



Next Generation Learning @ Work in



CABLE & WIRELESS

Transforming a Business - The e-learning Journey at Cable&Wireless

Introduction

Cable&Wireless Europe, Asia and US is one of the world's leading international communications companies, providing enterprise and carrier solutions to the largest users of telecoms services around the world. Its history can be traced back nearly 140 years when it laid the first sub sea cable. Today, Cable&Wireless' ambition is to redefine what it is like to work with a global telecommunications company. As part of this strategy, it has set its sights firmly on a worldwide target market of about 3,000 corporates, carriers and public institutions - where its experience and capability can make the most difference to their business. It wants to lead the market by understanding customers' needs and delivering them first time, every time.

This case study provides a fascinating insight into how e-learning has evolved at Cable&Wireless to become a critical, integrated component of the overall business transformation strategy.

The Business Challenge

So where does the journey begin?

Well, Cable&Wireless had been using some form of e-learning since the late 90's, with a combination of generic courses and some bespoke courses all available through an internal learning portal, but classroom based delivery formed the backbone of learning in the organisation with e-learning something of a peripheral figure. Relationships existed at that time with multiple vendors around the world, such as Skillsoft, Smartforce, NETg and Mindleaders, which meant that different products from different vendors were accessed and used in different ways, and that was far from ideal. Perhaps unsurprisingly, success and reaction during those early years was mixed.

Back in 2001, Cable&Wireless was one of the first organisations to introduce a global Learning Management System (LMS) and following a lengthy tendering process, Docent (now SumTotal) via Accenture was selected. It was a multilingual system that mainly managed classroom based training, open learning resources and e-learning

Page 1 of 7

courses. The system served the company well at the time, however, with the overall costs running into millions it no longer made economic sense. As the organisation embarked on a major transformation journey at the beginning of 2006 the decision was made that the model was no longer fit for purpose, especially as the way people were using e-learning differed from when it was first introduced. In addition to moving through e-learning courses in a linear fashion, colleagues (the term Cable&Wireless use for employees) now needed to be able to dip in and out of learning on-the-job and at the point of need – requiring the system to act as a performance support tool. Unfortunately, this facility wasn't possible on the existing system without substantial upgrading and integration.

The challenge was to reduce the operating cost of the LMS by migrating seamlessly to a new enhanced infrastructure that would act as a one-stop-shop for learning and performance, and provide critical support to the businesses transformation journey.

As Mike Booth, Learning Technologies Manager at Cable&Wireless stated: *“Our goal was to reduce the operating cost of the learning management system by migrating seamlessly to a new infrastructure that would act as a one-stop-shop for learning and performance. Not only did we achieve that, by shaving 65% off our operating costs, but we also delivered a greatly enhanced system that really meets the needs of the business.”*

Mike went onto explain: *“We had two options. Either we upgraded our existing learning management system, at significant cost, to enable it to provide the new elements we required: or we moved to a plug and play model such as SkillPort from SkillSoft. Ultimately, it was an easy decision to make because SkillPort was able to provide us with 95% of our new requirements and take over everything our existing system had been doing. Additionally, we were able to benefit from a much wider range of learning resources, from a greatly enhanced e-learning portfolio through to complementary tools such as Books24x7, skill briefs, job aids and skill simulations. To top it all, everything, including our own bespoke e-learning courses and our classroom training, can be searched down to a very granular level through SkillSoft's 'Search-and-Learn' facility – enabling colleagues to find the resources they require.”*

The migration was complex with more than 40,000 training records to be moved, plus an extensive portfolio of bespoke e-learning courses (developed specifically to work on the previous learning management system) needed adapting for the new system. In addition, the generic e-learning had to be switched from multi-providers to SkillSoft. It was also critical that Cable&Wireless continued to have a seamless reporting and tracking facility for compliance reasons, allowing the organisation to view consolidated reports of learning whenever necessary.

The Learning Solution

Introducing iLeARN

In less than eight weeks, and within the stipulated budget, a Cable&Wireless branded learning management system was designed and created, achieving:

- a 65% reduction in operating costs
- significant savings in implementation costs
- administration of all classroom training
- integration with the SAP HR
- access to an extensive range of SkillSoft and bespoke e-learning resources

- a helpdesk to support colleagues with all learning queries

The system is intuitive to use, with the ability to click on a link to view content, then to drill right down to topic level. Learners can complete a two-minute learning exercise, read a paragraph in a book or look into a job aid before they undertake a specific task. Users have realised that you don't have to try and remember what you've learnt all the time; you just need to remember how to find the answers you need!

