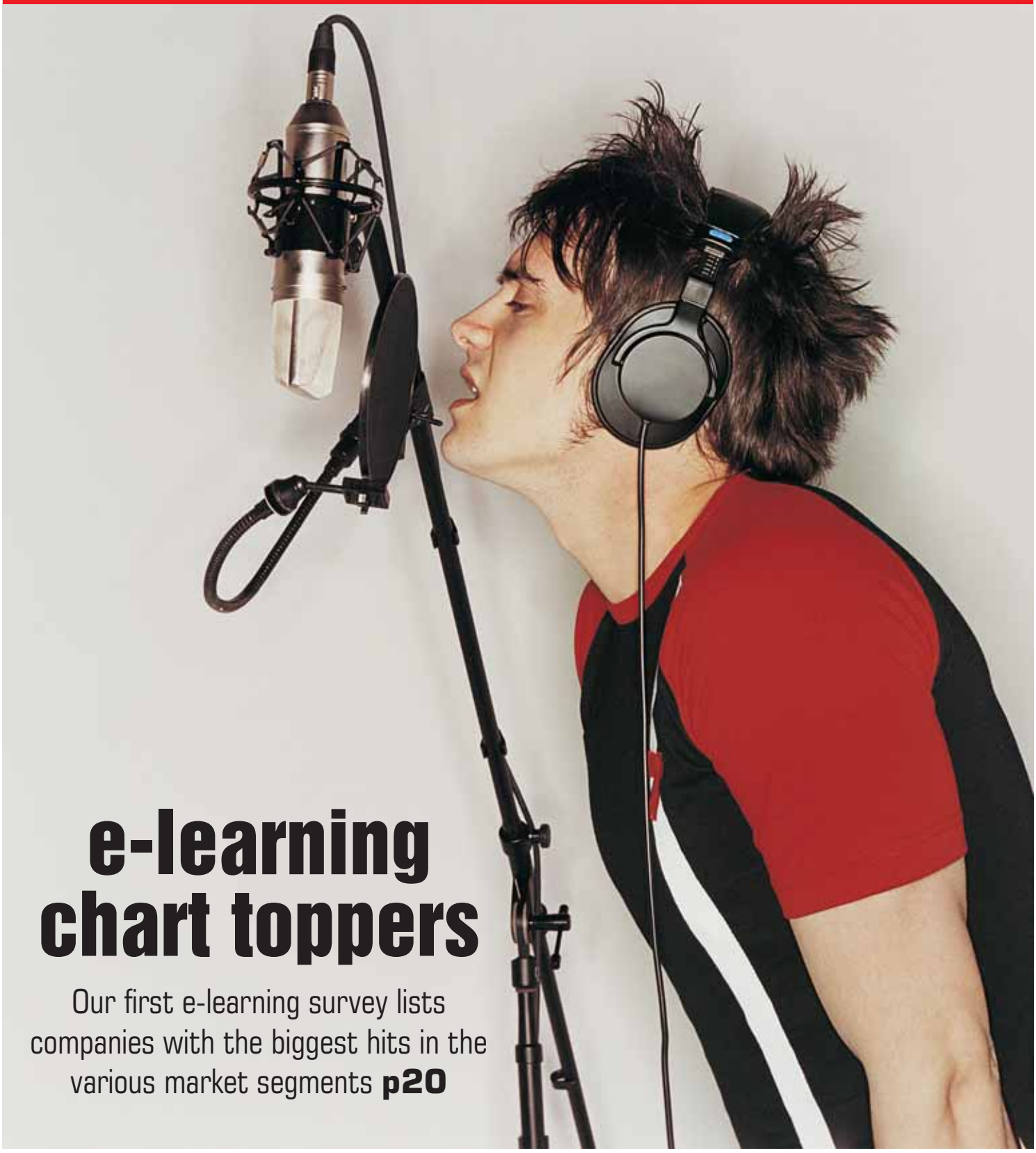
ITtraining

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e-learning chart toppers

Our first e-learning survey lists companies with the biggest hits in the various market segments **p20**

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Editor's intro

E-learning analysis and a baby break



Given the ongoing popularity of the annual Top 50 IT training companies table, we decided to try some similar analysis for the e-learning arena in this issue – see p20. However, the term e-learning is somewhat diverse, as our e-learning correspondent Clive Shepherd explains in his commentary accompanying the charts, so we decided the best way to approach the task was to split it into categories. That means we actually have four tables, rather than one.

We hope it's a useful starting point to categorising the market, although by no means are claiming the list is complete. Next year, we will be able to compare the two years' results, which may help show how the e-learning market is developing. There have been suggestions that e-learning can be a cost-effective training tool in tight economic times, and the finances of the providers may give some indication if that is true.

Meanwhile, economic uncertainty has shaken the IT industry and training particularly badly in one neighbouring country: Ireland. As the economy shrinks 7 per cent, Don Taylor takes a look in this issue on p26 at how its training industry is looking at diversifying to stay afloat.

In another piece related to the economic downturn, Alan Bellinger offers tips on how to go about planning next year's budget, given that it is likely to be smaller in size than this year's.

Not all, however, is doom and gloom, as proved by our case study about CarPhone Warehouse, which has been training their staff to sell laptops. It's written by my colleague Jutta Mackwell, who has been acclimatising herself to the world of *IT Training* in the last couple of months, ready to take over as acting editor.

By the time you are reading this, I'll be on maternity leave and Jutta will be editing both the printed magazine and e-newsletter. Her email address is below and she will of course always be happy to receive ideas and feedback about the publication.

IT Training really has been a particular joy to work on because of the lovely people in the industry, so a big thank you to everyone I've come in contact with over the last two and a half years. I look forward to working with you again in the future.

Helen Wilcox, Editor (until August 2009)

Acting Editor from August 2009: Email jutta.mackwell@hq.bcs.org.uk

IT training

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Subscriptions: **www.bcs.org/ittraining/subs**

IT Training is published under licence from Haymarket Specialist.
www.haymarket.com
Tim Bulley, Licensing Director.
Telephone +44 (0) 20 8267 5078
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IT Training magazine is published quarterly.
The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of The British Computer Society or the organisations employing the authors.

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Update

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

Spending on training for IT and telecoms professionals is set to increase or at least stay the same over the coming year, according to over 90 per cent of respondents in e-skills UK's latest ICT Inquiry.

Around nine out of ten of the 2,000 surveyed key decision makers from UK businesses expected the number of IT and telecoms staff to remain unchanged in the coming year, despite overall headcount reductions.

Almost 25 per cent of companies with IT and telecoms staff also stated that they have experienced ICT-related skills gaps, and around one in six firms considered the IT user skills of non-IT staff to be below the necessary standard.

Around one in six IT and telecoms recruiters also found they were struggling to recruit staff with the right skills, qualifications or experience. The most common problem was the applicants' lack of business skills needed to communicate and align IT investments and strategy to the business.

Soft skills are also high on the agenda of employees considering training in technical and business skills, such as IT, project management and communications.

According to a SkillSoft survey, 88 per cent of the 200+ respondents would be prepared to develop soft skills in their own time outside working hours.

Among the soft skills that respondents rated highly were: people management, with 31 per cent citing this as the most important, time management, with 23 per cent support, and problem solving, 18 per cent.

Developing the workforce is high on the agenda of the government. Companies winning government-funded IT contracts will have to fulfil a **commitment to skills training**, Skills Secretary John Denham announced at a summit between government and IT industry representatives held on 21 May.

The government's chief information officers committed all government departments and agencies to ensure that successful contractors have in place a development plan for their workforce.

UK digital industries alone produce an annual gross value added of around £86 billion, 10.9 per cent of the UK total, and have the potential to contribute a further £35 billion over the next five to seven years.

More support for training also comes from the Learning

Security skills shortage: training essential



Over 80 per cent of hiring managers struggle to fill information security positions, partly due to lack of desired skills, a survey conducted by (ISC)^2 found. The most sought after skills included operations security, information risk management, access control systems and security management practices.

and Skills Council, which has announced an **increase in the overall budget for Train to Gain** from £797 million to over £1 billion in 2010-2011. This is expected to support 1.4 million learners – 100,000 more than previously planned – in the current and next financial year.

However, in the private sector, short qualification courses outstrip NVQs in popularity, a recent inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning found.

The report, which was sponsored by Niace, the adult education body, revealed that employers spend their money on short courses to improve the productivity of employees rather than on qualifications funded by the government through programmes such as Train to Gain.

Results from a recent survey among 250 learners conducted by Infinity Learning showed that having access to a skilled coach was vital to the **success of e-learning**. Seventy-eight per cent of those surveyed stated that one of the major barriers to benefitting from e-learning was not being able to ask questions and get further guidance from an expert. Another drawback was the lack of opportunities to discuss issues with colleagues (66 per cent).

One-third thought that generic e-learning programmes were ineffective compared to other training methods, and 54 per cent rated e-learning as less effective without a skilled coach. On the other hand there was a 100 per cent satisfaction rate with e-learning when access to a good coach was provided. Frustration with technology also posed an issue for over 25 per cent of respondents.

Supplier briefs

Prince2:2009 exams now available

Examinations for the 2009 version of Prince2 began on 6 July, following the launch of the updated manuals and release of the syllabus on 16 June.

Accredited training organisations are offering courses in the new version of the method or learners can still self study for the examination.

The format of the Prince2 Foundation Examination is unchanged. The length of the Practitioner Examination has been cut from 3 hours to 2.5 hours, the total marks reduced to 108 and the pass mark raised to 55 per cent. The pass mark for the Re-registration Examination has also been raised to 55 per cent, and total marks decreased to 36.

