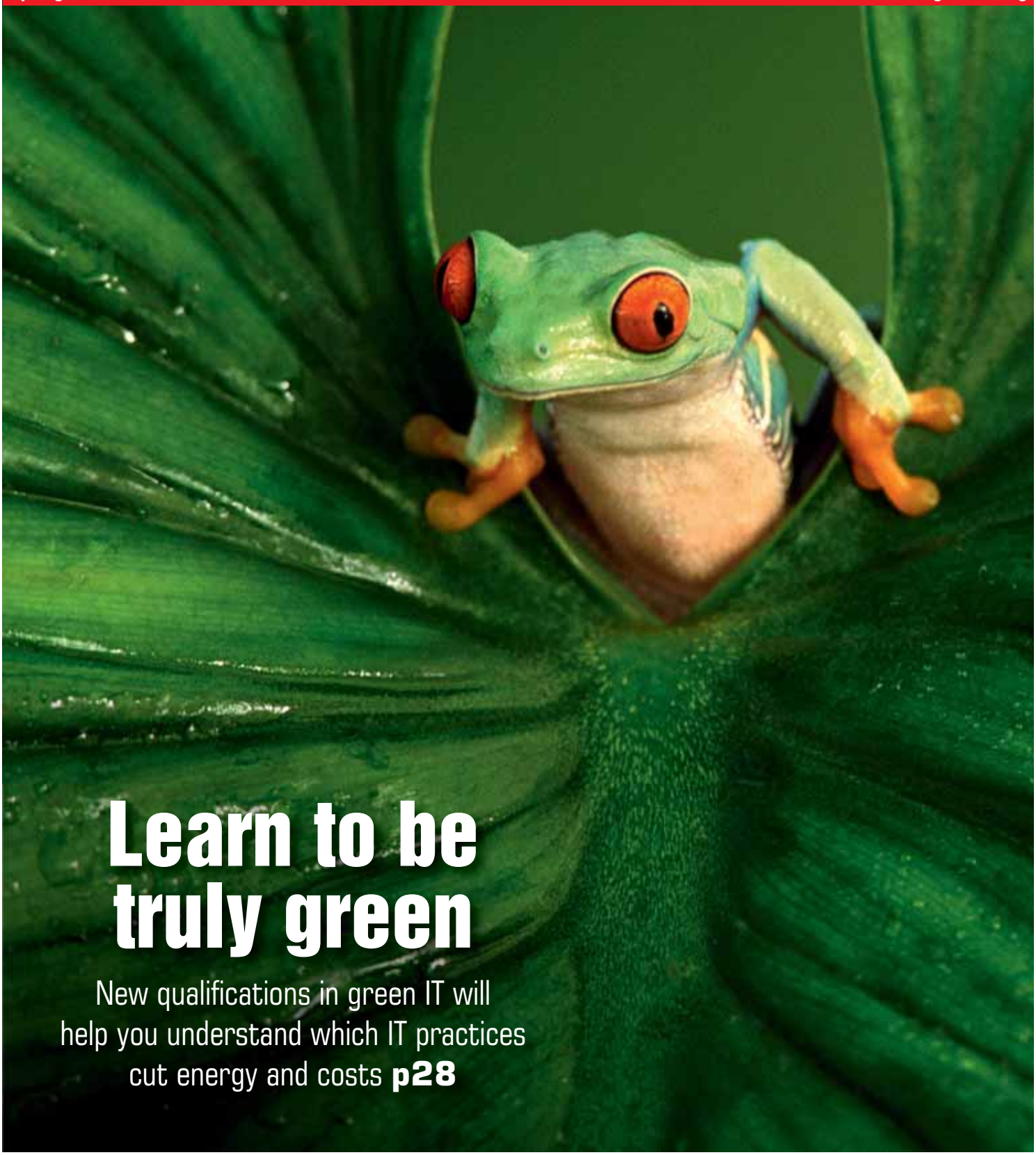
ITtraining

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Learn to be truly green

New qualifications in green IT will help you understand which IT practices cut energy and costs **p28**

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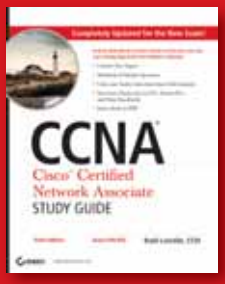
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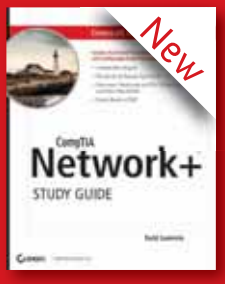
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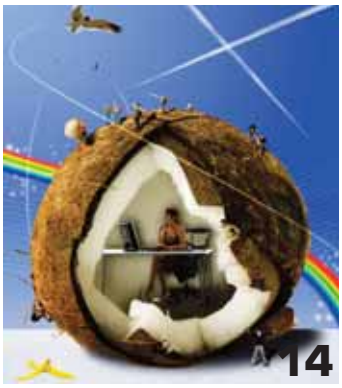
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Handling Gen Y is the least of our worries.

Green training to help cut costs



I recently had one of those conversations that leave you thinking that something seems such a good idea that it's a wonder it wasn't done before. In this case, I was interviewing Liam Newcombe about the qualification he's helping develop for 'greening' data centres. See p28. Given the huge amounts of energy they consume, it seems to make perfect sense to train people to consider how to cut energy consumption and hence costs, especially now that the EU has defined best practice for data centres in its recently published Code of Conduct.

BCS is also working on launching a foundation level qualification, which sets out to define which green IT practices really do cut down energy consumption.

Well, not surprisingly, it only took me three sentences to mention the all-pervasive words: cost cutting. As well as the green article, two other feature articles mention it, plus both of our columns by Clive Shepherd and Alan Bellinger. One article looks at how buyers are no longer wishing to splash out on fancy LMS functionality, while the other examines how to embrace quick and dirty but make into fast and clean. In his column, Alan looks at becoming leaner and meaner, while Clive considers the implications of training Gen Y, but points out it's a minor problem compared to surviving the economic downturn.

To sound a more positive note, one place where I saw few signs of belt-tightening was at the Learning Technologies show in January. In fact, both the number of exhibitors and conference goers were higher than last year and the event had a positive vibe. Maybe the learning technologies community is better placed than some because if has the potential to do well in a recession, since suppliers can promote their wares as cost-saving tools? Or perhaps, dare we hope, that learning and development against all odds is not suffering as much as feared?

One of the most refreshing presentations I heard at the Learning Technologies conference was by Gail Sadler, talking about Hilton Hotel's experiences of a large e-learning project, warts and all. So often people only want to talk about what went well in a project, glossing over the parts that did not go smoothly. Yet I suspect we learn more from knowing what pitfalls others have fallen into. Look out for a summary of her presentation in the *IT Training* e-monthly in March.

Email helen.wilcox@hq.bcs.org.uk

IT training

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Advertising telephone +44 (0) 20 7306 0300 Ext 201
Advertising email: ittraining@mongoosemedia.com
Subscriptions: **www.bcs.org/ittraining/subs**

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www.haymarket.com
Tim Bulley, licensing director.
Telephone +44 (0) 20 8267 5078
Email: tim.bulley@haymarket.com

IT Training magazine is published quarterly.
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Update

A round-up of the latest news and developments for IT training professionals

Smile: more training on dental systems



Dental hospitals are getting a training boost this year with £11 million allocated across England to fund new IT systems that will support the training of dental students. The funding is part of a joint initiative with NHS Connecting for Health and the Dental IT programme board.

Fifty-nine per cent of companies rely on **self-trained staff** to sort out everyday computer problems, according to a report published by City & Guilds. Five million workers lose two-and-a-half hours a week dealing with other people's IT traumas. Small companies with 6-10 employees are the quickest to pass IT dramas onto unqualified staff, with 65 per cent of IT amateurs having to work above and beyond their contracted roles as a result.

Over a third of workers have failed to get a job done on time due to a lack of IT knowledge and trained support, with over half trying to fix problems by themselves.

Call centres take a more forward-looking view to IT problems with 56 per cent of their employees having the necessary training to get out of a sticky IT situation.

Certain **IT skills** remain in short supply according to a survey of employers by the National Computing Centre (NCC). Skills particularly in demand this year include Oracle, SAP, NET, web development, business analysis and network support. New skills that job applicants will need over the next 12 months include virtualisation, .NET, C#, security and ITIL.

The level of overall perceived skills shortages has risen from 6.8 per cent in the previous year's survey to 7.9 per cent, the highest since 2001.

The demand for systems and support staff is expected to grow to 10.2 per cent over the next two years.

For 44 per cent of those working in the training, e-learning and technology sector, **salaries** did not rise in line with inflation last year, according to a survey by Blue Eskimo, a specialist recruitment company in those areas.

Thirty-seven per cent of the almost 500 people who responded to the survey did get salary increases in line with inflation with just 19 per cent increasing above it.

Nevertheless, most are happy working in their current industry. Sixty-one per cent said they liked their job while 28 per cent loved it.

Dissatisfaction with pay, however, is driving some to seek new jobs. Fifty-five per cent said they will be looking for a new job in 2009, with 26 per cent of them motivated by more money. Twenty-two per cent wished to have a more interesting job and 19 per cent better career prospects.

People factors are one of the biggest **barriers preventing successful implementation of e-learning**, according to research undertaken by Towards Maturity.

The top three barriers were reluctance of staff to adopt new technology, lack of knowledge about its potential use and implementation, and lack of skills amongst staff to manage and implement e-learning. These were cited by over 50 per cent of organisations in the benchmark survey of learning technologies in the workplace

'Driving Business Benefits', published in January

Learning technologies that allow learning and development to respond quickly to business needs have experienced the greatest growth in the last two years. Podcasting is up by 195 per cent, rapid development tools by 43 per cent and the use of virtual classrooms by 23 per cent. One in five organisations are still only using text based e-learning without supplementing this with video, animation, audio or images.

Those more mature in their use of e-learning report more benefits from their e-learning investments, for example established users are over six times as likely to report improvements in quality than those who are sporadic users.

Three out of five businesses expect to increase the allocation of their budget to learning technologies in 2009.

The research, supported by Becta as part of the Next Generation Learning @ Work campaign, included more than 300 private and public sector organisations. The report highlights how organisations use and benefit from different types of e-learning, identifies critical success factors for e-learning success, and considers future trends.

It also analyses the habits of highly successful e-learning implementations. The research is available free at **www.towardsmaturity.org**

e-skills UK has issued new strategic plans for England, Scotland and Wales for 2009-2014. These plans address the skills needs of the IT sector, and e-skills UK's contribution to the IT-related skills needs of business leaders and individuals in all sectors. The strategic plans are available at: **www.e-skills.com/strategy**

Supplier briefs

Parity Training sold conditionally again

Parity has for the second time agreed a sale for its training arm, subject to shareholders' approval.

ECS, a Dubai registered company, agreed to buy Parity Training for £3 million on 28 January. Completion is conditional on the approval of Parity Shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting on 19 February.

The proposed sale of Parity Training to Xpertise for £4.8 million last July was scuppered in August by QA-IQ's offer for Xpertise, which excluded Parity Training. The latter's revenues in 2007 were £18.6 million.

Thunder Bay, which trades as New Horizons in the UK, has an option on buying Parity Training at a future date. Parity will retain two of its three divisions: resources and solutions.

Learning Tree launches recession management course

Learning Tree International has brought out a new course, 'Managing in Tough Times', to help managers deal successfully with serious issues created by the current global economic downturn.

The three-day course will cover subjects such as how to minimise stress and maximise productivity, demonstrate strong leadership and 'grace under pressure' to provide psychological security and stability for the team.

The course will provide a case study environment with managers engaging in role-playing and group and individual activities, including making cuts with a strategic focus, managing the rumour mill, and handling employees sensitively when delivering bad news.

The ROI Academy to measure ITQ value

The ROI Academy has been contracted by e-skills UK to measure the value of the ITQ to corporate clients to support the business case for it. The ITQ is a module-based IT user qualification. The ROI Academy is developing a case study looking at the impact of the ITQ programme within a major national retailer.

Fast Lane partners with London Metropolitan Network

Fast Lane UK, IT training provider for Cisco and NetApp specialists, has joined forces with London Metropolitan Network (LMN) to deliver discounted technical training and a series of technology seminars.

LMN is jointly owned by its members: 80 higher and further education institutions. The scheme will provide members, including a number of charities and museums, training in networking technologies at varying levels, such as Cisco Certified Network Administrator, and high-level technology briefings for IT directors.

Fast Lane's plans for new courses and seminars for 2009 include security, unified communications and VoIP.

Adobe introduces e-learning suite

Adobe Systems has launched the Adobe eLearning Suite software, a new content-authoring solution aimed at learning professionals, educators and trainers to create rich learning experiences that can be delivered via the web, desktop, mobile devices and learning management systems.

The new suite integrates new versions of various Adobe products, including Captivate, Flash, Dreamweaver, Photoshop, Acrobat Pro, and Adobe Presenter 7.

Adobe has also released Captivate 4, its latest version e-learning software for creating content and courseware that combines simulations, scenario-based training, quizzing, rich media and interactivity.

learnpipe specialises in learning searches

An Irish start-up called learnpipe is offering a search service based on a specialised search engine.

Its objective is to provide only learning-related results – from structured data (sites that feed data to learnpipe) and unstructured data (which its crawlers have indexed from across the web).

Learnpipe is free to use and plans to avoid pay for inclusion models; the company says it will commercialise the site in other ways.

