environment. For example, a plasma screen delivering detailed information from a server for a group of learners is placed next to a vehicle when some practical work is taking place, so that there is a synergy between the instruction and the application of knowledge. BMW has a learning culture that it seeks to embed and develop within its dealer network.

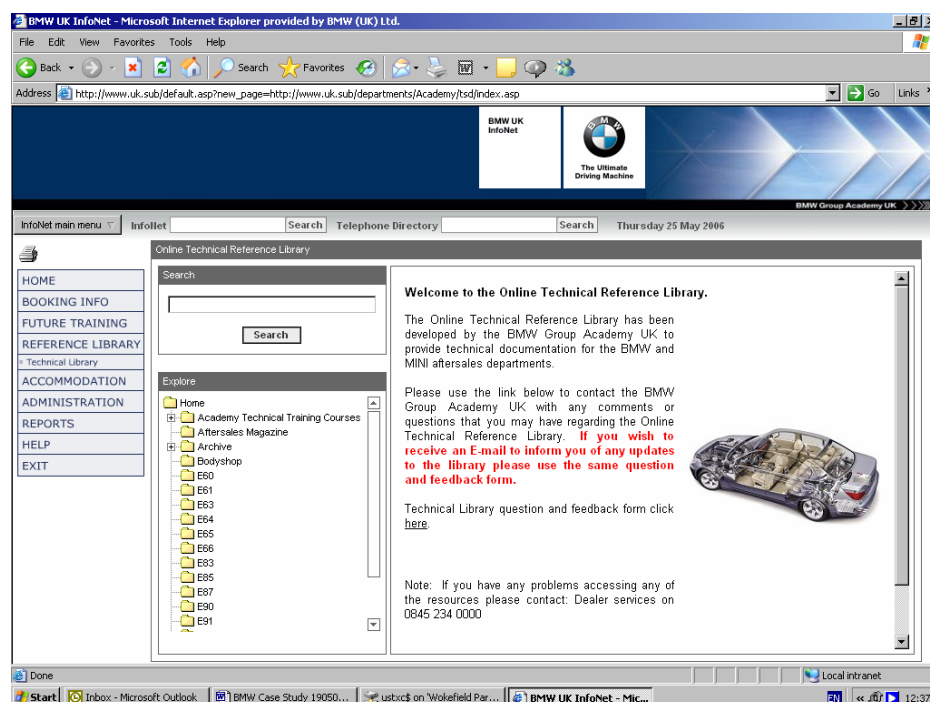


BMW has brought its training in house due to the very technologically advanced nature of its products and the fact that training can be more focused to support the business objectives of both BMW Group and the dealer network. 200 different training programmes are delivered.

It uses NVQ and Technical Certificate as the qualification for its apprentices and augments this with its own specific content to meet its requirements and enable the progression from apprentice into the BMW Academy curriculum. The rationale for this Academy resource is to ensure that Technicians are not lost from BMW dealerships (there is a high rate of attrition - employees lost to the workplace - in the automotive industry); to raise the standards in skills in the dealerships and provide a coherent career progress path and sense of belonging to the BMW family. Also, given the highly innovative nature of the vehicles, it is critical that technicians and other staff in the dealerships are kept up to speed with any new features and developments in the range. For every 1% of reduction in attrition rate (employees lost to the workplace), £1.6 million is saved by the BMW dealer network.

A blended approach is used to introduce information on new models to the sales and technical staff. Online learning is used to re-enforce the information that is given before a new model arrives in the showroom. This is done for sales and technical programmes. This means that when sales and technical staff spend time out of the dealership at the Academy they are already well grounded in the information they need to master. There is a very clear technical progression (through to Master Technician) and a similar path is being developed for Sales and all other disciplines of after sales staff.

There is a need for continual improvement; for example to have sales staff able to present the product more effectively and for the technical support service to be delivered as an ideal customer experience.