Candidates can take exams based on either the 2005 or 2009 edition of the manual until 31 December 2009. From 1 January 2010 examinations will be based on the 2009 edition only.

Certificates for Prince2 Practitioners who qualified prior to the introduction of the updated version are still valid. Candidates need to re-register against the new version when their certificate expires – up to five years after it is issued.

Pearson Vue to deliver new ISEB ITIL version 3 exam

Pearson Vue has been chosen by ISEB to deliver its new IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) version 3 foundation certificate in IT service management.

The ISEB exams available via Pearson Vue test are: ITIL V3 Foundation Certificate in IT Service Management; Foundation Certificate in Business Analysis (FCBA); Foundation Certificate in Project Management (FCPM); Intermediate Certificate in Software Testing (ICSWT); and Foundation Certificate in Software Testing (FCSWT).

The tests for this latest version of ITIL are open for registration and delivery in the Pearson VUE authorised test centre network worldwide.

Premier IT offers VMware training

Premier IT is now running fully accredited VMware training courses at its training centre in Russell Square, London, in partnership with ETC, the distribution arm of Specialist Computer Holdings. The courses are aimed at technical staff, particularly those responsible for administering and managing virtual networks.

Premier IT VMware courses will cover infrastructure, capacity planning, recovering management and vSphere.

Edvantage adds voiceover function to authoring tool

Edvantage group has released a new voiceover function, CBVoice, for its content authoring tool CourseBuilder. The voiceover allows users to automatically create and add synthetic voiceovers to e-learning courses.

Using licensed speech-synthesis technology from the Acapela Group, CBVoice includes hundreds of sound files in 24 different languages. The company says the tool also includes the latest version-handling capabilities, automatic file management and naming functions.

e2train launches Kallidus 8

e2train has brought out a new learning and performance system, Kallidus 8, which has BBC/iGoogle-style web gadgets that allow administrators and learners to create individualised learner environments that combine formal and external informal learning opportunities.

The system includes an extended, SAP-based business reporting tool, which enables users to capture and represent performance and learning data, and to incorporate it into other management-wide systems.



Former Cisco director appointed MD of Fast Lane UK

IT training provider Fast Lane UK has appointed Andy Smith as managing director. Smith joins Fast Lane from his position as senior director at Cisco's Global Client Services and Operations; previously he held senior positions at Intel and Daisy Systems Corporation (Intergraph Corporation).



Alan Bellinger

Budget 2010 - a challenge

It's that time again: planning your 2010 priorities, resources and budgets. And it's a difficult time. You're almost bound to start the discussion with the challenge:

We reduced your budget by 10 per cent last year and hardly noticed the difference – so can we reduce it by 10 per cent again?

Any L&D professional who has been regarded as successful over the last 12 months will almost certainly have delivered 'more for less'. And, in all probability, that will mean that they've made greater use of learning technologies, delayed projects that weren't critical, and spent even more time on stakeholder engagement.

But how much further can you go on a 'more for less' agenda? In all probability the answer's going to be not much further.

There's a way out of this dilemma. With the economy showing signs that the bottom has been reached, the real issue now is the shape of the recovery. As that's so difficult to predict it's dangerous to bank on one option. My recommendation is to create not just a 'Plan A' but also a 'Plan B' and a 'Plan C'.

The starting point is not 'what funding do you need?' but 'what can you deliver'? Start off with those projects that you consider being absolutely essential – because they are fully aligned with organisational goals, not just because someone's shouting too loud. Focus on the outcomes of each project and the value it will create and then show the costs that generating such value will incur.

Once you have those critical projects – and the costs – identified you'll have your 'Plan A' – the areas that are absolutely critical. Now it's time to start on 'Plan B' – those additional areas that will give a significant return to the organisation. In looking at projects in this way, you should be in a position to show a relationship of at least 1.5:1. That is, if the costs of the project are 100, you should be able to show a benefit of at least 150. Many projects will show a return of 3:1 or even 4:1 – that's because, in most cases, the training intervention will almost inevitably reduce the lead time to competence.

In 'Plan C' you can include all those other projects that have been requested but are less attractive (in pay-back terms) than your others. Now not all of the activities you undertake are 'projects', so how should they be handled? It's best to include them in your 'Plan A' as L&D departmental activities – but that doesn't mean that you don't need to put a value against them.

The last tip is to make the budget submission one that is intelligible to others in the organisation; avoid jargon and initials and use the terms and frameworks the other executives already know. But the key trick is this: put your peers into a situation in which they are denying value rather than authorising spend.

BCS Information & Technology Training Specialist Group

AGM highlights year's achievements

The BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group (I&TTSG) held its second AGM on 7 May. Chair Jooli Atkins outlined the achievements of the group:

- This regular column in *IT Training*.
- Recognition within the BCS by being involved with the BCS IT Trainer of the Year Award and the Strategic Panel of Education and Training Forum.
- The BCS blog, which has received an average of 322 hits per blog post. The highest received is 749.
- The online event 'The Art and Skill of Remote Training' in March, which was attended by more than 75 people.

Treasurer Mark Frank presented the accounts, and Membership Secretary Simon Perry gave a summary of membership, which has risen from 340 to 1,266 over the last year with 58 countries represented.

Secretary Bruce Nicholls ran through the changes to the group constitution to bring it in line with the model constitution agreed by the BCS Specialist Groups Executive. It will be available on the group's website. The current chair, membership secretary, treasurer and secretary were re-elected.

Paul Jagger from IBM Learning Development gave a talk on 'Building Your Career in a Recession with No Budget'.

Ideas for future events can be emailed to **jooli@matrix42.co.uk.**

Next event

An online event 'Introduction to the University of Cambridge Advanced Diploma in Training, Learning & Development' is scheduled for 2 September, from 4-5 pm.



I&TTSG new committee member Paul Jagger

Profile

Paul Jagger works for IBM as a business area manager and consultant for IBM Learning Development. He started with IBM in 1995 as a technical trainer, then moved on to manage a curriculum in IBM's customer education business. Currently he's responsible for driving new business in IBM's custom learning content development team. He also leads IBM's global community of learning professionals.

Jagger lives in Hertfordshire and describes his hobbies as 'amateur mountaineer and committed Apple MAC fanatic'.

Trainer service beds in





David Clarke (right), CEO of BCS, and Colin Steed, CEO of IITT, signed an agreement in May to provide endorsement of the ICTP certificate.

Since its launch six months ago, the new train-the-trainer service, the Trainer Performance Monitoring & Assessment Service, has taken off.

Continuous time and budget restrictions placed upon today's training providers and departments means that sending trainers out to 'train the trainer' courses to achieve high professional qualifications is not always feasible.

The Institute of IT Training (IITT) has always recognised the need for managers to assess, monitor and benchmark the performance of their own trainers as part of a natural development of their standards.

This need resulted in the IITT launching the IITT Trainer Performance Monitoring & Assessment (TPMA) Service. This cost-effective service is authorised, governed and monitored by the IITT and is a record of the training professionals' quality of performance in a live environment that, combined with other overarching knowledge and skills, is aligned to national standards – a real quality benchmark for trainers.

Upon successful completion of TPMA, trainers are eligible to apply for the Institute Certified Training Professional (ICTP) Certificate, which came into being as a result of the BCS and the IITT wanting to create one train-the-trainer standard. In May 2009, the IITT and BCS formalised their relationship by signing an agreement to provide the endorsement of the ICTP certificate, so this is now jointly awarded by the BCS and the IITT.

'Trainer standards used to be all over the place,' said Managing Director of the IITT, Ed Monk, 'For the first time, we have achieved uniformity in IT training and we're delighted that the BCS is endorsing this programme because it strengthens the links between the IT profession and the IT training profession.

Qualifications Director Pete Bailey said: 'The Institute of IT Training's TPMA service at last provides a clear industry-wide set of trainer quality assessment and monitoring standards suitable for all training professionals, whether they are trainers, tutors or teachers.'

The IITT's TPMA service is embodied in the two authorisation processes for organisations leading to becoming either an IITT Authorised Assessment Centre (AAC), which are approved centres that are authorised to run assessments for trainers on their knowledge and skills in a classroom environment, or an IITT Authorised Qualification and Assessment Centre (AQAC), which are an extension of the AAC's and provide assessments for trainers and running an IITT-recognised train-the-trainer or teaching skills programme.

Since its launch last year, TPMA has grown and is becoming increasingly popular with a network of AAC's and AQAC's offering TPMA assessment. Trainers are also pleased with the service.

Helen McDonald, a Matrix FortyTwo TPMA candidate, described her experience: 'The workshop was very well structured and as it was on a one-to-one basis it gave me plenty of opportunity to focus on the areas where I felt I needed to enhance my skills. I found the workshop to be extremely useful as it enabled me to concentrate on the aspects necessary for the TPMA-assessed training session. It also helped me to build my confidence and overall I certainly felt that it was worthwhile undertaking.'

TPMA is a very exciting development and we are getting huge interest in it from our clients

Henry Stewart, Happy Computers

The first organisation to adopt TPMA and become an AQAC was Happy Computers. Managing Director Henry Stewart is delighted with the service: 'TPMA is a very exciting development and we are getting huge interest in it from our clients. It provides a new flexibility and a new focus on the needs of the learner. I believe TPMA has the potential to transform the quality of training in our industry.'

The TPMA assessments consist of either a half-day (assessment only) workshop, or two-day/four-day courses.