CenREL aims to offer e-leaning on a budget

A new business, CenREL – the Centre for Rapid e-Learning – has entered the e-learning market, offering budget-priced e-learning services.

It works with customer-created PowerPoint slides and turns them into e-learning, adding studio voice-overs and a user navigation system and search function.



Alan Bellinger

Leaner and meaner

There's been a subtle shift in the way organisations are looking at business conditions in 2009. In my experience, the focus in late 2008 was on how we survive. However, as we moved into 2009 it is changing to one of 'We'll emerge leaner and meaner – but what will that look like?' And answering that is much more difficult.

In the past, in the stove-piped organisation, you could express it in terms of x per cent cuts within each of the different functions. In other words, in 20th century organisations, there was a rigid organisational structure in which we could apply practices like zero-based budgeting. But that is rarely the case any more.

The typical 21st century organisation is a very different beast to deal with. Collaboration has led to cross-functional working; always-on connectivity has led to global teams and partnering; and other technologies have led to the mobile workforce, business intelligence-led decision-making and the application of collective intelligence. Add to this the issues of managing diversity, work-life balance and security awareness, and you come to appreciate the complexities of the modern organisation. The fact is that organisations today are much more of an ecosystem in which interaction between others is critical to the survival of all.

Just look around your own organisation and you'll see numerous examples of this. In many cases you'll find teams that are working both off-site and out of sight; plus, they'll typically be distant from their managers. As a result, the team members are so interdependent that it's hard to see how you make them leaner and meaner without impacting the team as a whole.

I talked earlier about stove pipes, and they really are breaking down. Just look at the number of situations you've seen in the last 12 months in which decision-making has been based on expertise, rather than on function. Decision-making is increasingly based, firstly, on better business intelligence and secondly on expertise. In short, groups now are bound together by their community, by shared interest and by influence – they are no longer tightly coupled to functional managers and organisation charts.

Complicating this picture even further is the concept of the virtual enterprise – and so much work flowing and business processes extending across organisational boundaries.

To deliver the leaner and meaner organisation of the 21st century requires much broader brush strokes than we've used in the past. It will involve sourcing decisions, partner management and even customer engagement. In short, it requires decisions to be business management-led rather than accountant-led, all backed up with a strong dose of vision and leadership.

BCS Information & Technology Training Specialist Group

To like or not like post-nominals

Jooli Atkins, chair of the I&TT SG, has become a certified fellow of the BCS. In her BCS blog, she says: 'I actually have a dislike of post-nominals as a rule, and don't even have a job title on my business card, so why am I so proud of my new letters?

'Well, I think that it is the fact that, as an IT training professional, I have been recognised by the BCS as an IT professional…

'I am a great believer in experience over qualifications but it is very difficult to quantify or qualify (no pun intended) experience in a tangible way... Real learning outcomes are more important to me than exam success...

'I will wear my current nominals with pride but look forward to the day when I can replace them with FBCS CITTP – Chartered IT **Training** Professional.'

www.bcs.org/blogs/training

Next meeting

The group's next meeting will be dedicated to remote training. IBM will demonstrate and describe the latest technology – its own and that of others – and why it is important.

Then consultant Mike Morrison will talk about how face-to-face instructors can learn to use the technology effectively. As befits the topic, the whole session will be run remotely using IBM Lotus Sametime Unyte. The session will run from 16.00 to 18.00 on 5 March.

www.bcs.org/ittsg



I&TTSG treasurer Mark Frank

Profile

Mark earned his spurs in IT training with IBM, working his way up from teaching computer basics to new graduates to responsibility for the Websphere curriculum in EMEA and Asia Pacific. He has always had a strong interest in instructor-led and technology based training. He was a lead consultant on one of IBM's first global computer based training programmes.

He is now a freelance IT training consultant with a particular interest in designing training solutions that bridge the gap between formal learning interventions and competence. He works extensively with public sector clients and is heavily involved with instructor training. He will be an assessor for the new BCS/IITT TPMA certification.



Hear it on the podcast

Wikis, blogs, performance support tools and podcasts, all examples of learning technologies, are discussed in the sixth episode of the IT Training podcast. The fifth episode looks at competency frameworks, including how they can help make training more focused.

Learning technologies embrace much more than e-learning and are often low cost, according to the participants – Nige Howarth of Inspired Age and Alan Bellinger of IT Training fame – in the sixth episode.

E-learning tends to be associated with content, according to Howarth, while learning technologies include wikis, podcasts, Sharepoint, virtual classrooms, content management systems, and performance support tools.

Many learning technologies, are not expensive and can be produced quickly, especially compared to the development phase needed to create an e-learning course.

If you are just beginning to use learning technologies, a good starting point, Bellinger suggested, is Google, followed by instruments such as wikis and blogs, and Sharepoint.

What trends do they see for this year? Bellinger said: 'More for less, everything focused on survivability.' And Howarth: 'The continued use of rapid development techniques, social media, and informal learning. 2009-2010 will see serious virtual words and gaming become more mainstream.'

The fifth episode of the IT training podcast features Don Taylor, whose many hats include Infobasis and the SFIA Steering Council, and Marcus Harris of BCS, talking about competency frameworks and how they can be used to help develop employees.

Taylor pointed out one of the benefits of competency frameworks is for managers to decide against particular skills where staff should be and how to develop in these areas.

Harris said: 'Competency frameworks allow people to be very specific and focused on what training they are spending their money on and how they are developing people to best support the business and the individuals.'

Taylor and Harris also talked about how competency frameworks are employed in real scenarios and the recent update of SFIA to version 4.

In the lighter section, Taylor chose a gadget that cost just £3.50 as his favourite. It fits in his back pocket. Listen in to find out what it is.

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On the ground

What advice would you give fellow trainers on training technophobes? How would you make them feel at ease? We asked trainers to share their advice and guidance.



Technophobia is not a new phenomenon. It goes back to the Industrial Revolution when machines were perceived as a threat to the livelihoods of skilled craftsman. Change is one of the only things that can be relied upon in business, though nowadays we might be dealing with the roll-out of the latest Microsoft product rather than the seed drill.

While some people do pick up IT skills easier than others, I tend to think that technophobia is more a case of confidence and conditioning. Removing the fear factor: 'No, you won't break the computer if you push the wrong button!' is a good start.

We have to build confidence and build it quickly with some simple strategies that can help delegates make IT work for them. It is also useful to work in small groups of a similar skill level where possible.

Some people may have been conditioned over decades to feel that they just 'don't do' technology. It is important to talk to them and break down their fears while making the training sessions as relaxed as possible.

Be prepared to change your strategies or techniques to suit each delegate and use analogies where possible – be they football or fashion. And don't forget to praise even the smallest step towards banishing those technophobe tendencies.

Anne Harkness,
Alpha Training

More advice and tips at:
www.bcs.org/ittraining

Trainers: this is your page – please send in your views for the next issue to the editor:
helen.wilcox@hq.bcs.org.uk

Advisers: Jooli Atkins, Matrix FortyTwo and Dave Britt, BCS Trainer of the Year 2006.

Next issue

How can you enliven a course which must cover reams of material to prepare for certification exams?

Breaking developments

With the number of remote workers expected to rise in the coming years, what does a trainer need to think about to reach out to, and train, them?



Training remotely poses a variety of challenges for trainers that are very different to a classroom experience. Key issues to consider are:

- Communication – isolation is often cited as a key problem for remote workers. To combat this, share schedules so that you both know the best times to contact each other. Agree what sorts of issues should be treated as a priority and which can be responded to in slower time.
- Support – you need to be available to answer questions and offer guidance when needed. Whether questions are related to the subject matter, the learning process, or the tools they will be using, you need to know where to find the appropriate answers. To connect the training to the workplace, consider asking senior colleagues to act as mentors and coaches.
- Collaboration – encourage learners to interact with each other by setting shared activities. Building a sense of community both overcomes physical isolation and encourages productive discussions about learning content.
- Access to learning resources – ensure that learners know where to find what they need, and have the appropriate tools. A wealth of technological resources is available to support learning, but don't assume everyone necessarily has access to technology or knows how to use it. With the most recent government statistics showing that at least 3.1 million UK employees are now working from home (Labour market analysis and summary by the Office of National Statistics – September 2005), it is clear that more and more of us will need to consider how we can keep our remote workers motivated and engaged.

Paul Stevenson, Parity

Next issue

How can you make sure Gen Y is engaged by learning? To get your thoughts rolling, have a read of what Clive Shepherd has to say on the subject on p34.

A rewarding line of work

Training people who are blind or partially sighted in IT skills can be extremely rewarding as it can give them access and a lifeline to the world. IT trainer David Brown has also obtained another sort of reward in the shape of this year's BCS Trainer of the Year Award sponsored by APMG. Helen Wilcox spoke to him about his work.



What's a typical working day like for you?

I train for the charity, UCanDoIT, as my bread and butter work, usually two days a week in people's homes. It allows me to give something back to the blind and partially sighted community. I also train commercially in the workplace on how to use access software with various applications.

I usually do a couple of days a week for UCanDoIT training in the homes of students, who can range from age 18 to 88. Some people lose sight later in life.

UCanDoIT covers quite a large geographical area: Lancaster, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and occasionally Cheshire. I try to arrange lessons on one day in the same area, so I may give something like three lessons a day. Each session usually lasts about one and a half hours, sometimes longer.

Students may wish to learn anything from Word to setting up a home music studio, or online shopping or banking

David Brown

UCanDoIT can only provide 10 lessons to each student, so I have to work out quickly what users want to get out of the computer and know about a very wide range of different applications. Students may wish to learn anything from Word to setting up a home music studio, or online shopping or banking. What they learn also depends on their level and which of the varying access technologies they want to use.

What are the access technologies you train on?

There are two types of software that we use: magnification software (which magnifies on screen – for instant ZoomText and Lunar) and screen reader software, which reads everything on the screen – all the option files, text, links and so on. Examples are Jaws, Hal and Window-Eyes, and there's free software called Thunder. It's not as versatile as the other three, though. Then there is software, such as Supernova, which mixes magnification and speech technology. It's also possible to install a refreshable electronic braille display under a conventional computer keyboard, which allows the user to read the computer screen by touch in braille. You get one line at a time and then scroll down to get the next.

Whether you use the braille reader depends on whether you can read braille. As I lost my sight at 32, which was eight years ago, I find braille awkward and slowgoing. However, a lot of people who have not had sight from when they were young do use the braille reader.

As well as knowing about the access technologies, I have to have a grasp of how they interact with Microsoft software. The students need to learn them too and need to remember all the shortcut keys for Microsoft, plus extra ones for the access technologies.

Do you find the work rewarding?

Yes, it's very rewarding showing people that technology can help them and make life easier, and that it is easy to do things on computers and not as technical as they might think. Computers can help them become independent, email their family, or manage their finances. There is also technology that can read mail and scan it in. If I hadn't got into computers when I lost my sight, I would have gone mad if I'd had to ask people to read and write letters for me.

What about your commercial work?

I subcontract to T&T Consulting, which trains on a software interface between Dragon – voice-to-text software – and Jaws. It's called J-say, which is middleware, which means it works with Jaws to give you feedback on what you've typed. The organisation covers the country, so I travel a lot.

How do you get about?

I have a support worker, who drives me to students and settles me in, and helps with any issues. It

wouldn't be practical to get the train to a lot of places I go to.

What did you do before you lost your sight?

I was in the Middle East working with Inchcape Plc for six years and then Coca-Cola in Saudi as a marketing manager until a terrorist attack in December 2000. A car bomb disguised as a soft drinks carton was left on my car bonnet. As I worked in the soft drinks industry I assumed it was a sample. I lost my sight and my right hand.

How you can help UCanDoIt

UCanDoIT is a charity formed 10 years ago to teach blind, deaf and disabled people computer and internet skills in heir own homes.

Tutors are specifically trained both to work with disabled people and with accessibility software. They teach on a one-to-one basis on the learner's own computer in the learner's own home. The charity believes this ensures that the learner is able to learn at their own pace and to learn what they need or wish to learn.

If you'd like to help the organisation, its foremost need is funding and donations. It also needs IT volunteers who can help with one-off problem-solving if learners run into technical problems, for instance internet settings going wrong, or email not working. Also, volunteers are needed to receive and answer emails from learners, allowing them to practice sending emails to different people.
www.UCanDoIT.org.uk


Joyce Day


Lauren Crisp


Hazel Sheppard


Ian McMichael

Why did you go into IT training?

I could do it and was pretty good at it. I enjoyed it and realised the benefits it could bring to others. I was very disillusioned by the training on offer by other support groups to the visually impaired and blind. Courses were often held in places that were difficult to reach, and training was not offered in the home. I was very fortunate to come across UCanDoIT, which then only operated in counties around the M25. I said I'd like to offer training in a new region. In the last four years I've trained 40 to 50 people.

How did you find your students?

Before I got into IT training, I set up Blindsite Ltd to sell access technology and other hardware and magnifiers, for instance to help read a television screen, and I found many students through that. I couldn't reach all of them via the website, though, because you generally need to talk to blind people, especially if they can't already use computers. I got to know many of the blind societies by going to exhibitions. I have to keep knocking on doors, though, and networking.

It's very rewarding showing people that technology can help them and make life easier, and that it is easy to do things on computers and not as technical as they might think

David Brown

How do you keep your own skills up-to-date?

I'm forced to keep my skills up-to-date because new technology is always coming out, and access technologies, as well as Microsoft products, are updated on a regular basis. Often there are good new features in new versions but a whole load of fluffy features too.

I also spend time reading about the topics on various email lists and find information on manufacturers' websites. I'm also a beta tester for J-say and was one in the past for Jaws.