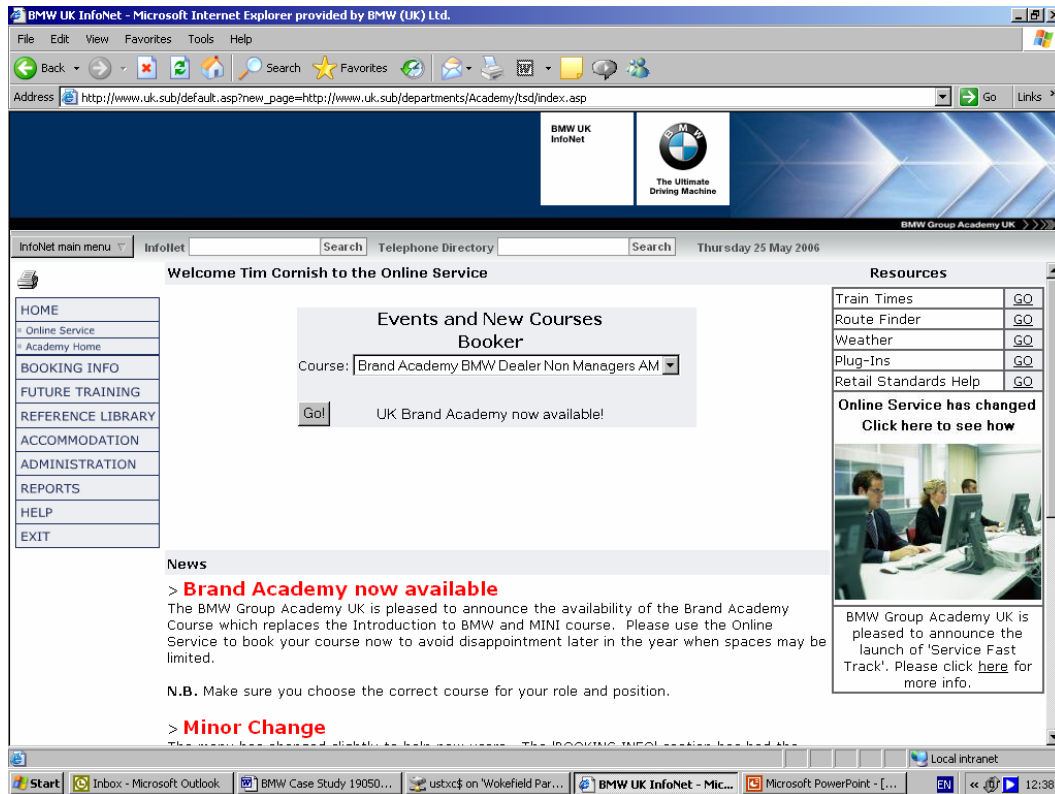
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A Learning Management System (LMS) is used. This is available from the BMW intranet and to dealers via an extranet to provide e-learning, technical manuals and support resources.

With the increasing demands on bandwidth for online content, the BMW dealer network have utilised a caching system to overcome these limitations. Large files are cached on a server within each dealership and updates made overnight. This is directly linked to the BMW LMS: the LMS is the hub of all e-learning. This means that rich media can be used but connection speeds are not an issue. All the technical literature is available in PDF format online and is the latest information available. A network of champions of best practice is being developed in dealerships, as well as champion dealers. In each case best practice is promoted whilst standards are used as the base line from which they are expected to progress.