Training Synergy signed up to TPMA in September 2008. Training Project Manager Jane McCarthy said: 'To date our TPMA half day assessments have consistently received good feedback, with those attending the event regularly commenting on the flexibility and cost-effectiveness and the support on offer before, during and after the assessment.'

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On the ground

What advice would you give on handling learners who aren't keeping up with the group?



Often trainers tend to try 'buddying' up a slow learner with a fast learner so they can concentrate on the rest of the group. If that still doesn't work they 'have a word' at tea-break, meaning they persuade them to leave the course and get individual help.

These approaches are reasonable, but not perfect as the impact on the group is not 100 per cent positive.

The priority for me is that all learners achieve the objectives of the session and fast learners achieve more. If someone is struggling to achieve all the objectives then my fall-back position is that they achieve as much as possible during the session without impacting the learning of the rest of the group.

How is this possible? Well I think you have to look at techniques for teaching a class of people with mixed ability, interest level and learning styles – that is every class you teach.

First you need to map the territory by assessing everyone in the class by getting them to talk to you about what their real needs are. Most people don't need much encouragement: just ask them about their job and what they think about using the computer. What they'd really like to be able to do soon comes out.

At the same time you need to assess their learning style – visual/verbal, big picture/ detailed etc. – so you can keep their interest by presenting ideas in the best way for them.

So long as you keep communicating with learners you can help them achieve and exceed their objectives.

Remember: every group is made up of individuals, so deal with their individual needs and they will all keep up.

Mark Lovatt, Ideal

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

Next issue

How can you convert a 'normal' room quickly into an effective learning environment?

Breaking developments

Will Twitter become an effective tool for learning IT skills?



At first glance, Twitter's 140-character limitations seems to render it into little more than an outlet for posting training hints and tips, or for sharing information and resources such as web addresses or event details.

Twitter's format dictates that it will not be effective as a stand-alone learning tool, but it can complement one's portfolio of resources. It can allow organisations to build up a community by encouraging past and future delegates and employees to 'follow' them. Ideas, promotions, learning tools and resources can be communicated within that community, thereby providing an effective learning service to followers.

If you receive or find a 'tweet' that teaches you a handy shortcut when using Microsoft Excel, or you are made aware of a discount, event or textbook that bears some relevance to your learning requirements, surely there is an argument in favour of Twitter's effectiveness. A regular user may use the site to search for communities relevant to their requirements, and find all sorts of useful resources as a result.

How useful Twitter is in comparison to other, more feature-rich, niche forum sites and social networking media – such as LinkedIn – is less of a certainty. Perhaps its simplicity makes Twitter a more accessible option?

The long-standing traditions of classroom-based, instructor-led training – and indeed e-learning – are unlikely to be replaced any time soon. Proven learning methodologies and techniques simply cannot be removed. However, incorporating the neat little application into a blended learning strategy can only serve to strengthen your capabilities and broaden your horizons, no less than the likes of, say, Google.

David Turner, Premier IT

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

Trainers: this is your page – send in your views for the next issue, or any comments about this week's advice, to the Editor: jutta.mackwell@hq.bcs.org.uk

Next issue

Can the latest internet phones make mobile learning a reality?



The force is with SAS

Helen Cockroft swaps her SAS training hat on some weekends for a police uniform. Each of the two roles has given her skills that she believes are useful to the other job, as Helen Wilcox reports.

What is your typical day like as a senior education consultant?

The main part is as an instructor delivering standard or customised training. I also spend some time preparing for courses.

Courses are typically two to three days long and I usually deliver one course every week. All SAS instructors deliver programming courses – there are five to six of those – and then specialise in the other three curriculum areas: statistics, business intelligence, and data integration.

I deliver courses at our own locations – Marlow, Manchester, Glasgow and Dublin, our base in London, or at customer offices. We increasingly go to customers' own offices, usually in the UK, but occasionally we go abroad if a customer has a big overseas office with English speaking staff.

We also get involved with user events – for instance the SAS Professional Convention where SAS experts give presentations to a gathering of SAS users, and users have the opportunity to take SAS certification exams.

We instructors are also involved in leading or contributing to discussions on SASprofessional.net – a social network that allows SAS users to keep in touch with us.

How did you get to where you are?

I had no grand plan to get into IT. I studied geography at university, and then just got a job – in a call centre for a credit card company.

The company I worked for had a scheme called Ideas in Action, and through it I suggested how to improve a database. I got a call from the IT manager who had seen my idea and had a vacancy in his department for a Unix administrator.

I went on Unix and SAS training courses, as the Unix server was also the SAS server. I loved the SAS part – partly because I picked up the programming very easily. It was quite intuitive and not really technical, more about the business and people side.

After 18 months, I applied for a job with a SAS consultancy in Slough. When I was invited for interview, I stayed with a friend who knew someone at SAS. He asked if they'd be interested in interviewing me, and I ended up here, by chance, as a technical consultant.

> I don't think education is something you should do at the start of your career. It's good to get a grounding in what you will be teaching first
>
> Helen Cockroft

How did you make the move into training?

In 2007, I decided what I was doing was not the right long-term career for me. I considered what I could do at SAS – as I didn't want to leave – and thought that education could be the most rewarding option. I had taught a course in summer 2003 for the SAS education department and loved it. I enquired and the education department had a vacancy.

That was really my first pro-active career move. I had no doubts right from the first months that it was right decision.

Is there anything you don't like?

Travelling has an impact on my private life, but it comes with the job and I knew about it from the start.

What advice would you give to others interested in a role like yours?

I don't think education is something you should do at the start of your career. It's good to get a grounding in what you will be teaching first. I used SAS for 10 years before teaching it. With real work experience, you can bring to life the material you are teaching and advise customers on how to use it.

You also need to enjoy being with people and be patient. You need to be passionate about what you're teaching; it's not enough just to know it. I think SAS software is amazing, so I find it easy to convince other people of that. You need good communication skills and to be able to bring the material alive.

Why did you become a special constable?

The police gives me experiences that would be impossible to get via other activities, such as putting me in situations of conflict. It means I push myself outside of my comfort zone.

What does it involve?

We are volunteer police officers. We have the same powers as the regular police and wear the same uniform.

Sometimes we do a response shift – responding to calls on 999 and on the non-emergency number. And we do neighbourhood policing in anti-social behaviour hotspots.

We have to do a minimum of 18 hours per month. That usually means two shifts of 10 hours. I usually do Saturdays, 5pm to 3am. I am careful not to work late on Sundays, so that it doesn't affect my paid work. The police are clear also that the day job comes first – and never force you to do a shift. The work is voluntary; we just get expenses paid.

What has been the most memorable incident?

So many jobs are memorable, but one of the most was attending my first road traffic incident. It was on a country road late at night and I could see lots of blue flashing lights from a fire engine and ambulance, and a badly damaged car on its side in the middle of the road.

My stomach turned over because I was expecting to see people badly injured. A paramedic told me that the car was empty so our priority was to find the driver and passengers. We found the driver hiding in a nearby garden. He admitted he was the driver and the only person in the car, and, amazingly, he was uninjured. But he was clearly drunk and I arrested him and took him to the police station where he provided a breath test sample three times over the legal limit.

Does your police work benefit your paid job?

It was the other way round to start with – the day job helped me get into the police. The recruitment process included picking a piece of paper with a word on it and having to talk about it for three minutes. Having given pre-sales presentations and delivered training, that didn't worry me at all. Both jobs are about communicating.

Now the police work puts me in extremely stressful situations, which can help back in the office. It also gives me a perspective of life that I wouldn't usually see – people at their worst moments. I think it helps me be a more rounded person.

How else do you learn for the day job?

We are regularly trained on technical and delivery skills at SAS. However, SAS has such a large product set that it is impossible to know everything. One of my favourite ways of learning is when it's done in a less formal way, for example when someone on a course asks you a question that you don't know the answer to and you have to go and find the answer out for yourself.

Does SAS use many learning technologies?

This year we started looking at Live Web training. I worked with another instructor to evaluate Adobe Connect. In the US, they've been using it for years because of the geography. They deliver the same courses on Live Web as in the classroom. We think for us it's better to use it for short topics.

We've also used Live Web to prepare for the SAS Professional Convention, which took place in July at SAS UK's headquarters in Marlow. At SAS Professionals, we gathered together over 100 SAS users to do SAS certification examinations. There were four teams – each had two instructors – and they used Live Web to conduct study groups during the last few weeks prior to the exams.

This Live Web method resulted in a much lower drop-out rate in users taking the certification exam after training. Usually the drop-out rate is 15-20 per cent, but due to the use of Live Web this year, this decreased to 3-4 per cent. I think that's because there is the sense of a team and the learners feel a lot more engaged. The teams and instructors are competitive over which team will get the most passes.

There will always be a place for classroom training. It's still the best way to learn, and there is no substitute for collaboration between participants

Helen Cockroft

Will classroom training survive?

I think there will always be a place for it. It's still the best way to learn, and there is no substitute for collaboration between participants.

Live Web has its place, for instance for teaching a new bit of syntax – in short, framed sessions. It will improve with better broadband. At the moment when you are demonstrating something with a mouse, for instance, there is a delay between the instructor moving it, and the student seeing it on their machine.

Helen Cockroft's career timeline

2001 - Present	SAS UK Headquarters, Marlow, Bucks
2007 - Present	Senior Education Consultant
2003 - 2007	Senior / Pre-sales Consultant
2001 - 2003	Consultant
1998 - 2001	The Associates Capital Corporation, Manchester
1999 - 2001	SAS/UNIX Administrator
1998 - 1999	Customer Services Officer



Wireless Camp scheme supported CWP laptop launch

How do you reach 7,500 employees spread across the whole of the UK within a very tight timeline, not only to train them on new technology, but also so they buy into the new vision of your business? This was the challenge independent mobile phone retailer Carphone Warehouse (CPW) faced last year. Jutta Mackwell reports.