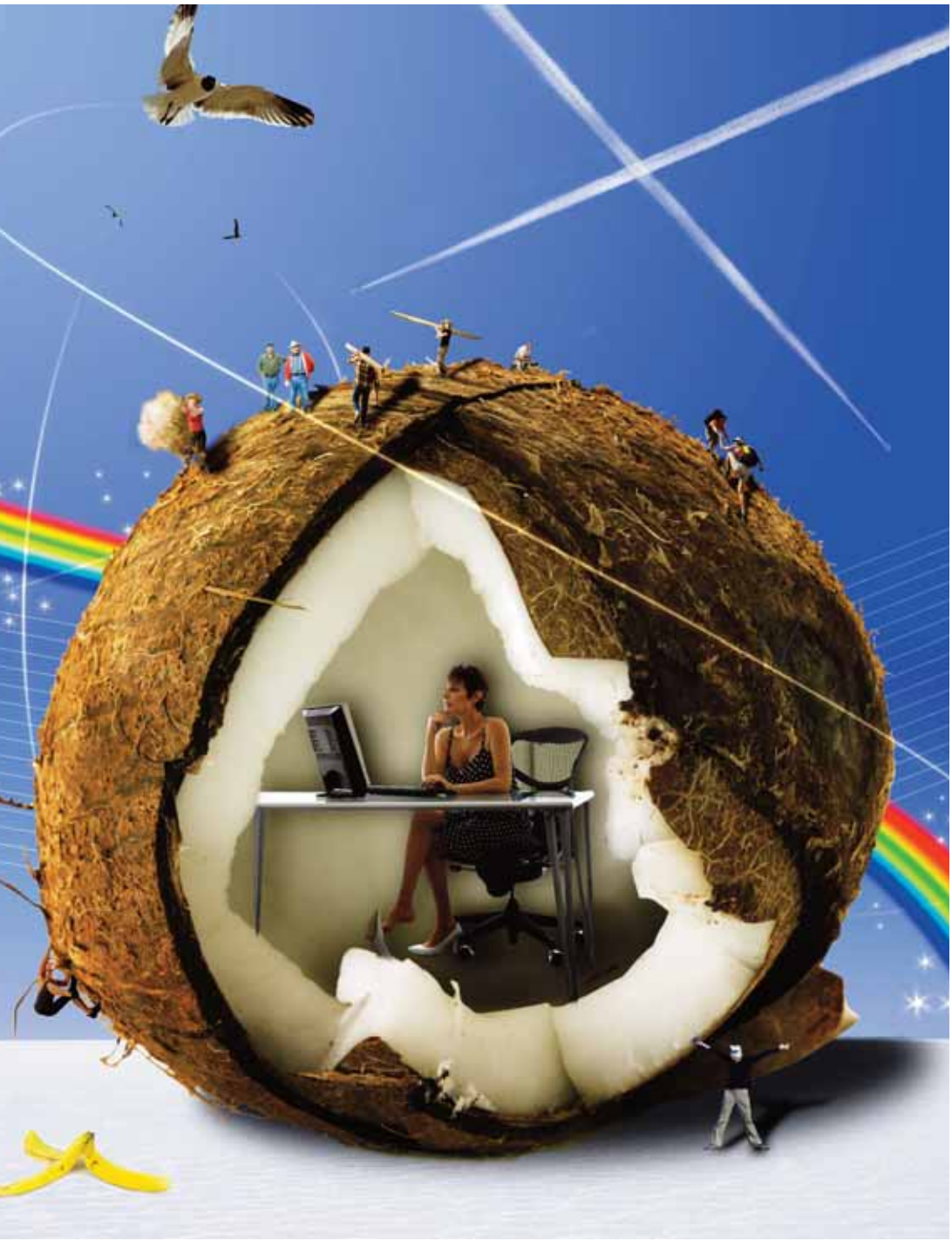
What are your plans for the future?

With UCanDoIT we're looking at how to make computer equipment for the partially sighted or blind people either subsidised or free, and offer them training with UCanDoIT up to the point where they can teach themselves.

I'm also looking at the possibility of supporting some ITQ programmes, as colleges just don't have enough funding to train their trainers on how to use accessible technology. I need to get ITQ qualified first.

How do you feel about winning the BCS award?

I am delighted and extremely grateful to UCanDoIT for nominating me. It highlights the importance of the need for good accessibility design in ICT. Many blind and visually impaired people see their computers as a lifeline to the world.



System ripe for replacing

Fruit suppliers need reliable systems that help forecast demand and fruit availability, and ensure correct stock levels. When Poupart introduced a new centralised system to do just that, 80 staff members needed to be trained on it. Helen Wilcox looks at how the training programme was rolled out.

Based in Hertfordshire, Poupart is one of the UK's largest suppliers of soft-fruit, top-fruit, stone-fruit, citrus, cherries, grapes and a host of other products to multiple retailers and independents.

Dealing with the seasonal variations and limited shelf life of fresh produce presents Poupart with ongoing challenges. Forecasting accurately is inherently difficult, yet ensuring the right levels of stock are in the right place at the right time is vital, as is adhering to customers' standards in terms of quality, food safety and value.

Poupart's buyers need to understand what fruit will be available from each of their growers by season, by week and then by day, as the season progresses.

'We are the interface between hundreds of fruit growers worldwide and some of the UK's biggest supermarkets,' says Robin Dawson, finance director at Poupart. 'Without timely and accurate information, we can't promise them what produce they will receive and when.'

Rapid advances in supply chain management technology had put Poupart's systems under increasing strain. Operating disparate and siloed systems for finance and sales order processing, forecasting, stock planning, promotion planning, and market share analysis compounded problems caused by forecasts arriving by email, fax or telephone.

'Forecasts often arrived late – if at all – and with a number of people re-keying information, both time and accuracy became a concern,' admits Dawson.

Poupart therefore researched solutions that could deliver reliable and accurate information for effective sales, stock control and promotional planning. It picked Microsoft Dynamics NAV as the solution, and chose Tectura, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, to implement and customise both the system and the training. In addition to Microsoft Dynamics NAV,

Poupart also uses Microsoft BizTalk Server and Microsoft SQL Server, which standardise business processes across the group.

Up to speed

The company-wide project involved 80 users in finance, sales and marketing, category management, technical, operations and purchasing. They all needed to be brought up to speed on the system. Training took place at various stages throughout the implementation. Key users – 15 business managers from across departments such as finance and procurement – were trained first by Tectura. In the final training stage, key users then trained the rest of the users, in a train-the-trainer approach.

Renée Horton-Coker, global programme director at Tectura, explains: 'We adopted the "train the trainer" approach because Poupart is in a better positition to train the end users on how to do a function specific to their business whereas Tectura provided the detailed knowledge of the functionality of the new systems. An ERP project encompasses the unique processes of the company, for instance knowing customer codes etc. Tectura can't be experts on these, although we are experts in their ERP product and we understood a lot of their business after spending many months working with them.'

Training for the key users began in the analysis phase of the project when they received standard application training for the Microsoft products.

'All training was conducted face-to-face because ERP software implementations are so specific to the organisation in question, and the industry they operate in, that e-learning would not be re-usable and therefore not cost-effective,' says Horton-Coker.

'The main objective at the first stage was for them to get the look and feel of the product and learn the terminology. We used language at this stage which is not technical, but business centric.'



All training was conducted face-to-face because ERP software roll-outs are so specific to the organisation in question, and the industry they operate in

Renée Horton-Coker, Tectura

The key users were trained in groups of five for five to seven days. It took several days as training covers things such as setting up customer data, which could take half a day. Details include not just the name and address of customers, but also payment terms, reminders, credit limits and so on. Then there are lists of products and price lists to set up.

'The whole purpose of the training was to help the company learn how to drive business decisions – to work out who are the top customers, what are the best selling product lines and so on,' says Horton-Coker

'This phase used standard dummy data. The key users had to learn almost a new way of thinking. It's like if you drive a Vauxhall Cavalier and then you have to learn to drive a Volkswagen van. You know how to do the basics, but you have to find where the light switches are, how to adjust the seats, and so on. It's like taking the system for a test drive.

'It's also a chance to find out that the car only does 80 per cent of what you want. This then helps in the next phase – the joint application phase because you can understand what to customise. For instance there may be certain screens that you may not want certain departments to see.

'By this next phase of training, the system had been customised to Poupart's needs, so it had a slightly different look and feel to the out-of-the box solution that the users first learnt on. We ran two-hour sessions because the users only needed to learn which specific modifications had been made to the standard solution with which they were familiar.

'At this stage, we could use more technical language because users were familiar with the system.'

In phase three of the training, during the deploy phase and prior to product testing, more intense focal point sessions were conducted with three to six key users, focussing on key areas of using the system, for example purchasing, sales order processing and so on. These were developed by Tectura specific to Poupart's business processes and all the material was bespoke. Tectura also ran workshops for key users on how to put together material to train the end users.

The key users then led the end user sessions supervised by Tectura. They were taught in groups of up to ten.

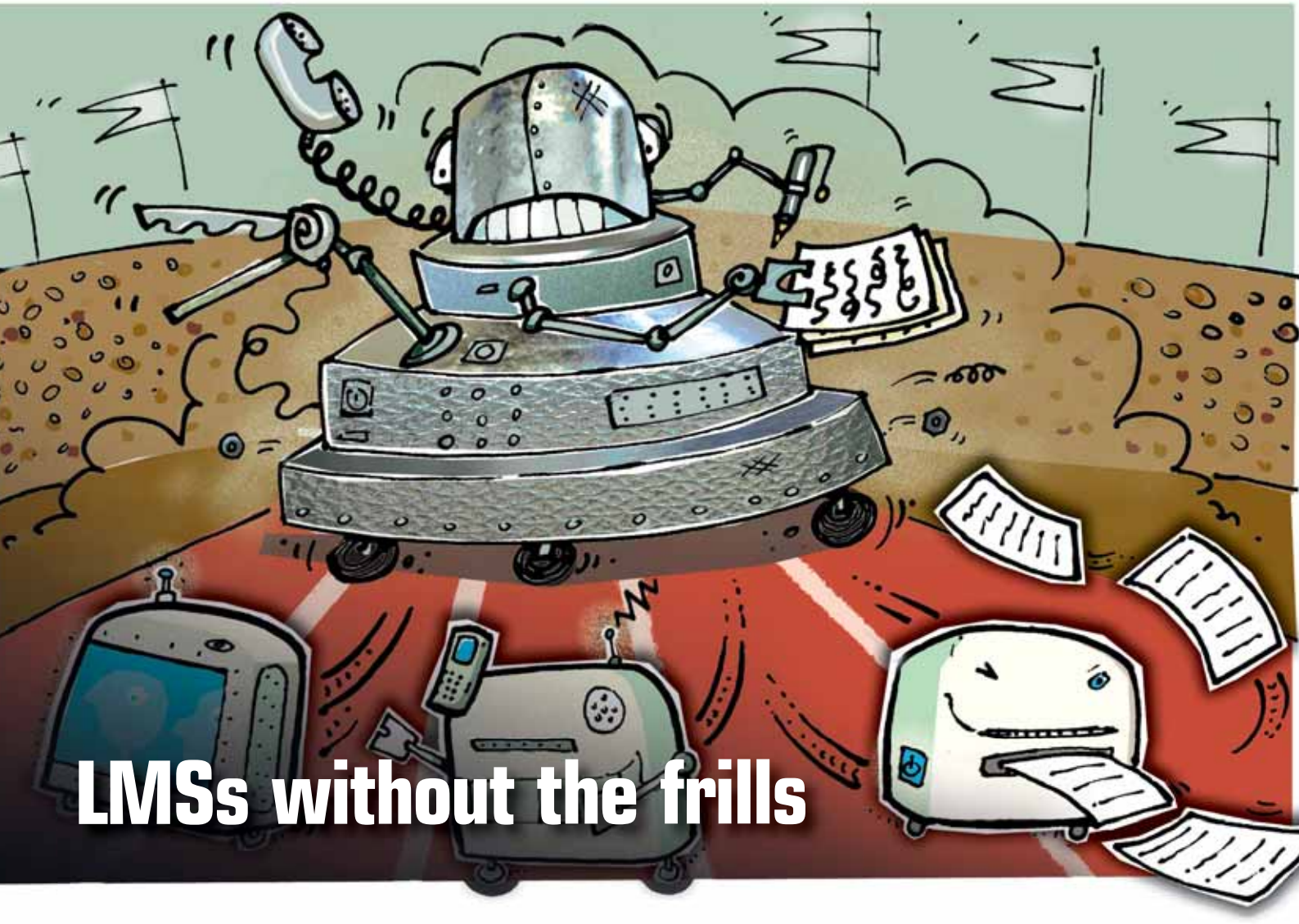
Evaluation stage

To evaluate the training's effectiveness, questionnaires were used to gather feedback on modules, content, materials and so on which was then fed into an official performance review process.

The overall system implementation took 12 months. The first phase of training was delivered at the end of the analysis phase in month 4. The second batch was delivered in months 9 and 10 and the third batch in the 12th month, along with end user training.

The new systems have allowed Poupart to see the exact stock situation at each pack house using Microsoft BizTalk Server. Once the stock has been assessed, a shipment order is instantly available to the pack house. 100 per cent of shipment order confirmations are now returned to Poupart and received into Microsoft Dynamics NAV automatically.

'Microsoft Dynamics NAV has allowed us to provide category management and promotion planning much more effectively, and in a much more joined up manner, than we were ever able to do before,' says Laurence Olins, executive chairman of Poupart. This is borne out by financial results.
'In the year after implementing Microsoft Dynamics NAV our sales increased by 35 per cent, with no additional headcount.'