This one-stop shop system (SkillPort), branded and known as iLeARN, provides a 'Search & Learn' capability in which a colleague can get help on a specific task right at the point of need. For example, one colleague needed to create an animation in PowerPoint, something they hadn't needed to do for over a year. Through the 'Search & Learn' capability, they were directed to specific learning choices, and the level of granularity inherent in the system meant that they could simply view a page in an ebook or undertake a small chunk of interactive e-learning. Within minutes they'd learnt what they needed, and could carry on with their work without leaving the workplace, so in effect e-learning and performance support become one.

This increased flexibility of access is a cornerstone of the ongoing e-learning strategy, but more on that later! Speed of development, ease of access and informal learning are all key ingredients in meeting the needs of the business, quickly and economically.

How was the new system initially marketed?

The launch of the system involved an extensive internal promotional campaign by Cable&Wireless. This included a series of road-shows around the country, demonstrations to senior management teams, newsletters and targeted mail-shots. This paid dividends. Within the first month of being in operation, more than 25% of colleagues used the system, successfully completing over 1,000 hours of learning.

This is a prime example of a rapid application development project that met a key business need and continues to provide increased functionality, with high user acceptance and adoption. Furthermore, it reinforces the critical need for e-learning to evolve with the business, and to stay aligned to deliver business benefits, and iLeARN really was the first step in the new learning strategy.

The Learning & Development team faced two key challenges:

1. Ensuring widespread acceptance and use of e-learning. Fortunately as a technology based organisation, a lot of colleagues were desk-based which made it easier to accept and adopt e-learning. In addition, the organisation wanted to ensure good accessibility and so made everything available without restriction, while respecting that the windows of opportunity for their colleagues to learn, are small.
2. Aligning learning to the business. As part of a planned transformation, it was absolutely critical that learning was directly aligned to the business strategy. The starting point was a learning infrastructure with low operating costs, hence the adoption of iLeARN. Although not considered an enterprise wide LMS, the various bolt-on elements provides comparable functionality at a significantly lower cost to the business. The organisation found that relevant and timely bespoke modules that supported key business initiatives drove

usage and commitment from colleagues. It also gained buy-in and support from Management and Leadership teams.

Transformation and the business strategy

After undergoing some challenging times in the early 2000's Cable&Wireless marked the start of its transformation journey in November 2005 with the acquisition of Energis which, at the time, was the third largest telco in the UK. The organisation began a four year plan to move from being technology driven to service driven, *re-inventing Cable&Wireless to create a new business.*

There were three core business objectives at the heart of the transformation plan:

1. **To set new standards of customer service**
2. **To focus on the largest users of telecommunications, globally**
3. **To reduce complexity in products, systems and processes**

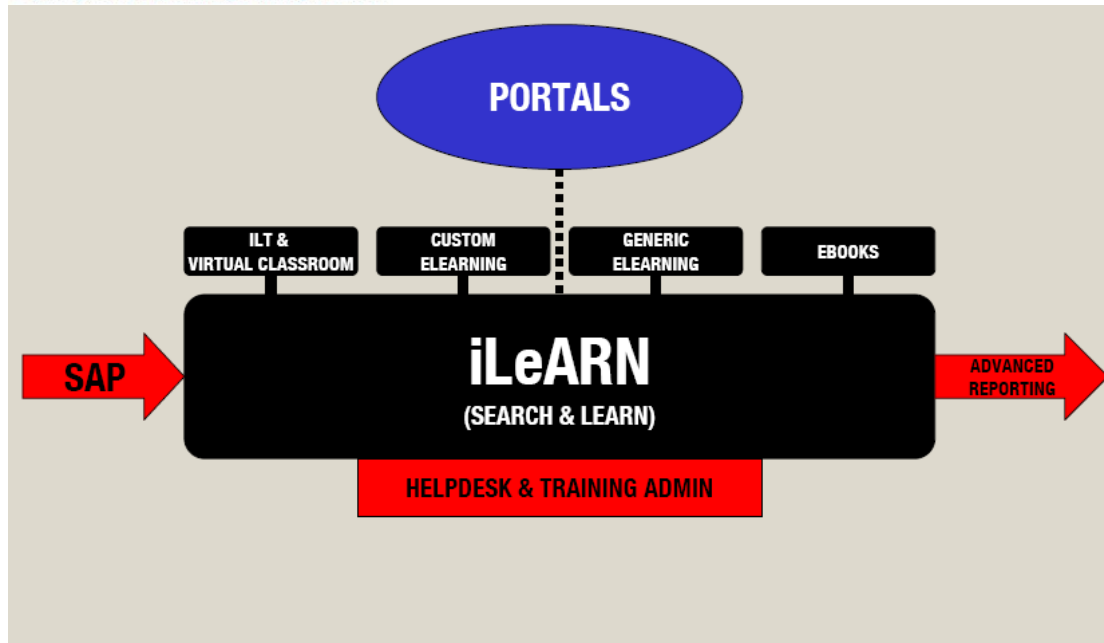
"One of the biggest business turnarounds attempted in British Industry in the last 50 years" is how the Sunday Times described Cable&Wireless in February 2006.