With the increasing popularity of wireless laptops and netbooks, supported by the rise of mobile broadband, CPW saw the potential of broadening its range into the arena. Last year, it started offering netbooks and laptops on the same basis as mobile phones, i.e. operators subsidise the initial purchase cost and users pay mobile data tariffs.

This move into a slightly different market turned out to be one of the biggest shifts CPW had undertaken in a long time. It included not only changing systems, redesigning stores and hours of negotiations with network suppliers, but also, and most importantly, a shift in people.

The 'big bang' launch of the new products was planned for 3 June 2008. To help deal with the sheer scale of the training project and the very challenging lead time, CPW brought on board Verridian, a Bristol-based training provider. The aim was to train 7,500 staff from high street stores, direct telephone sales and contact centres on the new products and services.

With only four weeks to plan and prepare a laptop training programme, CPW and Verridian needed to make sure that they 'were holding hands through the whole process', as Marcus Dacombe, Sales and Marketing Director at Verridian, puts it. This also meant that CPW had to make sure that whoever they worked with understood and shared CPW values, and were, above all, flexible.

The training aligned the company and staff to the new vision. What stood out for me was the impact it had on the employees and the customers

Darren Gardner
CPW

One of the most important things for the project was to work together as a team. Throughout the project, a Verridian project manager and training designer effectively worked full-time with CPW, and there were regular review meetings with key stakeholders.

'We said right from the start, it's just one team, we're in this together. If we'd treated ourselves as two different companies it would have doubled the effort,' explains Darren Gardner, Head of New Business and Multichannel at CPW.

One week before the start of the training programme, Verridian and CPW ran a pilot with about 180 hand-selected people representing

all sections of the business, from top branch managers to key support centre staff, in order to test-run the training and see if any changes were needed. The same group was then asked for feedback on the amended version.

The training phases

The training programme, which was known as 'Wireless Camp', was split into two phases. The first phase, which started off seven weeks prior to the sales launch, was aimed at getting all staff up to speed in terms of technical knowledge of the new products and enabling them to put that knowledge into practice. The second phase, which took place after the laptop launch, was follow-up, in-store training.

In phase 1, from May to June, a team of Verridian and CPW trainers, plus members of CPW's 'Geek Squad' set off on a 'roadshow', running camps at 63 venues all over the UK. The team often stayed in one location for several days in order to allow each member of staff in that area to attend.

Even though attending the Wireless Camp was compulsory for each member of staff, there was an incentive to take part: every employee who passed the camp successfully received a free laptop at the end. A 'pass' meant that they had to attend the one-day training course, complete a number of online training tests and eventually sell a laptop to a customer.

Even though most of CPW's staff are by no means computer-illiterate, many didn't feel comfortable with the thought of having to sell one to customers. 'It was amazing how many 18-30 year olds are scared of laptops,' says Gardner.

The day began at 10 am and finished around 6 pm. Delegate numbers varied between 100-200 people, depending on the size of the venue. After a welcome plenary session, where the new CPW vision was introduced and a senior manager gave a keynote speech, delegates were split into groups of 10-15 people, all 'equipped' with one Verridian, one CPW and one Geek Squad trainer.



What was great was having a blend of people. It was about learning from each other

Marcus Dacombe, Verridian

A technical 'mini' test to determine already existing knowledge then started off the training. Staff who scored 100 per cent became 'go to and ask persons', allowing the experts from store to be part of the training team. 'What was great was having a blend of people [in the groups]. It was about learning from each other,' says Dacombe.

The key aim of the breakout sessions was to give staff more confidence when talking about the new range and technology with customers, and also helping them to move beyond the technical jargon. This was achieved through a blend of instructor-led classroom teaching and a lot of inter-team role play on real-life scenarios.

Throughout the day, delegates were able to post questions in an 'I wish I knew' box. These questions were then answered in a 'University Challenge' game at the end of the day.

The day finished with a second test, where all delegates were given a handset, which was linked to their registration details, and allowed them to compare their new results with the ones from the first test. 'This was probably one of the biggest wow-factors,' Gardner says. 'We got an overwhelming response from people. They were all motivated to get out there and deliver.'

The second phase

In phase 2, CPW and Verridian arranged for follow-up, in-store coaching sessions. The aim was to see how staff were putting their newly acquired knowledge into practice and to provide some more support and training.

The sessions took place after CPW's laptop launch, from early June to early November, and saw trainers visiting over 800 CPW stores all over the UK. The days usually started off with a feedback session, and then moved into 'practical knowledge testing', which consisted of selling a laptop to a customer, either live or as a role play. 'What was really good was that the pass rate was very high – 93 per cent,' says Gardner.

After the assessment, the trainer would set up a personal development plan with each staff member, which would then be passed on to the store manager.

Looking back

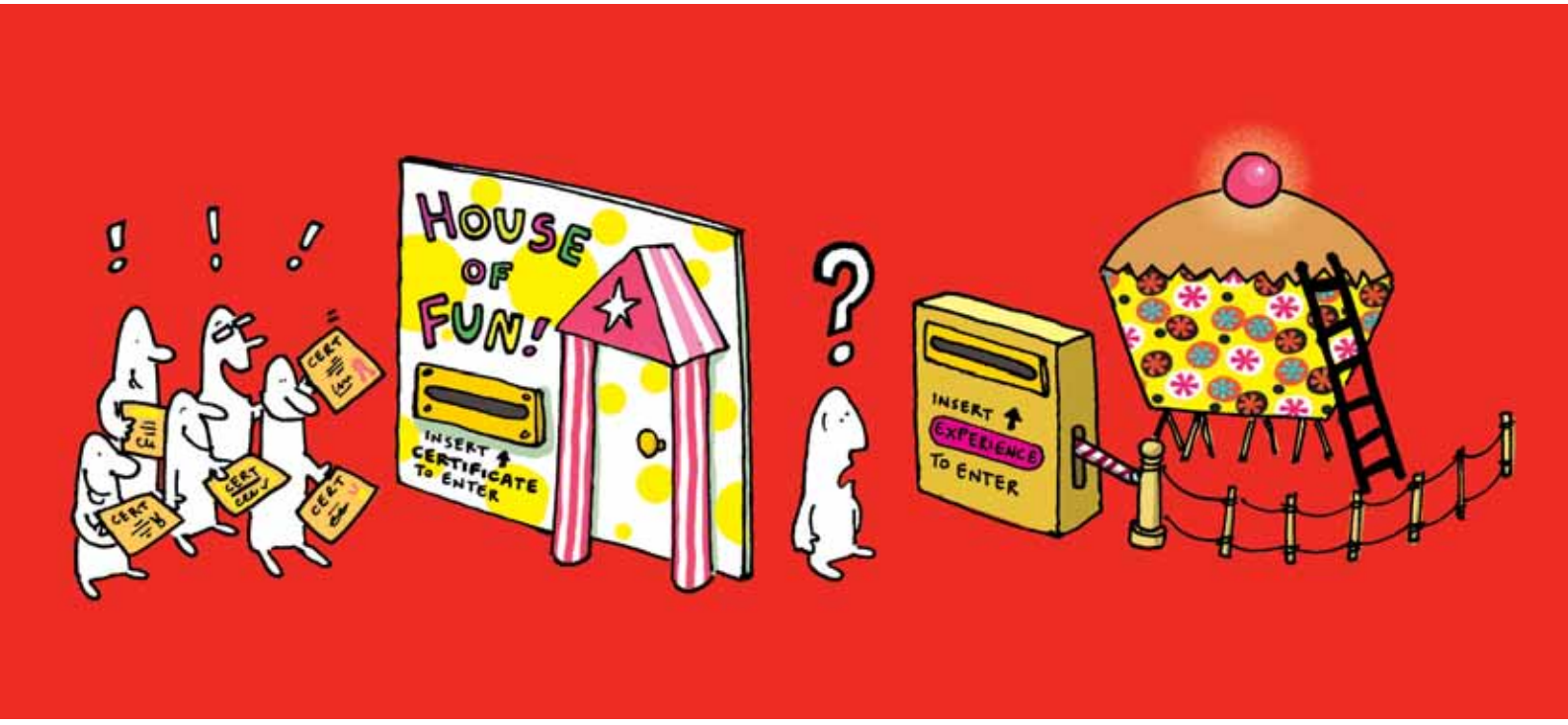
So was Wireless Camp a success? Both Gardner and Dacombe agree that it absolutely delivered what it promised. CPW saw an uplift in sales of 300 per cent after the project, and Verridian won the External Training Project of the Year award at the Institute of IT Training Awards in 2009 for Wireless Camp.

'The training aligned the company and staff to the new vision,' Gardner explains. 'What stood out for me ultimately was the impact it had on the employees and the customers.'

'The training was never just about a product, it always had people at its centre,' adds Dacombe. 'Seeing a room full of 100 people get excited and passionate about what they were doing was one of the things that made the camp a success.'

And is there anything they would have done differently? 'I don't think we'd do a lot of things differently,' Gardner says. 'What I might change if I had to do a project like this again is give it a slightly longer timeframe and ask people to do some preparation beforehand. But overall, the huge amount of positive feedback and the very successful launch of the new extended range speak for themselves.'

Parts of the Wireless Camp training have now been included as a one-day session in the regular induction training, and online material has been made available on the internal CPW system. CPW is also planning 'refresher courses', possibly in the form of six-monthly roadshows.



