

Conference Round-up

e-Learning Network Members Showcase Summary

Friday 10th July 2009

Introduction

Unique in the annual events programme from the e-Learning Network is the Members Showcase recently held on Friday 10th July 2009 in London. It's the only event in the ELN calendar that allows those training providers who are members and sponsors of the ELN to promote their wares. Now some may view that as contrary to the spirit of the ELN, but judging by the fact that the event is always 'sold out' then clearly the rest of the membership don't really object!

In real terms it clearly pays to listen to what the providers have to say because they are going to be shaping their product and service offerings based on what their clients are telling them and what they genuinely believe the overall market is looking for. After all it doesn't make a great deal of sense for the provider community to put their energies into products & services where there is no interest or demand.

The leading providers forge very close working relationships with their clients. They do that based on a thorough understanding of the client's needs, the culture and the target audience(s) so inevitably provider strategies should be driven by client needs and expectations.

Here's a brief summary of the various sessions from the Showcase.

Stuart Chadwick of [Kineo](#) provided a brief insight on examples of clients such as O2, Cable&Wireless, McDonalds, Deloitte, HSBC, FCO, Vodafone and Nikon using **Rapid Learning** solutions varying from the very basic with simple conversions from PowerPoint slides to the complex with high levels of interaction and user engagement. Stuart also introduced us to examples of **e-learning** being used **as an advertising medium** at Canon & Customs Union, as well as **collaborative learning** examples at BAT & Virgin. With 50% of their revenues coming from Rapid Learning solutions this further confirms (if needed) that Rapid Development approaches are now very firmly established within many organisations. An excellent example is covered in the [Cable&Wireless e-learning journey](#).

Mike Alcock from [Atlantic Link](#) shared the findings of a recent **client survey** and amongst the various findings, **'accessibility'** and **'flexibility'**; are still major factors in organisations adopting e-learning with [BT](#) as a prime example.

Dr Tom Holland from [MyKnowledgeMap](#) introduced [Compendle](#), a development tool that manages web content such as text, images, audio, video and Flash interactions. The tool also has Question Builder for assessment. Courses can be reviewed and amended by anyone with access to a web browser and the internet.

Compendle allows existing assets and content to be assembled into a finished product easily and quickly. The product is likely to be of interest to organisations that have existing assets in an electronic compatible format that need to be more interactive.

Owen Rose from [Information Transfer](#) used the [Towards Maturity model](#) as the basis for his case study with [Care Management Group](#). He was able to explain and demonstrate the clear links between clear definition of need, alignment to the business, setting the learner and work context, securing engagement, building capacity and delivering value – the very essence of our work at Towards Maturity. Launched initially through a multimedia presentation themed ‘Every Moment Has Potential’ the programme has been a resounding success with very high adoption rates.

Disruptive Technologies, defined on Wikipedia as “*an innovation that improves a product or service in ways that the market does not expect, typically by being lower priced or designed for a different set of consumers*”, was the theme of **Mark Tointon’s** session. Mark’s organisation – [Aardpress](#) focus on using open-source in a creative way, working primarily with partners. He expressed the view that Moodle, which is probably the best known example of open-source, is more of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) than an LMS. It’s always interesting to get an insight from someone who is focused on the world of open-source as you learn about software tools and services that may not receive a great deal of attention in the mainstream.

For example how many of us have come across the acronym LAMP referring to a solution stack of open source software, used to run dynamic Web sites or servers. LAMP refers to:

- [Linux](#), referring to the [operating system](#);
- [Apache](#), the [Web server](#);
- [MySQL](#), the [database management system](#)
- And one of several [scripting languages](#): [Perl](#), [PHP](#) or [Python](#).

You can of course get lost and overwhelmed in the sea of open source software such as SugarCRM, Joomla (‘*with millions of global users*’) and [DimDim](#) although the latter may be of interest to many as a free Web conference service. Certainly worth considering as a stepping stone for those who have not yet tried web conferencing in their organisation.

Collaborative e-learning Development was the theme of an insightful presentation from **Carole Bower** from the [Edvantage Group](#). She explained that the focus is on finding ways to work ‘collaboratively’ with clients rather than following traditional methods of developing e-learning solutions – the emphasis is on collaboration and not tools. Perhaps this is a template for the development of many future bespoke e-learning projects. As an alternate to the traditional approach from creating a specification (often referred to as a PID), through scripting, GUI design, alpha, beta and gold, with many iterative steps in-between, Carole presented a model consisting of a front-end workshop in which all key stakeholders and subject matter experts (SME’s) need to participate. Using ‘wireframe’ (*Wireframes allow for the development of variations of a layout to maintain design consistency*), a ‘blueprint’ is created and

through a review process costs and a detailed project plan are developed. The resulting functional prototype is explained in a face-to-face alpha stage and then onto beta and gold. Edvantage are finding that this approach results in less iteration. Carole shared a specific example where the approach has been used at Legal & General, and although it's still early days time savings of approx 30% over traditional methods are being achieved.

Tony Coates of [Assima](#) highlighted that the IT industry is over 50 years old but for that entire time have delivered poorly constructed training. The typical approach is to show people the correct way to use software and constrain them to repeat correct actions based on exercises without allowing them to make mistakes. He described the typical view of IT training - the business thinks it is too expensive, trainers believe they have too little time, learners are frequently distracted, frightened to make mistakes and learn by memorising. He emphasised that humans learn from mistakes but most screen-based IT simulations do not allow them to make mistakes. In most (all) IT learning environments they are constrained to get it right every time but user input error is a significant cost to businesses. He reported on an internal piece of research which identified that 88% of all Support Centre calls received were non-defect calls - there was nothing wrong with the software. Assima will interest any company needing to train large numbers of users to operate an IT application.

Scott Hewitt from [Real Projects](#) wrapped up the day by giving us a whistle stop tour of many examples of game based learning and a visit to their website for more details is worthwhile for those interested in this area.

In summary Rapid Learning, securing engagement in e-learning, aligning learning to business, harnessing open source and using collaborative development techniques in developing bespoke e-learning solutions were the key themes of the day.

Speaker slides and materials will be available to ELN members via the networks website – <http://www.elearningnetwork.org/>