LMSs without the frills

The days of the more bells and whistles, the better, are behind the learning management system (LMS). It may have become part of the fabric of learning, and a must-have for compliance, but when money is tight, buyers are going back to basics for functionality, as Gary Flood reports.

There was a time when LMSs – those big software suites that coordinate and help master big deployments of e-learning, training and development – were the next big thing. But this year there wasn't a separate stream on it at the Learning Technologies conference – and only one out of 45 sessions even had 'LMS' in its title. Has LMS 'failed'?

That's way too strong a way to characterise the state of play. But there is no denying (see box) that the market for commercial LMSs is, if not dead, then pretty quiet. And while there is clear interest in open source alternatives and companies still see the need for a way to manage their e-learning deployments, both what buyers want from an LMS and where they will get this functionality from is rapidly changing. It's not so much that LMSs have gone away but that it may make increasingly less sense to talk about them.

Or as learning technology consultant Nige Howarth of Inspired Age sums it up: 'You used to be told about aircon or power steering as great extras when you bought a car – now you just automatically assume they will be there when you pick one up. LMS is increasingly just part of the fabric when it comes to how we manage learning.'

LMS is increasingly just part of the fabric when it comes to how we manage learning

Nige Howarth, Inspired Ae

That's not to say that if an organisation went to market today it would struggle to find a company able to sell and support an LMS – far from it. It's more that what those companies are asking for and what

they are willing to pay for is a lot different to before the credit crunch.

'A few months back it was all about what web 2.0 features you had,' says Martin Belton, sales and marketing director of e2train, which has clients including O2 and Nissan Europe. 'There was great interest in how to increase user upload and user interactivity with material and so on. Now, the market has changed. As no one is going to dash out and recruit loads of new employees, their training needs have changed and so of course has the financial climate. Now it's all about deployment of LMS as a software as a service (SaaS) or as a managed service and there are different goals.'

Jon Øivind Stenerud, chief technology office of Norwegian LMS company Edvantage Group, which has ongoing engagements with organisations like Siemens, Lego and BP, agrees. 'The climate has changed. The RFPs [tender document for an IT solution] are much less about nice-to-haves in terms of features than a "back to basics" theme. There is still interest in the underlying architecture and the extensibility of a system, as organisations would prefer to make investments that offer them as much future-proofing as possible for when things turn around in the economy, but clients want to hear about the value they can get from using this system. And unquestionably, SaaS is coming of age in the LMS market.'

'A year ago almost all our systems were deployed inside the firewall; now almost none are,' says Belton.



Now it's all about deployment of LMS as a software as a service (SaaS) or as a managed service and there are different goals

Martin Belton, e2Train

Compliance drive

So users still want to buy an LMS – but they want to do so as economically and efficiently as possible, it seems. Why do they still want an LMS? Recruitment is likely to be down so much this year (for example the UK's leading graduate employers have reduced their recruitment targets for 2009 by 17 per cent since the latest graduate recruitment round began in September 2008), so what are they trying to train people about?

The answer is compliance and regulation, tied to an emphasis on deriving more value from internal (human) resources. 'There is much more emphasis at the moment in corporates on performance management – ways of tracking and measuring employees,' says Belton.

'The UK is the country in Europe where we see the clearest focus on the need to deliver compliance training on a recurring basis, and that's not a need that will go away; we have global clients as well who need to train 50 to 70,000 employees on an annual or biannual basis,' agrees Stenerud.

Overall, then, it seems that LMS customers want the cheapest LMS they can get as a way to get the maximum out of the people still working for them. If that seems a bit of a bleak statement, it's probably better to be more realistic about the function of this kind of learning tool than some of the grander claims floating about ten years or so back, when we thought instructor-led training was going the same way as the rotary phone. Belton says: 'No-one wants bespoke – they want off-the-peg, low capital outlay and low manpower to maintain.'

If that is the context LMS suppliers are operating in, it's no surprise that there is growing interest in open source LMS, and in this category the Moodle system seems to be building momentum. Equally unsurprisingly we have advocates of the system like Ray Lawrence, MD of training and support services firm, HowToMoodle, who says: '

Is there still an LMS 'market'?

Yes, is the answer; Bersin & Associates claimed they found evidence that the 2006 global value of the LMS market was $480m (£336m). But it is a highly fragmented one, with a 2005 report by CLO (chief learning officer) magazine noting the six largest LMS product companies make up over 40 per cent of the market, and a wide range of other sorts of companies, such as ERP and e-learning vendors, also claim to offer LMS functionality.

In the struggle to get established many small players either battle for niche positions or fall victim to a slow process of consolidation – for example WebCT has been bought by Blackboard and will be phased out completely by 2011.

Apart from Meridien, the two biggest standalone LMS firms have themselves acquired others or are indeed the result of combinations themselves, namely Saba and SumTotal, which together account for nearly a quarter of the whole ongoing market.

But even these relative LMS 'giants' are, if not struggling, then hardly running at full tilt. Saba – which these days labels itself a 'human capital management' firm – claims 17m customers globally and 1,300 customer organisations and for its last full financial year saw sales up 7 per cent, to $107m (£75m) – but also posted a $4m (£3m) loss. Meanwhile rival SumTotal, formed of the 2004 merger of Docent and Click2Learn, also saw turnover up for its last (pre-credit crunch) fiscal year, with sales boosted by 15 per cent to $123m (£86m), but it too made a loss for the year as a whole - $8m (£6m).

It's unlikely these bigger companies will go under, but it all seems a far cry from the heady days of the start of the decade, when LMS seemed one of the brightest promises of the whole dotcom bubble.

All sorts of organisations, from the NHS to academia to defence are all starting to use Moodle as there is no software licence cost, minimum risk in taking it up and, as you won't be dependent on the fortunes of a company to support it, your business continuity is safeguarded.'

UK charity Samaritans agrees. 'We were reassured that a lot of public sector bodies like the OU and NHS have started using Moodle and we have also found it solid and quite easy to train our people on,' says its training development officer, Nigel Rees, based at its Surrey HQ.

'We have limited resources and needed to get something that was robust, would have longevity and would be low cost to support.' Samaritans needed an LMS, he says, to better track and manage the learning to continuously deliver on non-soft skills to volunteers, managers and trustees at its 200-plus branches in the UK and Ireland.

There are of course arguments about whether open source is always the 'right' solution. 'I hear a lot about the rise of Moodle but I don't "see" it,' says e2train's Belton. 'I don't see how it solves what customers say is their biggest problem – they want something they can buy as a service or start using straight away instead of putting in a lot of effort to make it work or customise it.'

Nonetheless, if you as a training manager have signed a cheque in the last six months for a stand-alone LMS not being delivered remotely, then you are not so much 'wrong' as certainly not in the mainstream.

Rolls-Royce solution

'The problem with the LMS market when it started was that very sophisticated software was sold to very senior people – but it was a Rolls-Royce solution for a going-to-Sainsbury's problem. Too often you only used about 10 per cent of the functionality provided,' says Howarth (who should know – he earned his spurs at e-learning firm NetG, now part of SkillSoft).



The UK is... where we see the clearest focus on the need to deliver compliance training on a recurring basis

Jon Øivind, Edvantage Group

'What's happened is that people know they want and need to do things like track attendance and completion rates of courses, bookmark courses, let people come in and out of content and so forth, but there are many cheap and cheerful ways to do that now. So LMS has gone from being this grand, encompassing piece of e-learning to just one part of it.'

LMS, then, has not gone but is now really part of a general (with small letters) learning management system approach. And that approach, in 2009 at least, is clearly marked 'low capital expenditure,' 'does the basics' and 'quick to deliver results' – and not 'advanced functionality', 'competitive differential,' or even 'web 2.0'.

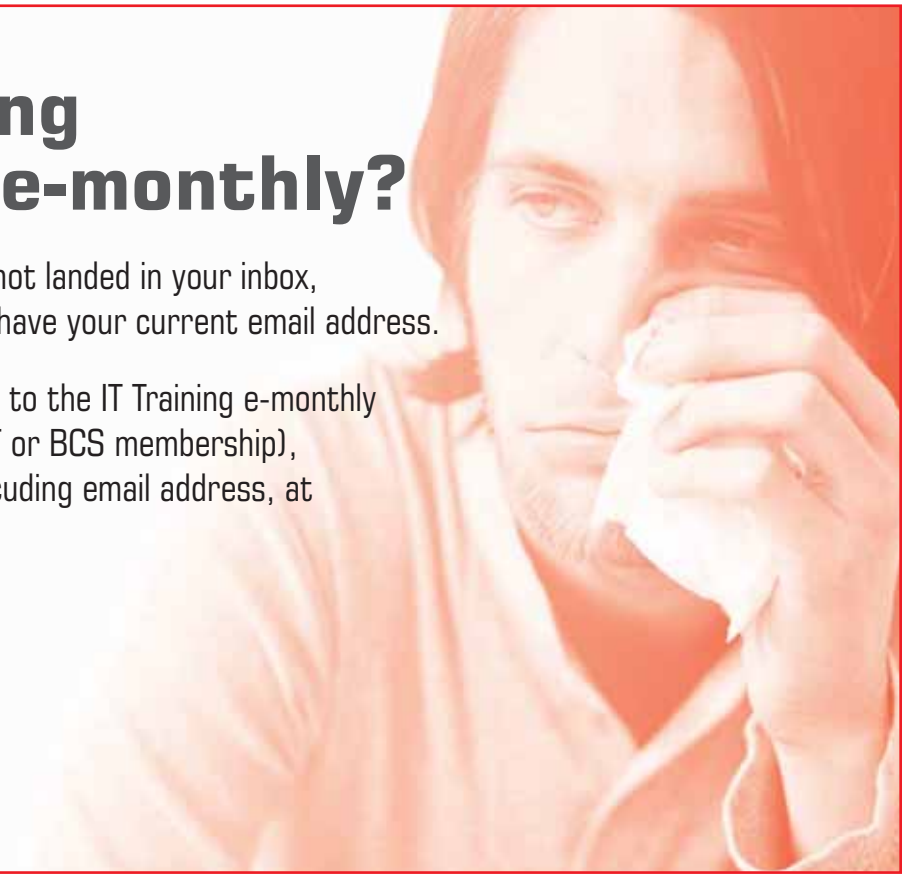
Those aspects will come back, we are sure – but not for a while.

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From quick and dirty to fast and clean

For years our instincts have been honed away from quick and dirty approaches, but it's time to re-think that position, argues Alan Bellinger.

You're in a meeting and an approach is being talked through that you intuitively think: 'This is a quick and dirty solution – what can I do to make it more robust?' And, yes, that's still sound thinking, as long as you don't over-egg it. Making it more robust is good; making it more complex is bad.

The core point is this: we're operating now in times that we haven't experienced before, and that means that we can't rely on the thinking that has served us well in the past. And that highlights that there is a critical point – the models we used in the past still hold – it's the way in which we apply and prioritise those models that's different.

Figure 1 (on page opposite) highlights the point. It is a traditional cost-to-benefit chart that, in times that are now fondly remembered, we would have used to highlight that it was beneficial to do the job right first time round.

By simplifying the scope you are able to reduce the effort to a great extent

Alan Bellinger

The blue project is a typical quick and dirty profile – lower cost to develop and execute but much lower benefit in the longer run.

But if you show these two profiles to your management today, in all

probability they'll opt for the blue solution; the shorter time to benefit and the implication that it's far less risk are just too tempting for them to pass up.

So the issue is no longer one of 'Quick and dirty is bad', it's more one of 'What do I need to do to make quick and dirty into fast and clean?' And when you start to look at the issue through that lens you'll see there are some very attractive approaches available – and, more specifically, ones that will meet with your management's approval. So let's analyse what's involved.

Clarify the goals

One of the elements that typifies a quick and dirty project is that people will rush into it with a lack of clarity in terms of what's involved: 'We'll work it out as we go along' is a typical mantra for such projects. And such an approach usually means that there will be mixed expectations as to both process and outcomes.

'But I thought that...' is an inevitable cry in these circumstances, either from your sponsor in the business (which really means this isn't going well) or from you in your L&D role (which really means, in the words of Fagin: 'I think I'd better think it out again'.)

There are any number of probes that you can use to clarify the goals in the early stages of the project: 'Let me just confirm' is either a precursor for checking your understanding or is the rather more devious tactic to deliberately misunderstand the position someone's taking. Alternatively: 'Are you really saying that...' or 'Do you really mean...' are great ways to introduce a slight shift of ground whilst ensuring that your sponsor has a deeper appreciation of what they're asking for.

At the conclusion of this phase – which really shouldn't be more than a meeting between yourself and the sponsor – you'll have much greater clarity on the goals. A short but succinct write-up of the goals (not the discussion that led to the goals being defined) will serve you well later in the project.

Define the scope

The goals relate to outcomes; the scope relates to what's involved in achieving those outcomes. And this is where you really can make the project fast and clean. The driver here is to 'keep it simple'. By simplifying the scope you are able to reduce the effort (and consequently the costs and the timescales) to a considerable extent.

An obvious example would be which parts of Office 2007 you include as part of supporting the roll-out? Through your training needs analysis you'll have established the functionality that's critical, important, desirable etc. So why not just cover the critical and find other ways to develop the other skills?

There's absolutely no harm in reducing scope if it's possible to do it – but make sure that your sponsor buys in to the approach you're taking, or it will backfire.