Is one open door enough?

Are vendor certifications actually worth the bother or are they a time-wasting bit of window-dressing not actually measuring real ability or performance? Gary Flood looks at how they have developed over the last years, what the research shows and the anecdotal evidence.

Industry qualifications in one form or another have been with us for decades, but they really took off when Microsoft introduced the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE).

Then there was the backlash, with MCSEs flooding the market, devaluing the qualification by volume alone, but also because too many such holders were descried as 'paper MCSEs'. The accusation was that people were just doing exam crams, even sending ringers to sit their exams. 'Clients ended up setting their own IT tests even for MCSEs,' says Matt Smith, Director of UK Regions for IT recruiter Harvey Nash.

Certification went quiet for a while, but unobtrusively the whole field has been re-building (see box opposite). Many exams now factor in some sort of blind-test practical element, often involving the candidate having to physically configure, de-bug or administer some actual technology.

And new certifications keep appearing. The Information Systems Audit and Control Association outlined details in January of a highly demanding professional qualification for IT, the Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT. In May business process management player Lombardi announced a programme, the Lombardi University.

Still the evidence is very mixed on what practical, career-enhancing effect getting the magic letters after your name actually brings the IT professional.

'Certification definitely has a place: it shows commitment and that you've gone that extra mile, but it doesn't prove of itself you can do the job better than someone who hasn't,' says QA's Commercial Director Bill Walker.

We need to demonstrate that our certification provides incredible value to the productivity of a workforce

Kevin Turner, Microsoft

Marc Smith, Director of Technical Marketing at Lombardi, adds: 'The problem with too much certification is that it is not based on exposure to practical project engagements, and you do need to have an element of that, not just courses and exams, to prove competence.'

Does holding qualification A or certification B make an IT practitioner more valuable in an employer's eyes? According to testing specialist Pearson Vue, yes. In March 2008 it polled just under 400 IT, HR and training professionals across Europe (including the UK, Holland and Germany) and found that certification plays a significant role in career progression and was felt to do even more so in the future. Almost half of companies considered certification to be important or useful, and only 7 per cent of companies responding expressed no interest at all in IT certification.

For recruitment purposes, Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and IBM



certificates are the most sought after by employers, the poll found, and IT certification was said to play a 'significant' role in career progression generally. It is also a benefit to job applicants, especially at the initial CV screening stage and as a final decider between candidates chasing the same position.

These findings were echoed by another study conducted in 2008 by IT analyst firm IDC among 800 (mainly US) IT leaders, collectively responsible for more than 2,000 teams. The survey's focus was to uncover the relationship between training, certification and functional performance. It found that 75 per cent of managers believe certification is important to team performance; also 66 per cent of managers believe that certification improves the overall level of service and support offered to IT end users/customers and overall team performance increases every time a new team member is certified.

Meanwhile, Microsoft's own 2006 survey found that of those contacted, 63 per cent of hiring managers reported certified individuals are 'somewhat or far more' productive than their non-certified counterparts;

For recruitment purposes, Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and IBM certificates are the most sought after by employers

Pearson Vue research

Recent evolutions in industry qualifications

A number of key IT vendors have either announced significant revamps or extensions of their proprietary qualifications in the past 18 months.

Probably the most significant is the ongoing evolution of the Microsoft qualification set from the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer to the new qualifications grouped around the Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS), which in turn can be the basis for the new Microsoft industry qualifications, the Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP), Microsoft Certified Professional Developer (MCPD), Microsoft Certified Master (MCM) and Microsoft Certified Architect (MCA).

Cisco has also been overhauling its core Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA), though in this instance it is not scrapping it so much as improving it. Candidates are now expected to pass some entry-level exams first, such as the Cisco Certified Entry Network Technician (CCENT), which is based on an introductory concepts exam, accompanied by a more skills-focused test. Beyond the CCNA are now job-related destinations, qualifications-wise, such as becoming Cisco Certified Network Professionals (CCNPs), and a few may aspire to be Cisco Certified Network Experts (CCNEs).

SAP, two years ago, decided to inaugurate an entirely fresh global certification programme. For the first time, SAP introduced a three-tier qualifications structure, with candidates becoming a SAP Certified Associate, Certified Professional or Certified Master.

Its main software rival Oracle has beefed up its OCX qualifications range from Oracle Certified Associate (OCA) to Oracle Certified Professional (OCP) up to Oracle Professional Master (OCM).

At the same time, companies as diverse as Apple, HP, Adobe, Sage and Novell have all either maintained or most often expanded their certification 'stories'.

55 per cent consider certification a key criterion when recruiting and a further 46 per cent see certification a factor for promotion. Microsoft European researchers have also found that in France, the average salary for a developer with Microsoft Certified Professional status was about 10 per cent higher than for a non-certified one; in Germany, there was even a 15 per cent difference.

The idea that the right cert equals the fatter pay packet is backed up by US IT pay market commentators Foote Partners. It regularly publishes painstakingly detailed analyses of which certifications are 'up' or down' in market value – e.g. in the file of IT security for April 2009, the Check Point Certified Master Architect qualification showed a 0.2 per cent increase in pay, the Microsoft Certified Solution Developer was most valuable in terms of pay in applications development, Oracle DBA Administrator Certified Master in database and so on. Yet a direct correlation between certification and more money is not proven. In the same Foote data, for instance, of 22,850 US and Canadian IT professionals contacted, being certified seemed to equal a 4 per cent drop in salary for the period in question. Surely the only fair conclusion to be derived from these sorts of salary surveys is that in volatile economic times, even the 'hottest' new certification may not directly translate into career progression?

However, the industry itself is keen and committed. Partly, this is down to the fact that it is undoubtedly a revenue stream for them: many certifications, e.g. the HP range, are only really pursued by HP channel and partner companies, who get better recognition and support from the parent supplier if they show such investment and commitment.

But then vendors take what they do seriously enough to know familiarity with their own products is vital. 'Everyone takes tests at school to show progress; why not in your IT career too?' asks Pearson Vue's European Sales and Marketing VP Suzana Lopes.

No less than four million IT professionals have earned Microsoft certifications to date; Microsoft is now also making all its customer-facing employees get certified, a move that affects around 15,000 of its staff. 'We need to walk our talk and demonstrate that our certification provides incredible value to the productivity of a workforce,' its Chief Operating Officer Kevin Turner said.

This is reflected in the IT training market itself. 'We have seen a lot of rising interest from consultancies and suppliers wanting to get fully "skilled up" during the recession – and we've seen probably more demand from this quarter than end-user companies for certification versus IT training in general,' notes Tony King, Solution Manager at training firm Global Knowledge.

Getting the right mix

However the reality is that IT practitioners won't pursue certification unless it's made a requirement. In the Person Vue research, for instance, even though employers encouraged staff to complete courses so as to gain full certification, just over half of those who undertake training actually complete it. Time constraints are the biggest barrier to completion rates, closely followed by whether or not certification is included within training. Motivation is also an issue, as people appear less willing to take certification if their company does not expressly require them to do so.

'Industry qualifications are great at opening the initial doors, but solid career and salary progress then can't take place without significant experience and proven worth in a role,' says David Marr, Training Manager at Globaltech Solutions.

Research by IT sector skills council e-skills UK (March 2008) indicates that employers actually rate a degree as the best qualification with vendor qualifications slightly ahead in terms of technical content and usefulness to the employing company and staff, and slightly behind in terms of cost and value for money.



Employers find it easy to see what a vendor qualification offers in terms of content, skills and knowledge

Karen Price, e-skills UK

'Employers find it easy to see what a vendor qualification offers in terms of content, skills and knowledge,' says the organisation's CEO Karen Price. But crucially, unlike degrees, as Marr points out, IT still has so many disparate technical specialisms and career paths that it's hard to see how one general industry qualification could ever be seen as equal to a degree. What, then, is the intelligent way to think about the value of industry qualifications? 'For longevity and commitment to IT as a career, it absolutely does you no harm to get them,' thinks recruiter Smith. 'But in employment terms it's about the total package – if you'll fit in, as much as your experience and training.'

'There are a whole set of factors when it comes to recruitment,' adds Walker. 'Certification is not a panacea. IT firms, like the government, really like the idea; in the real world it seems IT professionals and employers see the things more like only the surface part of the overall education experience.'