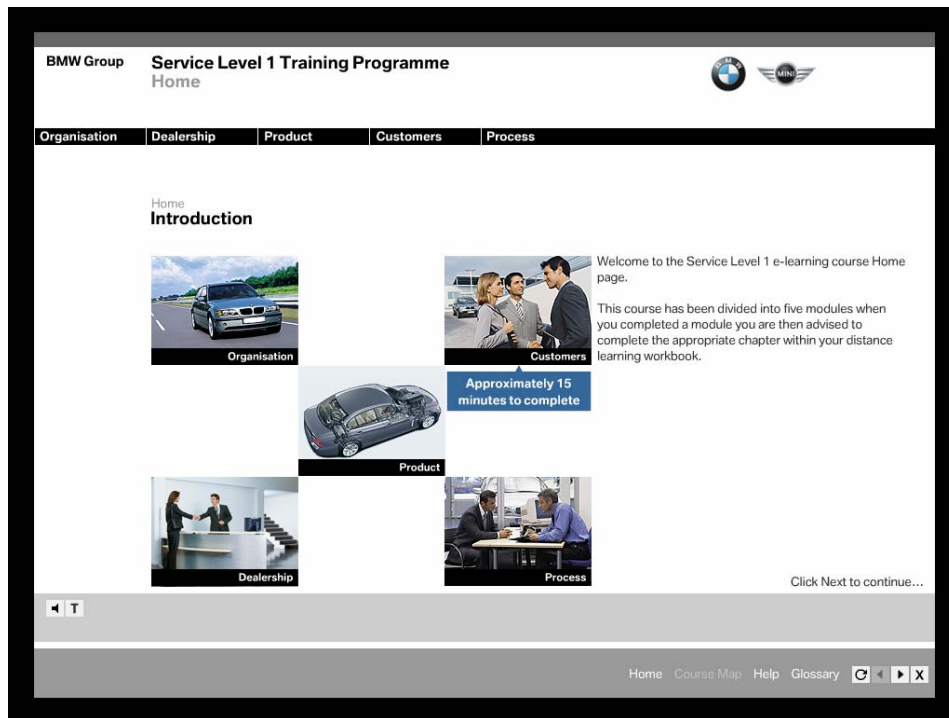
Training advisors do the day to day administration using the LMS to manage individual progression and logistical information (virtual and actual interactions and courses), so that the system is central to the administration and delivery of the entire Academy's work. Courses are created via a template and actual classes (cohorts) are created within this which includes a timeline of start and finish dates. Learners are registered and are tracked through their use of the system. They have a personalised experience according to their role and particular training requirements. Profiles are created for users in the system, so that subject matter experts have a level of access that enables them to review and also change content and structure of course materials.

The growth in usage of the extranet access to the LMS by dealers has been impressive. Dealer's use of the LMS has increased by 200%, from September 2005 to early summer 2006. The number of individual users within the dealerships grew from 500% between September 2005 and February 2006.



BMW LMS: Key Features

- Each individual has a training passport number to access the LMS and is tracked in the system. Reports on the progress of any learner can be downloaded from the LMS at any time.
- Each user gets their own customised experience (according to their role and stage) that enables them to use the resources they need to progress in their learning.
- Many types of methods can be used for assessment, from open ended questioning to multiple choice and simulations and a score given for each user as they complete these.
- Scoring is monitored but the emphasis at present is on getting engagement rather than any other consideration.
- Most of the young apprentices coming into the organisation prefer e-learning.



BMW Group Service Level 1 Training Programme Home

Organisation Dealership Product Customers Process

Home
Introduction

Welcome to the Service Level 1 e-learning course Home page.

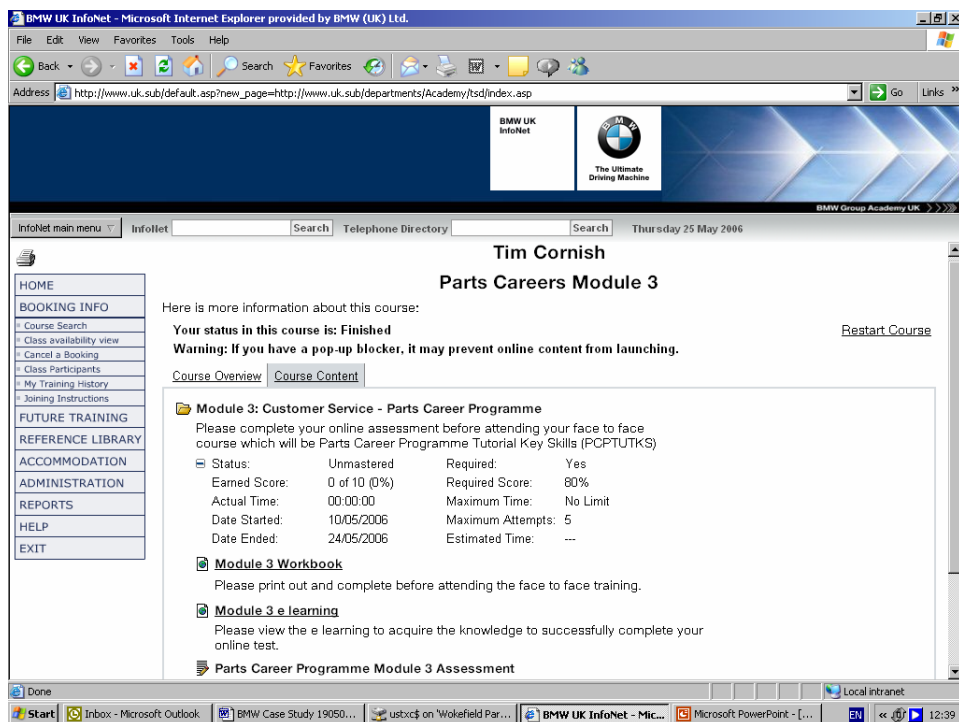
This course has been divided into five modules when you completed a module you are then advised to complete the appropriate chapter within your distance learning workbook.