Sort out the phasing

One of the great ways to shrink a project is with a cunning bit of re-phasing. You can do it by content, by audience, or by time; for example, by shifting one part of the first phase into the second phase (content re-phasing) or by moving one group into a subsequent phase (audience re-phasing) you can have a substantial impact on the project profile.

By doing this type of re-phasing you are really having two positive impacts on the overall project. First, you're simplifying the project which makes it easier to manage, and secondly you're reducing risk. But you're also creating a negative impact – you're delaying benefit. And so, just as we saw in figure 1 above, the balancing act is always one of balancing time and risk against benefit.

But, even here, there are ways of

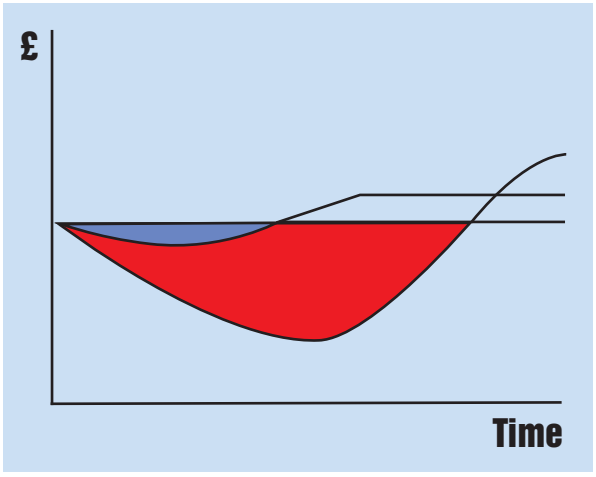


Figure 1: Cost-to-benefit profiles

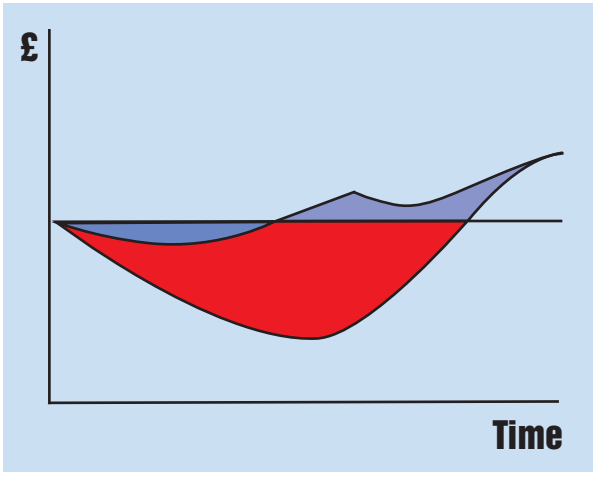


Figure 2: The Impact of Phasing



Multi-phased projects tend to have benefits over a big bang approach

Alan Bellinger

looking at the issue differently. If, for example, you're able to bring in phase 2 fairly quickly, then your cost-to-benefit profile could look like that in figure 2 (above).

This chart maps the cost-to-benefit line, and, since that is cumulative, subsequent phases profit from the benefits captured in phase 1.

In this type of chart the line is a cumulative cost/benefit line. In the early stages of the project you're only incurring costs as you don't start picking up benefits until after delivery.

Figure 2 argues that if you get your phasing right, then you really can improve the profile. It is incorrect to read the chart 'The red one costs a lot whilst the blue one doesn't' because the blue one is

offsetting costs against the benefits, which are only just starting to come in on the red one.

It'll require some subtle phasing issues to get a profile such as that in Figure 2 – but multi-phased projects tend to have benefits over a big bang approach.

With some projects, if you get your phasing right, you can capture a comparable level of benefits whilst also making the cost-to-benefit profile look better. The profile is an excellent way of looking at projects – but, once again, the trick is to keep it simple. Base your graphs on broad trends and instinct rather than a detailed analysis. What you come up with in ten minutes may have a larger margin of error than a profile researched in a couple of days – but it won't be a big enough margin of error to justify the analysis paralysis.

Assess the options

You've scoped it and phased it, so now we need to decide on the best method of skills transfer. And this comes down to a simple matrix (see Figure 3 below).

And here again it might be time for some fresh thinking. Have you always been sceptical about a technology-based approach believing that it would involve high development costs and a higher risk profile? Then take a look at rapid e-learning and see if that changes your ideas. Alternatively, perhaps you've always looked to deliver formal interventions believing that that's the only way to ensure that the skills are really transferred; then think again. In the current climate informal learning interventions have three major benefits to your management – less time off work, quicker availability, and greater management visibility.

Manage expectations

The most important point about making the project fast and clean is to manage the expectations of your sponsor or sponsors. We saw earlier how important it is to get the expectations right at the start of the project, but most people exhibit an alarming tendency to allow this early work to atrophy as the project progresses. And so the lesson is obvious – keep all sponsors and stakeholders informed as the project progresses.



For a real primer on this subject I recommend 'The Black Swan' by Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Alan Bellinger

And don't limit progress reporting to status updates, rather link progress to the original goals. That way, you'll maintain visibility of the goals, and provide confidence that the project will lead to a successful outcome. By doing that, you'll be able to show that risk is being managed – worth many brownie points in the current climate – and that managers' time can be devoted to their critical operational issues.

The greatest pitfall in all of this is the tendency to use a 'one size fits all' when it comes to progress reporting – and the direct consequence of that is that your sponsors/stakeholders don't read it, if it's written content, or take it in if it's verbal. In short, this is an area in which a little contextualisation has an enormous benefit.

Expect the unexpected

This is the year in which everything's different. And the greatest risk we all face is one of relying too much on past experience. I've been surprised recently at how many meetings I've been in when norms from the last two years are applied almost without question. This doesn't argue that we can't rely on our experience, but it does argue that we need to assess our experience in the light of current operating conditions.

Making sure that projects are fast and clean is one way we can ensure that our approach resonates much more with current management thinking. But don't stop there. And for a real primer on this subject I recommend 'The Black Swan' by Nassim Nicholas Taleb; I read it over the Christmas/ New Year period and found that its coverage of improbable events was so thought provoking it was amazing. It certainly influenced my thought processes.

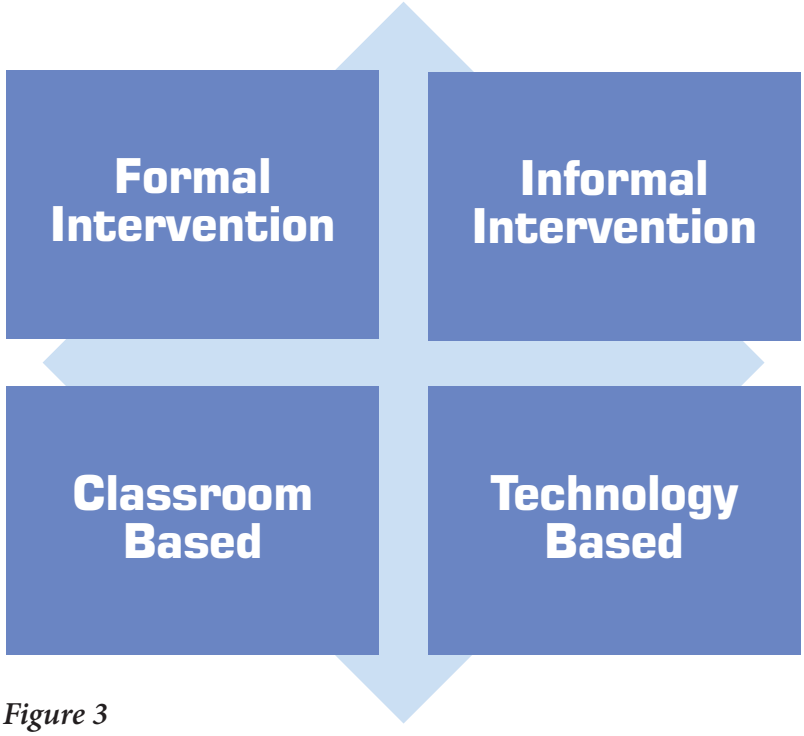


Figure 3



Revision no help for tough governance exam

A new qualification is available for experts in IT governance. It's so hard that you can't revise for it, only take it and hope you are good enough to pass, as Gary Flood reports.

Sorry if not being able to revise seems off-putting, but the organisation behind the certification is adamant that becoming Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT (CGEIT) can never be seen as something achieved by any kind of brain dump.

However, practitioners of the disciplines around effective IT governance are unlikely to be offended – and in fact are probably not that surprised at this high barrier, given that the new exam is from the same body that twice a year whittles down 250 proposed questions for another of its exams to a mere 23.

This is the new qualification coming out of Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA), the 40-year-old body behind the control objectives for information and related technology (COBIT) IT governance standard.

In December 2008, the first candidates sat the CGEIT, which becomes the third qualification available from this group, complementing its 20-year-old Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA) and 7-year-old Certified Information Security Manager (CISM).

'We see a clear emergence of what might be called a new class of professional, the IT governance specialist, and this qualification is a reflection of that trend and a way to recognise that unique skill set,' says Howard Nicholson, business analyst for the City of Salisbury in Southern Australia and chair of ISACA's CGEIT Certification Board.

Like its two stable mates, CGEIT now becomes a biannual exam event, with the next round set for June 2009. Not surprisingly, given its tender age, CGEIT is a minority sport in terms of uptake, with just around 1,000 holders as of the start of 2009. The exam is a stiff test of candidates, as it seeks to examine the six identified relevant domains of IT governance and a number of related sub-domains and tasks. 'We don't expect candidates to know all of this but they do need to demonstrate a high level of base competency,' says Nicholson. 'We also expect them to be able to write a clear narrative of what they are doing in their day jobs so as to demonstrate their suitability.'

Just sitting the exam isn't even the end of this process; each paper is examined blind by up to three assessors and a work reference from a peer also needs to be considered. Plus, the qualification is scrutinised on a rolling three-year basis. Despite the emphasis on real world experience, there are at least a few ISACA-sponsored guides and 'candidate manuals' available.

We don't expect candidates to know all of this but they do need to demonstrate a high level of base competency

Howard Nicholson, chair of ISACA's certification board

The body claims a CISM or CISA is roughly equivalent to a postgraduate diploma (and presumably values the new CGEIT at an equivalent level). A new CGEIT holder is Jo Stewart-Rattray, director of information security at the Australian arm of chartered accountants RSM Bird Cameron, who holds all three ISACA qualifications. 'Having these qualifications has absolutely helped me,' she says. 'In my job I have also found that clients recognise their worth and I think have a higher level of confidence in the consultant assigned to them.'

Where will CGEIT go next? This could be the first attempt by ISACA to start framing a COBIT professional qualification. In the meantime, any IT governance practitioner who thinks they truly know what they are talking about can knock on the CGEIT door to see if they can pass the exam you can't revise for.

Read the full article online at:
www.bcs.org/ittraining

ISACA website:
www.isaca.org



Stood up and delivered

Assessing live training delivery is a cornerstone of a new trainer certificate awarded jointly by BCS and the Institute of IT Training (IITT). Helen Wilcox looks at how the certificate was developed and asks the first successful candidates about their experiences.

The first group to make it to the finishing line of the Institute Certified Training Practitioner (ICTP) certificate formed part of a BCS pilot for its train-the-trainer standard, with courses and assessment run by two training providers.

BCS began developing its own train-the-trainer standards, Accredited Course for Tutor and Trainers (ACTT), three years ago. However, with government standards changing, BCS decided it made sense to work with other bodies and incorporate ACTT into the ICTP. The ACTT therefore no longer exists in name, although its essence is part of the ICTP.

The ICTP came into being as a result of the BCS and the IITT wanting to create one train-the-trainer standard. Previously, IITT used to run the Trainer Assessment Programme (TAP), BCS was developing its standard, plus there were further occupational standards developing.

'Trainer standards used to be all over the place,' said managing director of the IITT Ed Monk at a ceremony in January to award the certificates to the successful pilot candidates. 'For the first time, we have achieved uniformity in IT training. We're delighted that we have a group of people who have achieved ICTP.

'We're interested in raising standards – for us, today is a celebration of working together.'

Following BCS teaming up with the IITT to launch the new certificate in September last year, the successful candidates on the pilot ACTT course became eligible to receive the ICTP certificate.

To achieve certification, the candidates had to show that they were meeting a set standard in training delivery. As part of a three to five day course they attended, their live delivery was assessed. For ACTT, they also had to submit further evidence of competence for elements that were not covered in the 20 minute assessment during the course.

This ICTP has been designed so that the resultant assessor's report can be used as part of a wider portfolio of evidence submitted against the Qualifications Credit Framework Level 4 accredited qualification - Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS), which is awarded by OCR.

A major benefit of the course was the focus on tying theory in with the practical side of planning and delivering courses

Brian Rowlatt, Logica

Chief executive of the IITT Colin Steed said to the successful ICTP candidates: 'If you add additional evidence to the assessor's report then you can put yourself forward for a Level 4 accredited qualification. You're well on the way to getting a nationally recognised qualification.'

For more information about this and the IITT's Trainer Performance Monitoring and Assessment (TPMA), the successful completion of which results in ICTP, see the IITT website: **www.iitt.org.uk**.

BCS was keen to set a standard for IT trainers that did not mean they had to follow a long assessment procedure. The ICTP provides this as it offers recognition for IT training professionals and provides a stepping stone to achieving a Level 4 accredited qualification.

Jooli Atkins of Matrix FortyTwo and chair of BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group said: 'Development and support of the ICTP by BCS shows its commitment to support and encourage the training profession, providing evidence that the BCS acknowledges and supports IT trainers as IT professionals. This follows the setting up of a specialist group for IT trainers in BCS about two years ago. We now have around 1,000 members, so clearly there is a need for this type of recognition within the BCS.'