To find out more

Microsoft
www.microsoft.com/learning
www.microsoft.com/presspass/features/2009/jan09/01-21ITCertQA.mspx
www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp/newgen/default.mspx

The new Lombardi University
www.lombardisoftware.com/bpm-software-training.php

The latest 'hot' certifications and interesting mappings of qualifications to (North American) resulting job prospects
http://www.footepartners.com/FooteNewsrelease_2009skillstrends_041609V1.pdf

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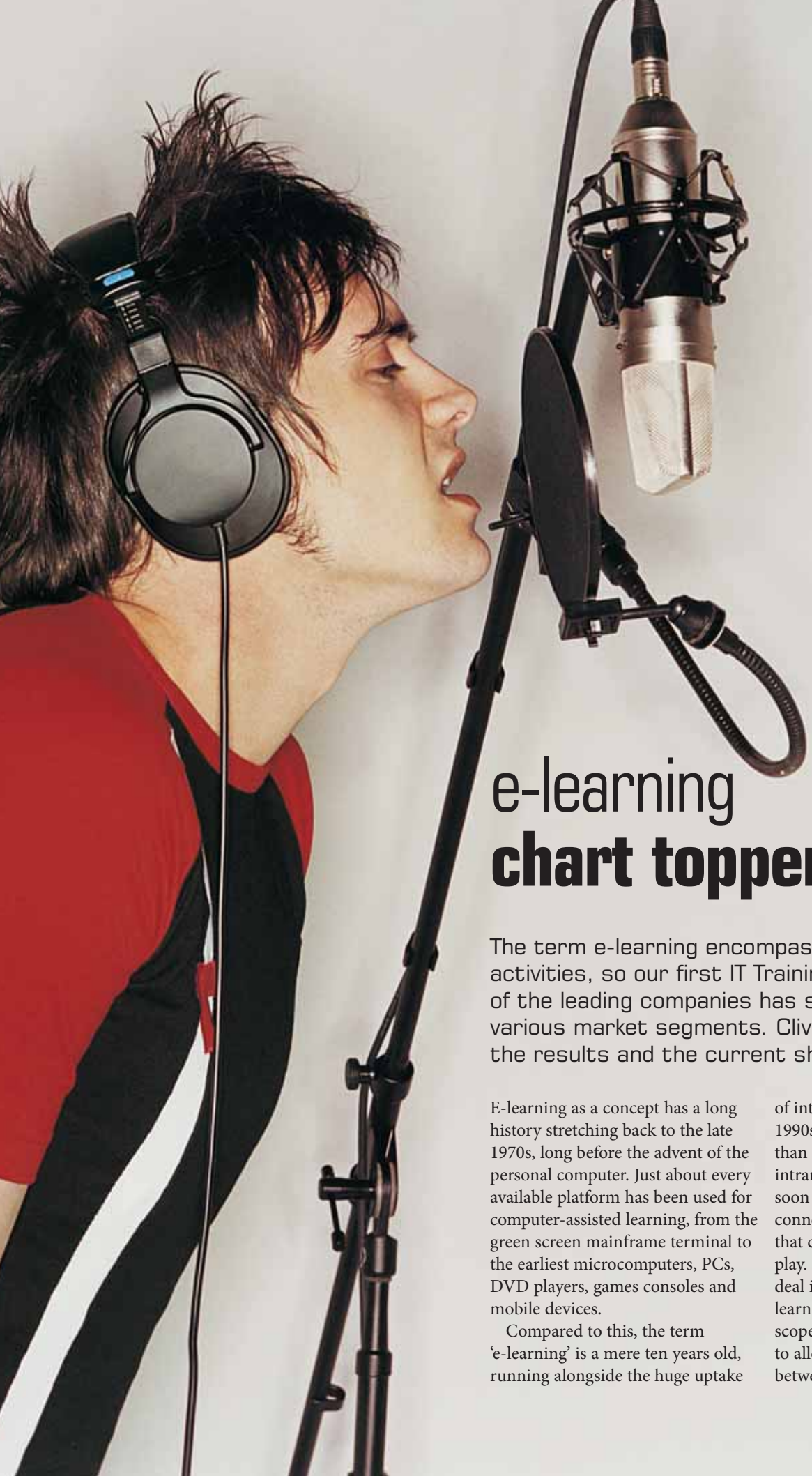
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e-learning **chart toppers**

The term e-learning encompasses a wide range of activities, so our first IT Training e-learning survey of the leading companies has split them into various market segments. Clive Shepherd examines the results and the current shape of the market.

E-learning as a concept has a long history stretching back to the late 1970s, long before the advent of the personal computer. Just about every available platform has been used for computer-assisted learning, from the green screen mainframe terminal to the earliest microcomputers, PCs, DVD players, games consoles and mobile devices.

Compared to this, the term 'e-learning' is a mere ten years old, running alongside the huge uptake of internet technology in the late 1990s. This re-branding was more than cosmetic: the internet and the intranets and extranets that followed soon after brought a degree of connectivity to personal computing that changed the way we work and play. Connectivity means a great deal in the context of workplace learning, because it broadens the scope of computer-assisted learning to allow remote communication between tutors and learners, not to

mention access to huge quantities of training materials and reference information.

Not surprisingly, e-learning has developed into a broad church, encompassing a wide range of activities, from the classic, self-paced lessons (traditionally referred to as CBT – computer-based training) through to performance support, e-assessment, learning and content management, games and simulations, mobile learning, web conferencing, and more recently, learning using social media.

For this reason, the 2009 *IT Training* survey of the e-learning market could not be adequately described in a single list. Instead it separates out the market for bespoke e-learning content, off-the-shelf content, authoring tool providers and LMS/LCMS providers. In the case of bespoke content, which is a more localised business, only UK sales were included. In all other cases, where the business is typically international, the tables show global sales.

To gather this information, *IT Training* contacted a wide range of leading players in each of the chosen categories. Many were happy to respond with details of their sales for 2008. Some declined because it was contrary to their company policy to disclose sales information or because the information was not available in the form required. In other cases, notably for public companies, the information was readily available from Companies House and similar sources.

Bespoke content developers

Bespoke multimedia content development in the UK first appeared on the scene in the early 1980s. Indeed, one of the companies in our list, Epic, can claim to have been a leading player from the very start to the current day. Most bespoke development is provided as a local service within the UK, although some companies have development teams off-shore, some overseas companies have a UK presence (notably Cognitive Arts in our list) and some UK companies have spread their wings to provide services to international clients (notably Kineo). Of course, many clients of these companies operate beyond the UK and distribute the content internationally within their organisations.

Bespoke development meets client needs that cannot be addressed by off-the-shelf products or by in-house teams. Typically, only large organisations have the audience numbers to justify bespoke development, although new rapid tools and processes are bringing down prices and opening up opportunities to a wider range of organisations.

Bespoke developers are typically relatively small companies, employing a mix of specialists in project management, instructional design, software engineering and graphic design. Projects range in size from a few tens of thousands to several millions, with development times ranging from a few weeks to many months.

The market for bespoke development has been both helped and hindered by the current recession. Some projects will have been postponed or shelved as organisations assess the damage; in other cases, organisations are responding to reduced budgets by switching from classroom training to e-learning. As we exit the recession, e-learning is likely to have been a net beneficiary, with a much enlarged share of the market for formal learning and development.

Off-the-shelf content providers

The provision of off-the-shelf training content is again a long established business sector, with origins that can be traced back to the heyday of training films and videos. All but the youngest readers will remember the early John Cleese films from Video Arts (still going strong and included in our e-learning list). And the dominant player, SkillSoft, can be traced back to the 1980s provider of IT training videos, BIS-Deltak.



The market for bespoke development has been both helped and hindered by the current recession

Clive Shepherd

Many off-the-shelf content providers specialise in a particular subject area, such as soft skills or IT training. The market leader, SkillSoft, has, through acquisition, built a broad catalogue of titles covering all major business disciplines. Some have extended their offerings to include non-interactive resources, most notably SkillSoft's Books24x7 venture.

Although off-the-shelf content is an international market and much technical content can be distributed with American accents and spelling, other disciplines – particularly soft skills – require localisation. Similar issues arise with content that is designed to meet compliance needs, where the content must be developed in accordance with local laws and regulations.

Off-the-shelf content is typically purchased in quantity under license for use by an entire organisation, division or department, and then renewed annually. This content can be hosted externally by the provider or installed within the firewall.

Most publishers target the largest organisations and the market for small and medium-sized enterprises is still largely untapped. An exception would be learndirect, an initiative of the UK government that deliberately targets individuals and smaller companies, but did not make information available for this year's list.

Authoring tool providers

Authoring tools are software packages that allow developers to build self-paced e-learning and performance support materials. Many have been platform-specific and have therefore come and gone as focus has shifted from DOS/Apple II to Windows/Mac, and from floppies

to videodisc to CD-ROM and then online.

Traditionally, authoring packages have been desktop tools sold per seat on a perpetual license. Early tools used to charge royalties as titles were distributed, but this practice has thankfully now died out. Although most tools are still Windows applications, we are seeing a rapid growth in the use of online tools, which allow data to be stored in a database on a central server and facilitate the collaborative development of content. Examples of online tools include Atlantic Link (a UK company, included in the list) and Mohive.

Some authoring tools are designed primarily to support IT training and, indeed, they head up our list. Adobe was not able to supply figures for this review, but remains the undoubted market leader in authoring tools. Adobe's Captivate, which originated as a screen capture tool for IT training, is the world's most popular tool, now extended to support all types of content. Top of our list is Camtasia, another highly popular screen capture tool. At number two is Assima, a UK-centred company that provides highly advanced tools for software simulation, both for training and performance support. The other tools in our list also have modules to support screen capture.

An important development in recent years has been the growth in popularity of so-called rapid development tools, which take PowerPoint output and enhance it for web distribution in Flash format. The two most popular of these are Articulate and Adobe Presenter, neither of which were able to supply sales figures. The same capability is also available with the online tool Atlantic Link.

The outlook for authoring tools looks bright as more organisations decide to develop their own e-learning content in-house. It remains to be seen whether online tools, typically purchased on an enterprise basis, will erode the dominance of the desktop tools. It is quite conceivable that competition will also be felt from open source and free tools.

The outlook for authoring tools looks bright as more organisations decide to develop their own e-learning content in-house

Clive Shepherd

LMS/LCMS providers

The first major learning management systems (LMSs) started to appear in the mid 1990s, alongside the growth in popularity of web-enabled applications in general and e-learning in particular. Some were developed from existing classroom-course management systems, but most were new dotcom ventures.

LMSs provide online support for all aspects of an organisation's learning and development efforts, including classroom training. Many LMSs extend to performance management, providing support for job and employee competency databases; others include content management capabilities (learning content management systems, or LCMSs), which allow an organisation to centrally store all forms of content, from media assets to reference documents to learning objects, and to re-use these in a variety of contexts; further extensions to the LMS include social networking components, providing web 2.0 capabilities within the firewall.