The organisation now has approximately 5,500 colleagues across Europe, Asia & the US. Around 50% of these joined the organisation during the last 3 years and all possess a common core skill of strong customer focus. This new dynamic workforce meant that rapid induction was seen as key and provided an opportunity for the new learning strategy, which has been met in an innovative and exciting way.

The Learning Strategy – iLeARN Portal & Rapid Development

One portal that integrates with iLeARN is 'A New Way of Learning'. This portal provides context, supporting material and advice for existing colleagues so they know what's available and how to access and use the site.

The model below helps to describe the components of the learning infrastructure at Cable&Wireless:



One of the elements of this model is rapid development of custom e-learning. Cable&Wireless recognised that developing e-learning courses was simply too long and costly. Being a business in transformation, initiatives happen very quickly and supporting e-learning courses need to be developed in extremely short timescales. Traditional processes of developing a bespoke course are no longer fit for purpose for the organisation. The process model now is to develop content quickly, eliminating unnecessary 'bells & whistles', but without compromising instructional design. All content must have a measureable business impact and courses are designed on that premise. The new model involves the minimum number of people, normally an e-learning programme manager, a subject matter expert and a multi-disciplined development resource. Minimal documentation is required as the process is iterative and uses rapid authoring tools.

Such a model requires a fundamental shift in thinking from within the provider community. From Mike Booth's perspective, the vast majority of bespoke e-learning providers continue to follow the traditional formal processes and documentation associated with bespoke e-learning projects, and that probably still has a place and is perfectly suitable for other organisations, but not at Cable&Wireless. Fortunately they were able to find a partner (Kineo) who fully understood and embraced what the organisation was trying to do and how bespoke e-learning could be developed. The wider message to the bespoke e-learning market is the critical need to change. In fact, perhaps what is needed is a transformation in the provision of bespoke e-learning which parallels the transformation at Cable & Wireless.

So how has the learning strategy supported the three core business objectives?

Let's consider the business objectives in the transformation strategy again.

1. **To set new standards for customer service** – In addition to recruiting new colleagues with a strong service focus, the management community play a key role in driving the service experience and to support their development is

a programme called ‘The New Way of Management’. Part of this programme is a series of short, sharp 20 minute modules for a target of 700 managers. They developed and rolled out 10 such modules to all 700 managers in just three months.

2. **To reduce costs by concentrating on fewer, larger customers –**
Cable&Wireless had 30,000 customers at the start of the transformation journey, but they wanted to reduce that and focus on the largest users of telecommunications globally. Not surprisingly, such customers receive tremendous support and attention and from an overall business perspective it makes sound business sense to focus resources on this smaller number of enterprise customers. ‘Know Your Telco Stuff’ is an extensive series of e-learning modules that ensure all colleagues actually understand the services and underpinning technology that the organisation provides to these customers.

3. **To reduce complexity in products, systems and processes –**
Telecommunication companies are complex businesses by definition, but Cable&Wireless wanted to reduce the level of complexity and develop a much simpler business model, while remaining focused through clear KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators) and meeting the expectations of shareholders and the investment community. E-learning plays an integral part in helping to reducing complexity by educating colleagues in the simpler processes, products and systems.

Encouragingly for Cable&Wireless the business is ‘bang on’ where it wants to be, and where it expected to be at this point in its transformation strategy, so clearly something is working very well.

What’s next in the journey?

There are five complimentary e-learning drivers supporting change in the organisation:

e-learning Driver	Characteristics
Infrastructure	Via iLeARN, allowing for ‘plug & play’ interoperability that’s 90% ‘fit for purpose’ and integrated with the SAP HR module.
One Stop Shop	Easier to blend and search, colleagues know where to go, and it’s easier to control, manage and measure.
Performance Support	Respects time constraints, how to find what you need when you need it! Granularity via ‘Search & Learn’ and all in one place.
Rapid Development	Flexible, timely, relevant, essential business focussed content at low cost.
Portal Approach	Portal integration with iLeARN means best of both worlds. High impact, context and engagement, with an underpinning infrastructure.

These drivers, along with others, have helped to position e-learning in Cable&Wireless as a key component in the transformation journey.

The use of learning technology has changed dramatically at Cable&Wireless in recent years as the business has changed. From simple origins with some generic

content and bespoke courses, e-learning is now the cornerstone of the learning strategy at Cable&Wireless, and that's testimony to the vision, tenacity and creativity of all those involved.

The overriding principle for learning at Cable&Wireless seems to be that it must be 'Immediate & Relevant'. In their world learning is much greater than simply transferring knowledge quickly. It's tightly integrated and aligned to the overall business strategy and transformation plan. It's innovative, dynamic, creative and serving the critical needs of the business. A business in transformation with learning as a critical enabler.