Approximately 15 minutes to complete

Click Next to continue...

Home Course Map Help Glossary

Episodes of learning are intended to be bite-sized and discrete, added together to make a whole dynamic learning experience. This is similar to the way cars themselves are created, that is to say, from components which can be updated and improved and replaced in order to provide the most ideal product.



BMW UK InfoNet - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by BMW (UK) Ltd.

Address: http://www.uk.sub/default.asp?new_page=http://www.uk.sub/departments/Academy/tsd/index.asp

BMW UK InfoNet The Ultimate Driving Machine

InfoNet main menu | Infollet | Search | Telephone Directory | Search | Thursday 25 May 2006

Tim Cornish
Parts Careers Module 3

Here is more information about this course:

Your status in this course is: Finished [Restart Course](#)

Warning: If you have a pop-up blocker, it may prevent online content from launching.

[Course Overview](#) [Course Content](#)

Module 3: Customer Service - Parts Career Programme

Please complete your online assessment before attending your face to face course which will be Parts Career Programme Tutorial Key Skills (PCPTUTKS)

Status:	Unmastered	Required:	Yes
Eamed Score:	0 of 10 (0%)	Required Score:	80%
Actual Time:	00:00:00	Maximum Time:	No Limit
Date Started:	10/05/2006	Maximum Attempts:	5
Date Ended:	24/05/2006	Estimated Time:	---