The major LMS providers market their products internationally, with the majority of leading players based in the US. LMSs are usually sold on an enterprise license, with the price based on the number of users. It is quite typical for a substantial amount of support and configuration to be required when the system is installed.

More recently we have seen the major database and ERP software companies extending their HR offerings with LMS components, most notably Oracle and SAP. Where an organisation is already heavily invested in the solutions provided by these vendors, there will obviously be a temptation to add LMS functionality to their existing suite rather than work with a completely different supplier. No figures are available for Oracle and SAP LMS sales.

Another complication to the LMS market lies in the increasing adoption of virtual learning environments (VLEs) as LMS replacements. VLEs, such as Blackboard and the open source Moodle, were originally developed for the educational market and are used by thousands of colleges worldwide. However there is a fine line between an LMS and a VLE (indeed in the US they make no distinction) and VLEs, in particular Moodle, are now widely used by employers to support the delivery of online and blended solutions. Sales of Blackboard were $312m for 2008, but they have not been included in the list because their usage is so heavily educational. As Moodle is open source, there is no way to assess revenue.

Other e-learning products and services

As mentioned previously, e-learning now encompasses a very wide range of products and services, many of which have applications beyond learning and development. A major example is web conferencing, already widely used by organisations to support online meetings and webinars, but now increasingly used for live online training. In the US it is estimated that 10 per cent of all formal training is conducted this way.

The major players in web conferencing generally are Cisco Webex (with a dominant market share), Microsoft LiveMeeting, Citrix GoToMeeting and Adobe Acrobat Connect. Some products centre more on the virtual classroom, including Elluminate and Saba Centra. There is also increasing activity in open source web conferencing, while the capability of instant messaging products such as Skype could easily be extended upwards to blur the distinction with full-scale web conferencing.

An emerging trend is the use of web 2.0 ideas and technologies



PRACTICE-IT

Experts in IT Skills Development

IT Skills development is not all about training

Here's the conundrum; your IT Department is planning to install some critical new IT infrastructure (i.e. hardware, software and applications) that has a significant skills impact on your IT Professionals. The skills gap has been identified so do you:-

- Provide the manuals and leave them to figure it out for themselves?
- Send them on a 5 day training course?
- Do nothing and hire the skills?
- Provide them with a safe working environment to develop their skills while still supporting the organisation?

Read the manual

IT Professionals are a resilient lot who prefer to dive in and figure new technology out for themselves - and that can be a realistic approach for some areas of IT. After all, that infamous phrase "easy to use" applies to so many IT subjects.

But there are a number of concerns with this approach. "easy to use" can readily be translated into "hard to use well" and there are so many technical issues where a little knowledge is a dangerous thing! But the main issue is what hardware and software will they use to "try out" their learning experience – most IT managers will want to keep experimenters as far away from the live system as possible. The other concern, of course, is that the outcome is unpredictable.

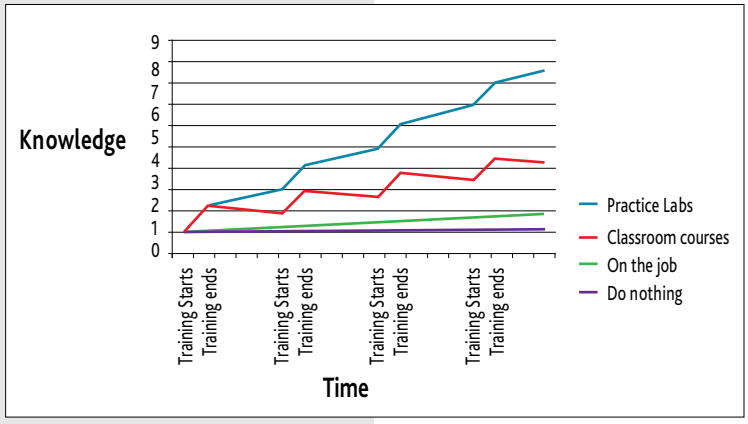
Classroom courses

Conventional classroom courses are the traditional way to ensure the effective transfer of new skills and they directly address the concerns arising from reading the manual – there are predictable outcomes, hardware and software is off-site, and best practice is deployed.

However, there are cons as well: time off work is significant, it's a high cost approach (especially if there are a number of people to train) and the timing is not necessarily ideal.

Do nothing and hire the skills

Don't laugh – this is a realistic alternative and is probably the approach that around half of the managers, faced with the conundrum, will take. There are two critical benefits from this approach – the solution is implemented quickly and it's low risk.



Say goodbye to...

- Course cancellations
- Expensive 5 day courses
- Inflexible course content
- Limited testing infrastructure
- Scheduling headaches
- Suppliers' timetables
- Delayed ROI

... and hello to...

- Low cost targeted hands on learning
- Safe accessibility to new technologies
- Available when you want it
- Live risk free production environment
- Green IT
- No staff down time
- Rapid ROI with full reporting

The problem is this is a high cost approach and ultimately the skills leave the organisation with either the hired contractor or service provider once the implementation is complete. This can also have an adverse effect on support services as external resources seldomly engage with them while delivering the solution.

Practice-IT

What is needed, therefore, is a solution that continuously develops IT skills while keeping costs in check. This is where Practice-IT can help; we provide hands on technical solutions that improve IT skills through a combination of online live labs, customised content and bespoke face to face learning support. The result being your teams' knowledge will always continue to grow compared to delegates who simply attend traditional courses, learn on the job or do nothing.

Practice-Labs are the foundations of our approach to skills development and can be employed by the user to explore new technologies, resolve operational challenges and test new concepts in a safe working environment. As the labs are online they can be easily accessed from anywhere and at anytime and with no hardware, software and support costs (such as licensing and power) they are the ideal way to gain the practical experience you need on the technologies of today and tomorrow without having to invest in expensive equipment.

In conjunction with the labs, we run scheduled skill enhancement days for your team and these can be technology workshops, new project training requirements or skills improvement and development workshops. These can all be on a group or 1:1 basis and you cherry pick bespoke content to alleviate specific pain points you are currently experiencing or anticipating.

For more information

For more information on our solution or to learn more about how their Continuous Learning Model can enhance the skills within your organisation visit **www.practice-it.co.uk**, call **0207 631 3716** or email **roger.birchenough@practice-it.co.uk**

Top tables e-learning companies

Top 10 UK bespoke content developers

Rank	Organisation	Revenue 2008* (m)		Web address
1	Line	£7.20	(e)	www.line.co.uk
2	Epic	£6.10		www.epic.co.uk
3	CM Group	£4.25		www.cm-group.co.uk
4	Cognitive Arts	£4.01		www.cognitivearts.com
5	Brightwave	£3.80	(e)	www.brightwave.co.uk
6	Redtray	£3.75		www.redtray.co.uk
7	Kineo	£3.70	(e)	www.kineo.com
8	Assima	£2.38		www.assima.net
9	Saffron Interactive	£1.80		www.saffroninteractive.com
10	IMC	£1.01		www.im-c.com

Top 10 off-the-shelf content providers globally

Rank	Organisation	Revenue 2008* (m)		Web address
1	SkillSoft	£196.36	(A)	www.skillsoft.com
2	Element K	£39.48		www.elementk.com
3	ThirdForce	£26.90		www.thirdforce.com
4	learn.com	£21.26		www.learn.com
5	Video Arts	£4.63		www.videoarts.co.uk
6	ILX Group	£4.30		www.ilxgroup.com
7	Absolutely Training	£2.85	(B)	www.absolutelytraining.com
8	Watsonia Publishing	£1.43		www.watsoniapublishing.co.uk
9	LearningGuide	£1.28		www.learningguide.co.uk
10	Symantec Education Services	£1.21	(C)	www.symantec.com

Top 5 authoring tool providers globally

Rank	Organisation	Revenue 2008* (m)		Web address
1	Techsmith	£21.87		www.techsmith.com
2	Assima	£4.73		www.assima.net
3	Trivantis	£3.41	(B)	www.trivantis.com
4	SumTotal	£2.03	(e)	www.toolbook.com
5	Atlantic Link	£2.00		www.atlantic-link.co.uk

Top 5 LMS / LCMS providers globally

Rank	Organisation	Revenue 2008* (m)		Web address
1	SumTotal	£70.11	(e)	www.sumtotal.com
2	Saba	£65.17		www.saba.com
3	Plateau	£30.00	(e)	www.plateau.com
4	Mzinga	£18.22		www.mzinga.com
5-	Meridian Knowledge Solutions	£9.72		www.meridianksi.com
5-	Element K	£9.72		www.elementk.com

within learning and development, including blogging, wikis, online video, podcasting and social networking. Some of this functionality is being incorporated in the next generation LMSs, although many organisations are likely to use readily available stand-alone tools or build their own custom solutions.

The prospects for new learning media

The learning and development profession generally is at a crossroads. On top of the pressures for a more speedy delivery of training and for more environmentally friendly solutions comes the extreme cost constraints associated with the deepest recession in a generation. Organisations will be bound to turn to solutions that are more responsive, less disruptive and clearly more cost-effective, and that generally means a greater use of new media.

As Joseph Schumpeter reminded us: 'Technology is not kind. It does not wait. It does not say please.' The effect will not just be felt by classroom providers; e-learning is undergoing a major upheaval as it shakes off its CBT heritage and emerges as a more versatile medium better suited to the realities of 21st-century working life and the expectations of next generation learners.

* Revenue figures are for the calendar year of 2008, except for:
A: FY ending April 2009
B: FY ending December 2007
C:. FY ending March 2009
'e' indicates that the company has supplied an estimate.