The ICTP certificate on its own is recognised for IITT Professional membership at the grade of Associate. The ICTP, with a Level 3 accredited qualification in the learning and development space, is recognised for IITT membership at the Professional grade of Senior Associate. Other train the trainer courses (including TAP, MCT, CTT+) are also accepted for IITT

membership at the Associate grade. Full details on the IITT website.

Steed believes that more companies will take up the train-the-trainer approach in the coming months: 'I think the government is putting a lot of money into developing employees, and pushing for employers to develop their staff.

'If you are taking on such a role, we suggest that you attend a train-the-trainer course at an IITT Authorised Qualification & Assessment Centre. Short courses can quickly equip you with the necessary skills. Reaching the ICTP standard proves to your colleagues that you have those skills, as well as providing a possible stepping stone for those who wish to progress to achieving a nationally recognised qualification.'

Ten training companies have either been approved or are nearing approval by the IITT as Authorised Qualification and Assessment Centres for the TPMA service leading to the ICTP certificate. Others are in the process of being authorised, and Steed said he hoped that there would be 25 by this April. Internal training departments can also be accredited, so that they assess their own trainers.

The students' viewpoint

A group of engineers from Yahoo! took a five day Matrix FortyTwo workshop leading to ACTT, so that they could train their peers. Their roles in Yahoo! are varied and they are using what they learnt during the certificate for quite different purposes.

Manav Meehan, head of process and programme management at Yahoo!, is involved in a lot of coaching and mentoring, and found the skills taught in the course useful for that area. 'We were told how not to be trainer-centric but trainee-centric,' he said. 'And how to be assertive in softer ways, and about influencing.'

Christopher Lacy-Hulbert, engineering manger on the Yahoo! FrontPage, specialises in information security. The plan is to deliver security training to engineers around Yahoo! Europe. In the past Yahoo! trained staff on security via a boot camp, but that approach using PowerPoint slides was seen as boring and not helping staff retain what they learnt. With what he learnt on the course, Lacy-Hulbert is planning to change that.

Artur Orteja is a software engineer, working in the international part of Yahoo!, on platforms for the media. As an add-on to his job, he trains others in accessibility, advising on how they can apply accessible tools to their web development projects.

'Colleagues ask for ideas,' he said. 'It's a nice interchange. I was already working on this before I did the course. All through my career I've been asked about accessibility because I'm blind.

'Matrix FortyTwo adapted the course for me when necessary – so, for instance, instead of drawing a diagram, I would describe it, for instance saying an arrow would go from here to here.

'Our delivery was videoed. We had to take a training session of 20 minutes and apply what we had learnt. We discussed it afterwards with the peer group. To complete the qualification, I then had to write about areas that didn't come up in that 20 minutes.'

The other course leading to ICTP as part of the ACTT pilot was a four-day one with Training Synergy. Among the participants was Brian Rowlatt, a consultant specialising in ITIL at Logica. His role includes writing ITIL course material and delivering it.

'My audience for courses is normally internal,' he said. 'We give courses on ITIL to our staff who are delivering IT services to Logica's customers. We have also started to provide courses to Logica's customers. Internally, I can tailor courses to Logica and give examples of how we use ITIL here, which I think makes them more relevant.

'Last year I was training all the time. Now I'm developing new courses. I have used what I learnt from the workshop in both aspects.

'I used to be a teacher around 30 years ago, so the ACTT course brought some ideas back. It went into theories of how people learn in different ways. A major benefit of the course was the focus on tying theory in with the practical side of planning and delivering courses, and so improve the quality of training.

'I also got some spin-off ideas from the course, such as using post-its in group exercises to write down and present their ideas. That way every member of the group can contribute their ideas, rather than having a scribe, who is too busy scribbling to be engaged, or who only writes down their own ideas. It's fast, so opens up opportunities for very quick group exercises when otherwise time pressure might imply that lecturing is the only option.'

Professional bodies pull together

The launch of the new ICTP has strengthened ties between the IITT and BCS.

'The jointly awarded ICTP certificate highlights what we can achieve by working together to develop services to suit both sets of members,' said Steed.

'Both of our bodies are aiming to raise the professionalism of the industry, and pooling our joint knowledge strengthens the quality of such certifications.'

Atkins said: 'Having these standards developed by the BCS and the IITT, in alignment with national standards, means that nationally recognisable qualifications are now in easier reach for trainers in the IT profession. This simplifies the choices for someone wanting to join the profession as a trainer, and means that courses will lead to set standards that will help employers easily understand a trainer's level of competence.'

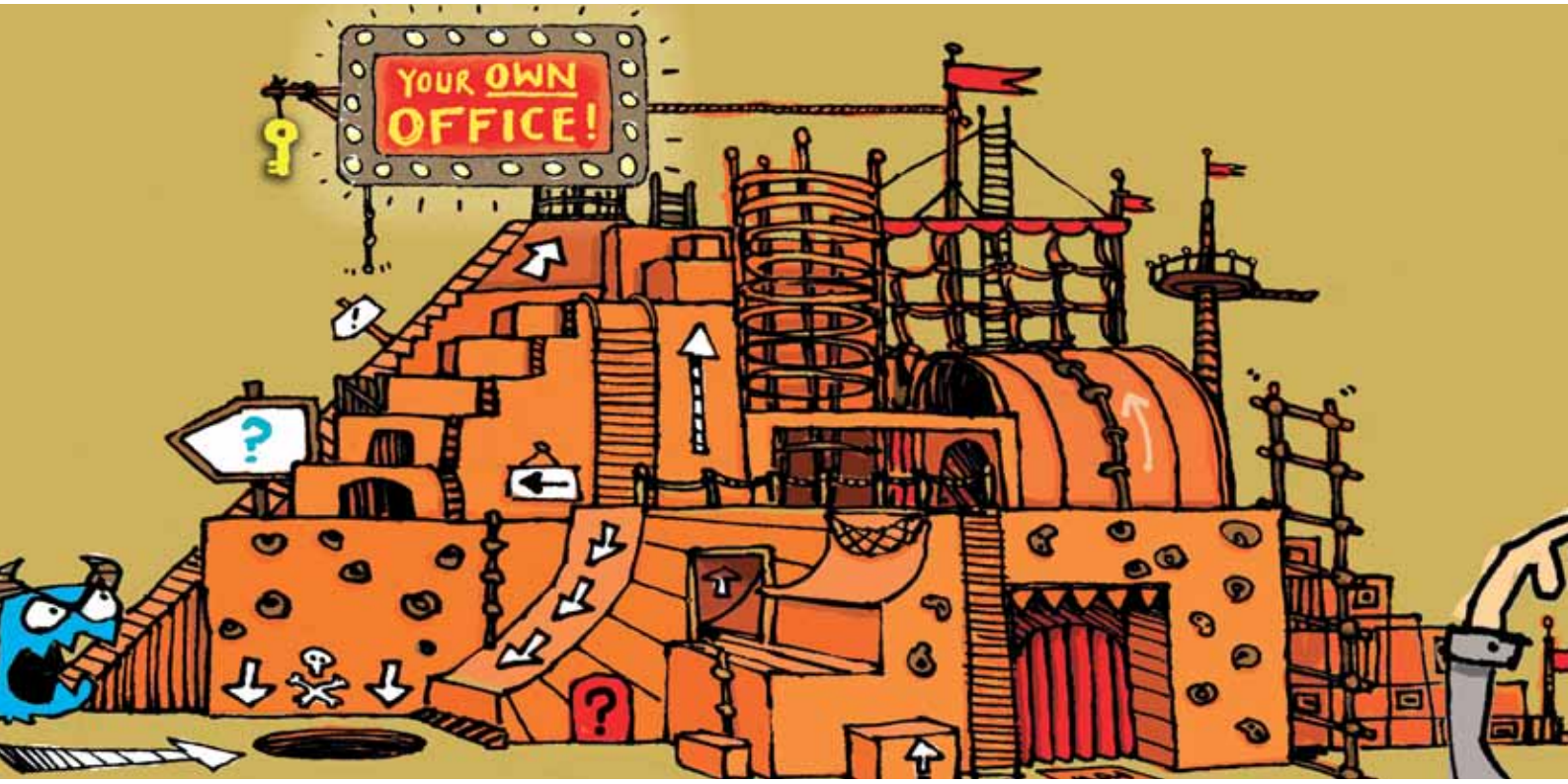


Courses will lead to set standards that will help employers easily understand a trainer's level of competence

Jooli Atkins, Matrix FortyTwo

Structure to support career climb

The benefits of competency frameworks are often related to training, for example identifying skills gaps and bridging them. Donald Taylor looks at the types of competency frameworks available, how to deploy them, and their benefits.



The approach to IT skills, however, is changing, driven by organisations which want to be sure they have the IT skills they need in-house. That means understanding the skills each job role requires, understanding the skills that employees have, and then working to bridge any resulting skills gaps.

If this sounds like a training needs analysis (TNA), it isn't. There's far more to it. Whereas the focus of a TNA is developing a training plan, a full understanding of IT skills results in clear career structures and progression plans, more precise hiring policies, better deployment of personnel and, of course, more focused training.

Central to this approach is a competency framework which defines the skills and competencies for a particular line of work, defining both the relevant skills, and their associated behaviours at different levels of expertise. By providing a common language of skills across all these different aspects of working life – including training – a competency framework provides clarity in what could otherwise be a mess of policies and approaches.A well-known competency framework for IT professionals in the UK is the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA). Now in use by over 2,000 organisations, and first published in 1999, it is on its fourth version, released in December 2008. Containing definitions for 86 skills, defined in detail across seven levels, what differentiates SFIA from most other frameworks is its commercial model.

SFIA comes with a considerable amount of history, links and intellectual property built in

Russell Conway, North Cornwall District Council

SFIA is open-source, open to anyone, free of charge for non-commercial use. The framework is owned by the SFIA Foundation, a non-profit organisation with just one employee, operations manager Ron McLaren, and a board of representatives of each of the five joint shareholders: the BCS, e-skills UK, the Institution of Engineering and Technology, The Institute for the Management of Information Systems and the IT Service Management Forum.

SFIA only describes what IT skills are. It does not prescribe what they

should be. It makes no reference to training or qualifications, and it contains no information about jobs. SFIAplus, owned by BCS, goes much further and adds information about training, tasks and qualifications.

SFIA's non-national focus and simplicity has led to more than 100 countries using it. In contrast, other competency frameworks for the IT profession contain some of the information available in SFIAplus,





We now control our learning and development investment to focus on the right skills: development is business aligned

Paul Briggs, Norwich Union Life

but each bears the stamp of its national or academic origin.

Commercial IT competency frameworks also exist. Many consultancies offer the service of developing bespoke frameworks, and it is also possible to buy an off-the-shelf framework, such as Salary.com's ITG competency model.

An IT competency framework provides a wide range of benefits beyond understanding the skills gaps to be filled by a training programme. Charteris, a strategic technology consultancy, adopted SFIA as the standard way to describe their 150 highly-skilled consultants' job roles during their regular staff appraisals. Barry Hoffman, head of HR at the time, says: 'For the first time we could be sure we were spending our training budget on things linked to performance goals.'

This ability to focus training spending as a result of implementing an IT skills framework is echoed by Paul Briggs of Norwich Union Life. Head of practices and skills when they implemented SFIA as part of a comprehensive overhaul of the structure of the IT department, he says: 'We now control our learning and development investment to focus on the right skills: development is business aligned.'

Both Norwich Union Life and Charteris used SFIA with their own internal, non-technical frameworks, so that they were also tracking other 'softer' skills and behaviour, a not uncommon approach.

IT competency frameworks are also used in the public sector. The UK government plans to foster IT professionals in central and local government by establishing the Government IT Profession (GITP), underpinned by SFIA Version 4. Leeds City Council introduced SFIA as part of the GITP programme in 2006, and its 2008 staff survey revealed increases in all key staff indicators in the ICT division over the previous two years. These included 92 per cent of staff understanding what is expected from them in their role and 82 per cent being happy with development opportunities. The Council points out that these initiatives are the result of other improvements as well as introducing the skills framework.

With established competency frameworks such as SFIA so dominant, does it make sense for individual organisations to create their own frameworks for IT? Russell Cosway, acting head of ICT, North Cornwall District Council, says: 'SFIA comes with a considerable amount of history, links and intellectual property built in. You need to have a very good reason to abandon all that and create your own framework, and that's before you raise the whole question of keeping the framework up-to-date. The SFIA community does that together. It's a big job to do on your own.' Whatever IT competency framework you use, implementing it successfully requires the right approach. It is advisable to start small, working to establish what will and won't work in your organisation. Senior buy-in is essential, and at the beginning your implementation should focus on a single benefit for the clarity of understanding of the employees. Very often this will be around training. For employees, the benefit of assessing themselves against a competency framework is identifying training to fill skills gaps. Managers can benefit from seeing clearly what training is required, and prioritising it. For executives, the training budget is better used because it is focused on filling skills gaps for the job.Norwich Union's Paul Briggs is clear in his advice on implementation: 'Get the business model right; establish the change as a formal programme with senior management commitment; include SFIA in your plans; have a dashboard of critical success factors. And what are you waiting for?'

Useful links

SFIA Foundation
www.sfia.org.uk/

SFIAplus
www.bcs.org/sfiaplus

ITG Competency Group
www.salary.com/ITG/

Government IT Profession
www.cio.gov.uk/itprofession/



On course to reduce energy costs

Providing a common definition and understanding of which environmentally friendly IT practices make a real difference is the philosophy behind a green IT foundation qualification. BCS is also developing a practitioner level course aimed at those working with data centres, as Helen Wilcox reports.