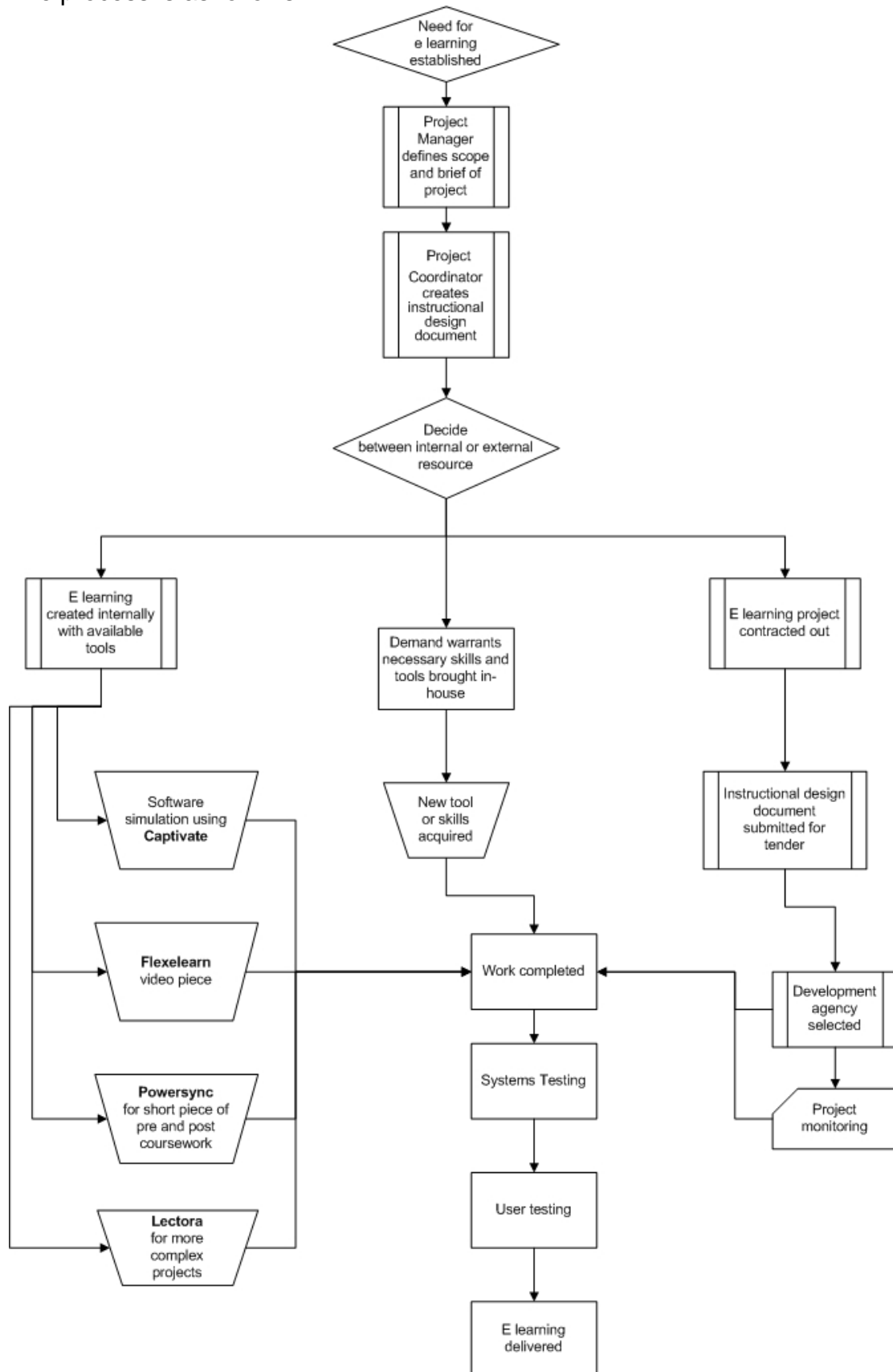
Module 3 Workbook
Please print out and complete before attending the face to face training.

Module 3 e learning
Please view the e learning to acquire the knowledge to successfully complete your online test.

Parts Career Programme Module 3 Assessment

Done | Start | Inbox - Microsoft Outlook | BMW Case Study 19050... | usbrx on 'Wolefield Par...' | BMW UK InfoNet - Mic... | Microsoft PowerPoint - [...]

A process of identifying where new resources are needed and developing new e-learning materials is undertaken. A trainer will start this process by identifying a need, and then a dialogue takes place to determine an approach. The process is as follows:



SIU – Signal Interface Unit



E-learning courses are supplemented with hands-on technology to support the training process. An example is the SIU – Signal Interface Unit, which enables learners to practice the diagnostic check of car engine control systems without touching the engine. They get feedback on how well they do and a progress route to the required level of competence. This is an especially appropriate solution as incorrect diagnostic checks will cause damage to engine management systems costing thousands of pounds in expense. Learners are varied in profile: they are predominantly male with 80 apprentices and 120 dealer staff in the centre at any given time. 70 staff are located in the centre, some are administrative and 8 technical trainers are on site, with 4 project developers (working on the LMS and resources). There are 7 careers staff and one product trainer. Other training organisations are used on an ad hoc basis. The trainers are predominately BMW Master Technicians and are sent on to the BMW Group Trainer Academy at the BMW centre in Munich, where they are taught the BMW way of delivery training. Role play and coaching are widely used with the methodology of facilitation the preferred delivery style.

Some resources and courses are contracted out, some resources and courses are developed in house using a combination of internal project management, a subject matter expert, developers and dealer input. Sometimes there is training given for events such as a Motor Show where an immersive ‘sheep dip’ approach is taken, but the LMS is used to support and underpin all training and track and manage the process.

Each training room in the centre has a wireless touch screen control device. This means that the whole environment and all the various devices in it are centrally controlled and can be adjusted, launched and operated seamlessly to provide the most appropriate learning experience at any given time. Large plasma screens are also wheeled around on mobile karts in the workshop area so that learning can be delivered in the location of the car that is being worked on. These display video, technical specifications and theoretical episodes which can be revisited in the context of actual practice. Within the training centre (as in the car showrooms and dealer workshops) a branded atmosphere is created that carries the essence of the company, its values and ethos of work. This is created by the visual clues of branding but is also reinforced by the way things are done as well as the visual environment.

Return on Investment

This is measured in reduced contact time in the training centre. Because learners are able to learn from their dealerships this saves money on costs such as hotel expenditure attached to going to the training centre. The impact of training can also be measured against key performance indicators, such as customer satisfaction surveys and warranty costs for incorrect diagnosis. Training is there to support the key business objectives.

Specific targeted training is provided as well as a systems approach. The challenge for BMW is in terms of saving days away from the dealerships, yet there are targets for technicians to undertake an annual fixed number of training days. The target is to use the BMW Group Academy itself only for those episodes of training that can only be delivered efficiently within this dedicated learning environment.

Future

- Capturing best practice on video and creating e-learning around this
- Creating e-learning components that can be delivered efficiently to where it is needed by the most appropriate method
- To increase the training within the dealerships

Tim Cornish (Learning Resources Manager) expresses the view that computer games show what the future of what e-learning will look like. This is because such games immerse users within virtual worlds and their consequences – as well as making learning fun. They therefore contain the possibility of replicating the work situation to enable interactions and diagnosis that can teach the learner the solutions they need to master. Page turning electronic book type e-learning is of limited value to learners. What needs to happen to meet the needs of BMW is the development of an environment that simulates real life to enable the learner to acquire the competencies they need.

The example of SIU (and beyond) is the linking of real tools to the workshop and the using of the tools in a way that bridge the gap between empirical learning to their practical application.

Voice of.....

- The learner
 - Matt is a first year apprentice at BMW. He has been at BMW 8 months and is on his first month of training at Bracknell Training Centre. Matt says, 'BMW have a large bank of information on the systems we use in the vehicles and I can test my knowledge and am helped to progress (the learners are tracked in the LMS) through my work.'
'I sometimes email my work to my tutor and get my assignment marked and sent back to me.'

- Craig is six months into his second year at BMW. Craig says, 'I have done training on CDROMs and used the Technical Library to access PDF documents with information on the products (cars) themselves. I have done Key Skills projects using e-learning here and accessed the Learning Management System at my dealership. The simulations and information I access helps me to understand some of the technical principles and systems I need to master.' He also said 'I can go online and check how many assignments I have completed and what I have left to do.'
- The staff
 - Danny Watson was a Master Technician in a BMW dealer, before he became a Career Programme Instructor. He thinks e-learning cuts down on a lot of questions from learners and enables a certain amount of learner led progression through information. It also enables learners to progress at their own rate. Danny thinks that where there are complex systems to learn, that there is more scope for reviewing and revisiting difficult concepts. Learners use digital cameras and record evidence and store it in their portfolios. The Learning Management System and the Dealer Extranet is used by learners for revision and the Technical Resource Library is a key source of the latest data on new models and existing information.

Conclusion

The key drivers for BMW of using ICT and e-learning are:

- Using technology to support training
- Ensuring the culture and 'brand' of BMW is promoted in the dealerships
- Maximising the effectiveness time available for training
- Bringing learning and practice closer together
- Maximising the return on investment for training

It is apparent that BMW are successful in engaging its dealership with its e-learning provision through its extranet. It is also quite clear that money is not thrown at and wasted on technology, but that a very disciplined and accountable approach is taken on each step taken. Indeed there has to be a tangible business benefit to BMW and a hard measurable one at that.

Some extra information on BMW

Adult Learning Inspectorate rated BMW Career Programmes a Grade 1 –
'Outstanding' – top in the motor industry

National Contracts Service 'Employer of the Year 2004' for Modern
Apprenticeship programmes

Winner of the National Training Award 2005

Career Programmes Learning and Skills Council National Award Winner
Career Programmes awarded, by the Department for Education & Skills
(DfES), 'Beacon Award ' status for our young people training (Innovation
Project)

Top two International Service Technician Award Winners for 'Best Technician'
worldwide out of 11,989 Technicians from 33 countries