'One of the problems with taking environmentally-friendly measures at the moment is that there is no formal reference material to define what green IT is – for example what is a carbon footprint, and is there any value in carbon offsetting?' said Jeff Payne, director of professional best practice for QA.

BCS and trainer provider QA are working together to create a Foundation certificate in IT, which will provide a base education in environmentally friendly IT based on defined terms. BCS is also developing a new EU Code of Conduct for data centre operators practitioner qualification. They form part of BCS's ongoing development of a qualification programme for the arena, alongside its wider energy efficiency awareness initiatives.

The foundation qualification will look at what terms come under green IT and how to understand their impact. It will look to define, for instance, how you measure a carbon footprint.

'Defining the terms is very important,' said Payne. 'As there is so much going on at the moment in green IT, we need a common base language between people.'

BCS asked a panel of four experts to define the terms and worked with it to develop the syllabus. QA is now developing the courseware, which takes around six weeks. That will be followed by six weeks of independent accreditation of the course by BCS. The qualification will be launched late spring/ early summer.

Examples of areas covered by the qualification will be how to balance flexible working requirements with shifting the burden of heating and lighting from one centralised office space to many less-efficient homes. Plus, whether increased use of virtualisation software enables reduction of hardware costs and office space.

The qualification will help all of those involved with data centres understand how what they do affects the total energy use of the data centre

Liam Newcombe, secretary, BCS Data Centre Specialist Group

Jeremy Barlow, product development manager at the BCS said: 'Organisations need to know how to comply with ever-tightening legislation, how they can create significant cost efficiencies, and how to balance the internal and external economic drivers they face. We're confident that individuals that complete this qualification will be able to develop a strategy that will bring significant benefit to their business.'

The qualification is intended for a large and general IT audience. 'It's relevant for every person in IT concerned with systems who wishes to know how they can cost-effectively and efficiently meet green objectives,' said Payne.

Why launch the qualification now? 'The defining event recently

was that everyone is conscious of what is occurring in the environment,' says Payne. 'In terms of the best practice journey, ITIL version 3 is moving from a process based to a service based approach. There is global warming. Green initiatives are coming out of the EU, our government, and the private sector.

'The first green initiatives will be about cost savings via environmental savings. The philanthropic issues will be looked at in the next phase.'

Cost savings through energy efficiency are the main thrust of the Code of Conduct for data centre operators practitioner qualification.

'Depending on whose calculations you use, and how energy intense their business is, a data centre can account for 25-50 per cent of the total ICT energy use in many companies,' said Liam Newcombe, secretary of the BCS Data Centre Specialist Group and co-author of the syllabus and examination for the new data centre qualification.

'Data centres are the obvious starting point for a BCS environmentally-aware practitioner qualification, as there are known inefficiencies in common design and practice which can be improved upon rapidly and substantially. This presents real savings because of the scale of energy use,' said Newcombe.

The practitioner qualification will be based on understanding the goals, principles and how to implement the EU Data Centre Code of Conduct published by the EU Joint Research Commission last November. The examination will last one hour after a three-day practitioner course. It can be taken as a stand-alone module, with no requirement to first take the foundation level, because it is specifically applicable to those involved with data centres. That is a large group in itself, ranging from the people managing software, through selecting IT equipment, mechanical and electrical plant managers, to those procuring data centre space or services.



As there is so much going on at the moment in green IT, we need a common base language between people

Jeff Payne, QA

'A major reason for the inefficiency in cost and energy in data centres is the division of skills and responsibility and the lack of effective communication between the multiple disciplines involved,' said Newcombe.

'Facilities are responsible for providing the IT racks with clean, reliable power and cold air whilst the IT people who fill the racks frequently have little idea what is involved in providing these services. The people buying and installing IT hardware don't realise how different choices affect the power and cooling systems and thus the energy needed to supply the racks. The IT applications specialists don't understand the hardware and how their specifications and choices impact its power consumption.

'The Code covers all of these areas with an integrated approach, so the qualification will help all of those involved understand how what they do affects the total energy use of the data centre.

'Other qualifications do exist for data centre operation, but they are role or technology specific, for example on how to design or operate the mechanical or electrical plant. We have to bring together the people who work in data centres to effectively deliver the service and realise the cost and energy savings available.

'Others who could benefit from the qualification are those involved in procuring data centre based services.'

Best pratice

The bulk of the training will be based on the best practices from the Code of Conduct, which forms one of three main pillars (along with metrics, and measurement and data collection). Newcombe chairs the working group on best practice.

'There are over 100 best practices – for operating existing data centres and building new facilities,' said Newcombe. 'I'm not aware of anything else that approaches the Code of Conduct in terms of depth and breadth of coverage and review input.'

Newcombe, and Zahl Limbuwala, chair of the BCS Data Centre Specialist Group, became involved in developing the EU Code of Conduct in March last year and assisted in publicising the Code and introducing DCSG members to the review process.

The Code provides a base vocabulary for data centre practices (for instance 'fresh air cooling' in the UK or 'direct air-side economiser' in the US is properly described as 'direct air free cooling') similar to the service management best practice guidance, ITIL. The Code then provides each practice with a score out of five to indicate the expected level of energy savings available from implementation.

'The qualification will give you a thorough understanding of the practices, why they were selected and how to apply them,' said Newcombe. 'For example, on air containment, you need to know what containment is and is not, how to implement and whether it may be suitable for retrofit to your facility.

'The qualification will also explain the application process for the roles of both participant and endorser in the code and how to complete the application(s).

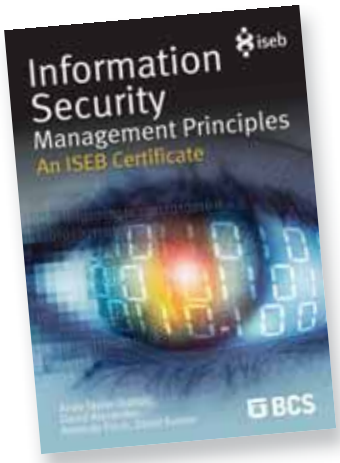
'This will be useful for those wishing to sign up to the code as participants, as to do so, the organisation must meet a minimum level of reporting and a subset of the best practices to differentiate them from non-compliant organisations. The course will cover performing an internal audit to determine compliance status and remedial actions.'

Newcombe and Limbuwala are currently writing the qualification curriculum and the examination, which will be verified by independent BCS assessors. Launch is planned for this summer.

Register your interest at: **www.bcs.org/greenit**

Book reviews

Our IT experts review a selection of recently published books covering an array of subject areas. For more reviews, see www.bcs.org/bookreviews



Information Security Management Principles: An ISEB Certificate

Andy Taylor, 224pp

BCS, £24.95

ISBN: 978-1-902505-90-9

Rating ★★★★☆

The ISEB certificates provide evidence of the holder's grasp of various IT topics. To gain the certificate, the candidate will usually participate in a formal course with an examination at the end. It is feasible to just take the examination and the Information Security Principles book covers the syllabus to assist in this. As well as the ISEB exam, it follows the structure of ISO/IEC 27001 and can help someone charged with designing a system to comply with the standard.

It has two major sections: management and 'technical'. A good balance between the two is maintained.

The management half moves through the processes of setting policies and objectives, defining the information assets, threats, probabilities and hence risk. It relates these back to the needs of stakeholders and regulatory/legal requirements. In line with management systems in general, the elements of a 'plan, do, check, act cycle' are covered with the handling of security incidents as a focus. The balance of technical controls against risk and the interaction of physical, personnel and technical security are explained well.

In the second half, the groups of controls found in ISO/IEC 27001 are covered at a high level without going into the individual controls or any depth of technical implementation. They are supported by good examples of the type of threat they relate to, often by a non-IT analogy which gives clarity.

To assist in exam preparation, the reader is given tasks at the end of each section as 'homework' and typical exam questions are listed at the end.

Although the language is non-technical, it is not always in plain English and is highly repetitive. The latter induces the reader to skim the repeats, which could lead to missing a nugget of information needed for the exam.

The blurb on the cover indicates it is directed at business and IT managers but it is more likely to be of use to the worker who has to set up the system. To this end, encouragement and tips are given throughout on how to justify implementation of the system and controls to management.

Reviewed by Brian Peaker MBCS



Desirable Future?: Consumer Electronics in Tomorrow's World

Jack Challoner, 262pp

Wiley, £12.99

ISBN: 978-0-470-98660-8

Rating ★★★★★

This book lives up to the claim that each in the series 'brings to life a particular area of technology and takes an informal look at where we are now, where future developments will take us and how they will affect us as individuals and as a society'.

In the introduction the author presents a vision of what technology may be like in 2050 and how much easier our daily routine will be. I liked this vision, but it suddenly returned to a description of current technology.

In the first chapter the author describes the technology behind the existing devices and services, primarily as a background for the rest of the book. Many readers will be familiar with the subjects – binary numbers, how analogue sound is digitised, how LCDs work, and so on – but for those who are not it serves as a good introduction.

In the second chapter the author looks at the industry that is responsible for creating the technology and key components (such as CPUs), the devices that use the technology and mentions some of the other key building blocks such as networks and software.

In the subsequent chapters the author looks at the technological trends behind the digital revolution and goes on to predict a major shift in our relationship with the desktop. A key area is the limitations of the existing user interfaces.

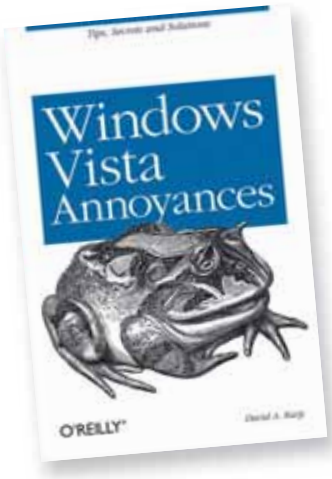
The innovations required to achieve a significant leap are discussed, such as wireless electricity, miniaturisation, reduced power consumption and three dimensional images, but he also questions whether the techno-bubble will burst.

The final chapter continues the introduction's theme: how technology in the future may change our lifestyle.

Given the broad nature of the intended audience for this book, the author does an excellent job of making the subject very accessible to all audiences. For example, the author's definition of web 2.0 is the clearest I have read so far.

I would certainly recommend this book for anyone with an interest in understanding the current technology and where technology, particularly consumer devices, might be going in the future.

Reviewed by Mehmet Hurer MBCS CITP CEng



Windows Vista Annoyances

David A. Karp, 664pp

O'Reilly, £21.99

ISBN: 978-0-596-52762-4

Rating ★★★★☆

This review is based on practical experience. I have just installed Vista and used the book during the installation. As anyone will tell you, installing Vista is a non-trivial exercise – as I discovered within the first ten minutes – because of a mixture of features and bugs.

Now if you drill down into that word 'features', what it really amounts to is whether they are intuitive. In fact, if Microsoft has made a feature more intuitive that could be good or bad news. The bad news is that you'll have become used to the fact that it was user hostile and spend ages looking for the old work-around.

I lost count of the number of times I said 'Where's that gone?' during this installation and that's when this book was really useful. Disorientation is a real issue for the 99.99 per cent of people who will be familiar with older versions of Windows.

This is not a book you'll want to read from cover to cover; it's a book to dip into when problems arise, although on some occasions, such as the registry, backwards compatibility and dual boot, I did read before I started. That's my problem in commenting on the book's value for money: I know the problems I was able to solve, but don't know how many I avoided thanks to the book.

There are three benefits that this book provides. First it solves the 'trying to find' issue and makes the steps involved clear; second, it provides practical examples that mean you can try new areas. And finally, there's the fast-track solution to resolving problems.

For me, the book solved 12 'challenges' that arose during my installation of Windows. If each one would have taken ten minutes to resolve that's two hours saved – a pretty good return on a £20 investment.

Reviewed by Alan Bellinger



Exploiting IT for Business Benefit

Bob Hughes, 204pp

BCS, £24.95

ISBN: 978-1-902505-92-3

Rating ★★★★☆

The book's title undersells itself. I thought it was going to cover the basics but I was pleasantly surprised that it did that in the context of the internet age of eBusiness. Bob Hughes has excellent credentials and his background comes through in the book. He is an academic and a practitioner, chair of the ISEB PM Examination Board and has carried out projects for many name-brand commercial organisations.

The book says it is aimed at IT professionals. I suggest it is more useful to beginners, either fresh from college or transfers from other parts of the business and to those who have progressed along more technical roles. For everyone else it will be good refresher.

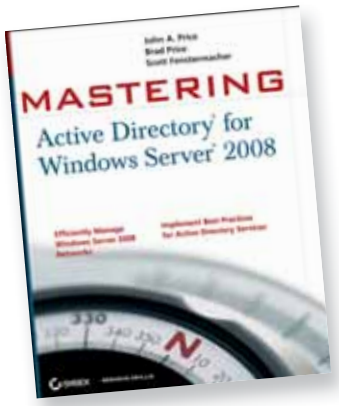
The scope is very comprehensive, perhaps too much so, but, given its aim, perhaps necessarily so. It is well supported by a comprehensive reference list of circa 90 citations –and a subject index.

The book is highly accessible with 155 pages of main text laid out in 7 chapters including 16 figures and 13 tables. Each chapter starts with learning outcomes, an introduction, and ends with self-test questions. Each also has panels that highlight important points and activities, plus exercises.

The chapters include an introduction followed by three chapters on business: competitive advantage, value chain and the business and technology environment; then two on applications: CRM and ERP.

My only minor disappointments are some omissions: agile computing, sense-and-respond method of contemporary strategy and the importance of the business sponsor/owner in realising benefits from IT-enabled change.

Reviewed by Charles Chang FBCS CITP, director, Oaksmill Limited



Mastering Active Directory for Windows Server 2008

John A. Price, Brad Price, Scott Fenstermacher, 768 pp

Wiley, £31.99

ISBN: 978-0-470-24983-3-1

Rating ★★★★☆

This is an in-depth guide. The authors have taken a proficient approach in discussing the components of Windows Server 2000 through to Windows Server 2008, addressing enhancements available in the latter, which would maximise the use of Active Directory by network administrators. The explanations are detailed and simple to understand, and screen shots accompany the text. This is particularly helpful as it clearly outlines the differences in the new release.

The authors have compiled an incredibly useful list of web references, and the real world scenario has useful pointers.

The book tells technical professionals how to work effectively to get the maximum out of the new features.

Reviewed by Uma Kanagaratnam MBCS

For further information on these books please contact the sales team at C.B.Learning.
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Celebration of outstanding achievements



Cheshire NHS ICT Service with Lucy Alexander

The Institute of IT Training IT Training Awards for 2009 were presented at a glittering gala dinner held at The Dorchester in London.

Despite the bad weather around the country, a capacity audience of over 450 people attended this year's awards on 5 February.

The event included an address by Ann Mogridge, a ChildLine counsellor, who spoke about her counselling work with the ChildLine charity for children in trouble or danger, for which the Institute raised £10,900 in its annual charity auction. This brought the total raised by the Institute for the charity to £150,000.

Happy Computers and Cheshire NHS ICT Service both had a double reason to celebrate, with both winning two gold awards.

The blue riband award of Training Company of the Year was won by Happy Computers. It was a popular choice with the packed audience. The company also won the IT Trainer of the Year Award when chair of judges Alan Bellinger announced Ed Lepre as the gold award winner.

Another company scooping two awards was Cheshire NHS ICT Service, whose internal training team won Training Department of the Year (Public Sector) and the Internal Training Project of the Year.

The Staff Development Programme of the Year Award was won by HSBC. The award, sponsored by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), was presented by David Hunter, chief executive of LLUK. He told a packed audience: 'LLUK, your sector skills council, strongly supports the initiatives of the Institute ensuring that this important sector has the trainers and managers with appropriate qualifications and standards, enabling their recognition as true professionals.'

HSBC scooped the gold award from fierce competition from IBM UK (silver) and Ricoh Germany (bronze).

The new category of award, recognising best examples of innovation in learning services was won by the US company Toolwire, who had flown in a team from the US for the event.

The Colin Corder Award for an outstanding contribution to IT training went to Brian Sutton. This was an extremely well received announcement with Brian walking to the stage to a standing ovation.

In his speech announcing the Colin Corder award, Institute chief executive Colin Steed related Sutton's outstanding contribution to the industry.

'He is a tremendous ambassador for the profession and is one of the most respected commentators in training around the world. His many personal and professional qualities would have made him a credit to whatever field he chose. We should be grateful he chose IT training'.

Denise Hudson-Lawson, from the Houses of Parliament, Parliamentary ICT, won the prestigious Training Manager of the Year. Julia Emelogu won the Freelance Trainer of the Year.

Other gold award winners were: FDM Group (Training Department),

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Verridian & Carphone Warehouse (External Training Project), Electronic Data Systems (Blended Learning Project), Etc Venues (Learning Facilities).

Steed, addressing the audience at the awards ceremony, said: 'The annual IT Training Awards honour those individuals and organisations who really shone in the past year and we are here to celebrate their achievements tonight.

'We must not underestimate the importance of giving national recognition to the skills and achievements that are driving best practice in our industry. Such initiatives are representative of a sector that is fast maturing to accomplish specific, relevant business results through the appropriate use of standards-driven IT training and development.

'The solutions and projects detailed in the award entries are enabling organisations throughout the country to deliver knowledge and learning faster and more efficiently – some in ways that were not possible before.

'Recent economic times have been tough for everyone in IT departments, and particularly for those working for IT training providers. But, once again, the quality of the entries has been higher than ever, which demonstrates that the industry is pushing forward and creating higher quality, measurable, business-aligned learning solutions.

'No matter what the market conditions are right now, in this time of financial uncertainty, quality and excellence remain key to success in this industry.

'I would like to congratulate everyone who entered the awards, every one of the finalists, and of course those who have won these prestigious awards.

'We should all aspire to the outstanding achievements that have been made by everyone who collects an award tonight.'

The event was sponsored by the BCS and was hosted by Sky TV Breakfast presenter Lucy Alexander.

The 2010 IT Training Awards ceremony takes place on 4 February 2010.

Full results

Innovation in Learning Services
Sponsored by itSMF UK
Gold: Toolwire
Silver: e-Learning for Healthcare

Internal Training Project of the Year
Sponsored by SAS
Gold: Cheshire ICT Service
Silver: AXA UK

External Training Project of the Year
Sponsored by Ricoh
Gold: Verridian and Carphone Warehouse
Silver: Contrast Training and Sunguard

Blended Learning Project of the Year
Sponsored by EMC
Gold: Electronic Data Systems (EDS)

Learning Facilities of the Year
Sponsored by 2E2
Gold: Etcetera Venues
Silver: The Moller Centre

Staff Development Programme of the Year
Sponsored by LLUK
Gold: HSBC, HTS Global Banking and Markets
Silver: IBM United Kingdom
Bronze: Wood Mackenzie and Pertamina

Training Manager of the Year
Sponsored by Hewlett Packard
Gold: Denise Hudson-Lawson, Houses of Parliament, Parliamentary ICT
Silver: Graeme Phillips, Firebrand

Freelance Trainer of the Year
Sponsored by Capital Training
Gold: Julia Emelogu
Silver: Marilyn Bennett

Trainer of the Year
Sponsored by OCR
Gold: Ed Lepre, Happy Computers
Silver: Jerome Henry, Fast Lane Consulting
Bronze: Michelle Sinclair, Afiniti

Training Department of the Year (Public Sector)
Sponsored by NCC
Gold: Cheshire ICT Service
Silver: London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Bronze: Houses of Parliament, Parliamentary ICT

Training Department of the Year
Sponsored by IBM
Gold: FDM Group
Silver: Espresso Group
Bronze: EMC Education Services

Training Company of the Year
Sponsored by Prometric
Gold: Happy Computers
Silver: Afiniti
Bronze: Firebrand

Colin Corder Award
Sponsored by Pearson VUE
Brian Sutton



Clive Shepherd

Gen Y is the least of our worries

Much of the discussion at the Online Educa conference in Berlin last December was around the challenges posed by a new generation of learners, the so-called Generation Y.

Given that a good half of the participants at the conference were from higher education and, as a result, most if not all of their students were from Gen Y, this emphasis was understandable. However, for the rest of the audience, those with a responsibility for workplace learning, the impact of Gen Y is only just being felt.

So, who or what is Gen Y? Well, if you were born somewhere between 1982 and 2000 (the latter is unlikely, if you're reading a trade magazine) then you're the real thing. You've been brought up with video games, mobile phones, the World Wide Web, MSN and social networking; and, until recently, you've also been living through a period of unprecedented prosperity.

If you have many of the same technological habits as Gen Y, but don't qualify on age grounds, then, like me, you're Gen X (1961-1981) or a baby boomer (1946-1960) in Gen Y clothing. By the way, they can tell you apart – the middle-age spread and the grey hair not being the only giveaways – they might also notice how long you take to send a text message.

There are two takes on the characteristics of Gen Y. First there's the negative: 'Gen Y are the "diva" generation: high-maintenance, out for themselves, lacking in loyalty, thinking only of the short term and their own place in it.' (Association of Graduate Recruiters).

Well, in some ways these are simply the behaviours of a group who are in high demand, who can afford to play the market. Now that job opportunities are becoming scarce and there's a risk of unemployment, Gen Y will have to learn to keep their heads down and ride out the storm. And, of course, the behaviour of Gen Y is adapting accordingly, as one employer, a Florida law firm, reports in *The Economist*: 'The tone has changed from: "What can you do for me?" to: "Here's what I can do for you."' However, this new behaviour will probably not come easily.

As for the positive characteristics – 'Gen Y is tolerant, optimistic, collaborative, open-minded and driven,' (suite101.com) – we can only hope that these persist, because they are the qualities that we will need to get us out of this mess.

A little compromise will be necessary on both sides. The next generation will certainly have to temper some of their expectations and take the world as it is, not as they would like it to be, but their older bosses should also be prepared to make concessions. The economy will eventually recover, and demographic trends in most rich countries will make clever young workers even more valuable.

The economy will eventually recover, and demographic trends in most rich countries will make clever young workers even more valuable

You might be asking what all this has to do with learning and development. Well, it seems Gen Y is as demanding about the training they receive as they are about their job opportunities. The website Barking Robot (and yes, you did read that correctly – see **www.debaird.net**) defined the learning preferences of Gen Y as interactive, student-centred, authentic, collaborative and on-demand.

Interestingly, these are the same preferences that I and probably you have as well. In fact this list bears a striking resemblance to the essential characteristics of effective adult learning described by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s. We've all been bored, alienated and patronised by some of our learning experiences – it's just that Gen Y seems to be a lot more confident about expressing its feelings.



They are the voice of the unknown disgruntled learner.

However, we need to get the Gen Y issue in perspective. Jay Cross, who invented the term e-learning, warns us to 'be aware that the magnitude of the financial meltdown is almost beyond comprehension. I can foresee training departments being eliminated almost entirely.'

In this situation, for learning and development professionals to be fussing too much about the needs of a new generation of learners would be like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. First, let's deal with the iceberg.

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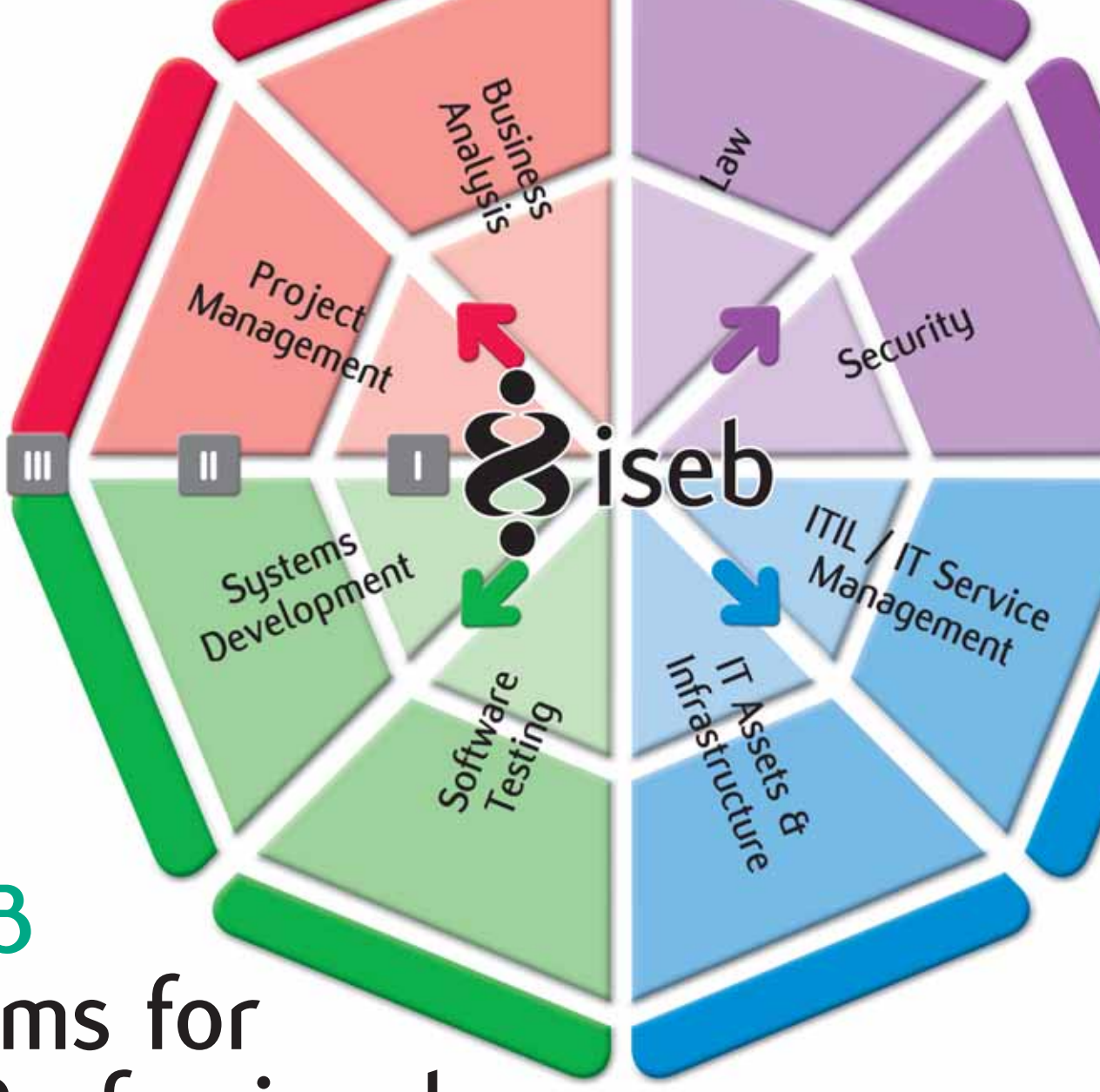
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