Not all companies active in a particular category are necessarily included in the lists. We were not able to include companies whose turnover (or part of the business relevant to the category) is not available on public record and where the company has declined to provide the information. We have done our best to provide an accurate list but cannot guarantee complete accuracy.



itSMF qualification scheme expands

The IT Service Management Forum (itSMF) can now offer a full set of service management qualifications, having officially recognised ISEB's new ISO/IEC 20000 foundation level syllabus. Megan Pendlebury, Head of IT Service Management at itSMF UK, explains how the entry level exam fits into the itSMF service management qualification scheme.

Since British service management standard BS15000 was fast-tracked to become an internationally recognised standard (ISO/IEC 20000) in 2005, organisations have felt a particular sense of achievement by gaining accreditation.

Plenty of hard work goes into achieving the standard, not only by those running the project, but also by the 'business as usual' staff who need to be fully engaged in the vision of achieving the standard in order for it to happen.

The itSMF scheme allows organisations to be certified via a registered auditing company against the ISO/IEC 20000 standard, giving them a stamp (certificate) of being a quality service management organisation. This stamp shows current and potential customers as well as the competition that organisations are serious about what they do and are in control of the services provided.

To complement this certification scheme, itSMF devised a qualification scheme that trains two different audiences: auditors and consultants. The auditors' qualification teaches experienced auditors the specifics of the ISO/IEC 20000 standard and the ins and outs of IT service management. The consultants' qualification is intended for internal consultants or external contractors with a high level of service management experience, employed to take the organisation through the certification process.

There used to be a gap in the itSMF scheme as the people in an organisation who needed to really understand the standard in terms of what it is all about and where their roles fit into it, were left in limbo. They could take awareness courses, but there was no itSMF-approved structured and examined entry level course. Some decided to sit the consultants' qualification, which covered more detail than they wanted, leaving many unsuccessful in passing the exam.

The itSMF has now plugged its entry level gap by endorsing, and promoting, the ISEB Foundation Certificate in ISO/IEC 20000 as part of its scheme. ISEB's Foundation exam, which had already been running a year prior to the itSMF endorsement, is aimed at staff in internal and external service provider organisations who require knowledge and understanding of the ISO/IEC 20000 standard and its content. This means individuals at the coal face can prove their knowledge and understanding of ISO/IEC 20000, and, as the course is at the right level for them, they will have a more positive experience.

We see ISO/IEC 20000 as a major part of our industry's future. When asked why they are considering working for certification against the standard, many organisations will cite competitive advantage or their customers wanting proof of what they do. Many more people will therefore be involved in this area through time. The only way that the global rollout of ISO/IEC 20000 can happen is if examination institutes work together to ensure that the market is clear and that the students themselves are able to get the training and achieve the level of qualification that they feel they need at any stage in their career.



The only way that the global rollout of ISO/IEC 20000 can happen is if examination institutes work together

Megan Pendlebury, itSMF UK

itSMF UK

The IT Service Management Forum (itSMF) is the independent and internationally recognised forum for IT service management professionals. Globally, the itSMF now has over 6,000 member companies, blue chip and public sector alike, covering in excess of 70,000 individuals. The itSMF UK is the founding Chapter of an increasingly important global business currently comprising 53 Chapters worldwide. itSMF UK is a not-for-profit organisation, run by its members.



The Celtic Tiger prepares to pounce back

IT training in Ireland is responding to tough times by considering online learning and overseas markets. Donald Taylor investigates.

Ireland has gone from boom to spectacular bust in less than a year. With the economy predicted to decline by 7 per cent for 2009 (against 7 per cent growth in 2008) and unemployment set to rise beyond its current rate of 11 per cent to near 17 per cent in 2010, things are tough. How tough? A recent headline in the Irish Independent ran: 'We've never had it so bad'.

How has the IT sector – another of Ireland's boom sectors – stood up to this dramatic reversal in fortunes? And what is happening in the training sector that supports that sector?

The answer is that, despite the recession, IT skills shortages continue in Ireland, as they do in other European countries. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, which advises the Irish Government on skills needs, says in its 2009 National Skills Bulletin that skills shortages persist in the IT profession despite a downturn in computer manufacturing.

This combination of increased unemployment and IT skills shortages has meant that interest in IT training and certification remains strong, but the recession is making itself felt.

We've moved beyond just learning where to find things on menus to being effective knowledge workers

David Carpenter
Q-Validus

'There's no doubt that the demand for training is there,' says Donal Kavanagh, Content Editor for Learning Ireland, a website for information on training ranging from one-day workshops to degree courses. 'Searches on training courses have risen 21 per cent over the past year.'

According to JNIR internet research, more than 600,000 people used the internet to search for training courses in 2008, making it the second largest category searched online. But that hasn't meant boom times for training companies, reports Kavanagh. 'The recession has left classroom providers in particular having to fight a little harder to win the business. There are reduced prices and 2-for-1 offers. People are definitely looking for good value.'

The focus on value-for-money is about more than just finding a good deal, says Kavanagh. 'According to our surveys, around 50 per cent of our users are self-funders whose managers won't pay for training,' and, he adds, more than money is at stake. 'Those still in work are having to cover the roles of those made redundant,' he says. 'They just don't have time to attend classroom-based courses.'

BT Ireland's Training Solutions has noticed this shift in attitudes to training dramatically. While – along with other providers – it has seen a decline in demand for classroom training, it has also noted a significant increase in demand for its instructor-led online training in both IT end user and professional skills. Based in Belfast and Dublin, the company's training team of 38 delivers training not only across the island of Ireland, but also internationally to clients such as Intel and Tourism Ireland.

According to Peter Carlin, Sales and Commercial Manager, being able to attend a live online training

course in 90-minute modules at the desk is attractive for a number of reasons. 'People are finding it difficult to get the time and budget for classroom training so this approach works for them,' he says. 'Also we know that learning spaced over time helps retention. Our instructor-led training over the internet makes that possible.'

But while the downturn has been the catalyst for more interest in training over the internet, participating in learning online means a considerable change in learning habits for most people, says Carlin. Usually it takes practical, hands-on exposure to convince people that it can really work. 'We get a lot of light bulb moments during pilots when people are actually doing it,' he adds.

Adapting delivery mechanisms and organisational approaches to learning is a common theme in Ireland today, it seems. Q-Validus CEO David Carpenter is aiming to change the way organisations and individuals consider their IT skills. He wants to switch training and qualifications from focusing on the software used to concentrating on what people use that software for. Q-Validus' Computer Wings training and certification programme doesn't have titles such as 'Introduction to Word Processing' or 'Using SEO Tools', preferring 'Newsletter Publisher', for example, or 'Web Optimiser'.

As former CEO of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Foundation, Carpenter knows a thing or two about international training and accreditation of IT skills. Like BT Ireland's Training Solutions, he has his eyes set beyond Ireland's shores and has already entered into agreements with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and set up partnerships to spread Computer Wings further afield.

'This shift of focus from software product to employee productivity is crucial,' says Carpenter. 'We've moved beyond just learning where to find things on menus to being effective knowledge workers.'



Those still in work just don't have time to attend classroom-based courses

Donal Kavanagh, Learning Ireland

While Q-Validus is producing a new approach to training and certifying users of IT, the Irish Computer Society remains the national institution that qualifies IT trainers themselves in Ireland. Its Certified Training Professional (CTP) programme checks trainers' ability to plan, deliver, assess and evaluate IT training.

Gwen Conlon, Programmes Co-ordinator at the ICS, points to the hands-on side approach as one reason for the programme's success. 'The practical nature of the assessment of CTP trainers shows that the trainers can actually deliver training effectively, and do not merely have theoretical knowledge of the process.'

Although the CTP programme was launched in 2002 and now has more than 700 trainers certified in Ireland, the ICS is not standing still. The programme is in use in Europe and the Middle East, and like everyone else in Ireland, it seems, the ICS plans to continue that international expansion, extending the programme to Hong Kong, Singapore and South Africa. And as part of its expansion plans, the ICS aims to take its training to the internet. It is in the process of developing an online CTP course, due for release in the autumn.

So while the need for IT training in Ireland remains strong, the recession is making classroom provision increasingly difficult to justify for both providers and learners. It's a trend that the Limerick-based Irish Centre for Business Excellence (ICBE) has noted. Working with organisations across Ireland, the ICBE is an independent, non-profit organisation that promotes business improvement and excellence. It has several communities of practice, among them a group of some 200 learning and development professionals from both the north and south.

'Our L&D members report that it is increasingly difficult to find the time to train staff, while also saying that the need for training remains. As a result, people are considering different approaches to the classroom, and even to formal training altogether,' says ICBE Client and Project Manager Caoimhe Cullinane. She has recently started an online networking forum that allows her L&D community to meet and to share experiences and resources online. 'It's early days to report on progress,' she says, 'but this is definitely the trend for the future: low-cost interactivity that provides support in the workplace. It will never replace all classroom training, but it certainly will supplement it.'

There can be no doubt that the economic situation in Ireland is currently very difficult. Despite it all, however, IT training appears to be adapting to the tough conditions, looking online and overseas for ways of diversifying and extending delivery. One thing that has not gone away with the downturn is the need for training, and neither has a long standing regard in Ireland for learning itself. As Donal Kavanagh puts it: 'Education has always been highly valued here.' From the reactions of key players in IT training in Ireland, it seems that he is absolutely right.

Useful links

2009 National Skills Bulletin
http://www.skillsireland.ie/publications/2009/title,4350,en.php

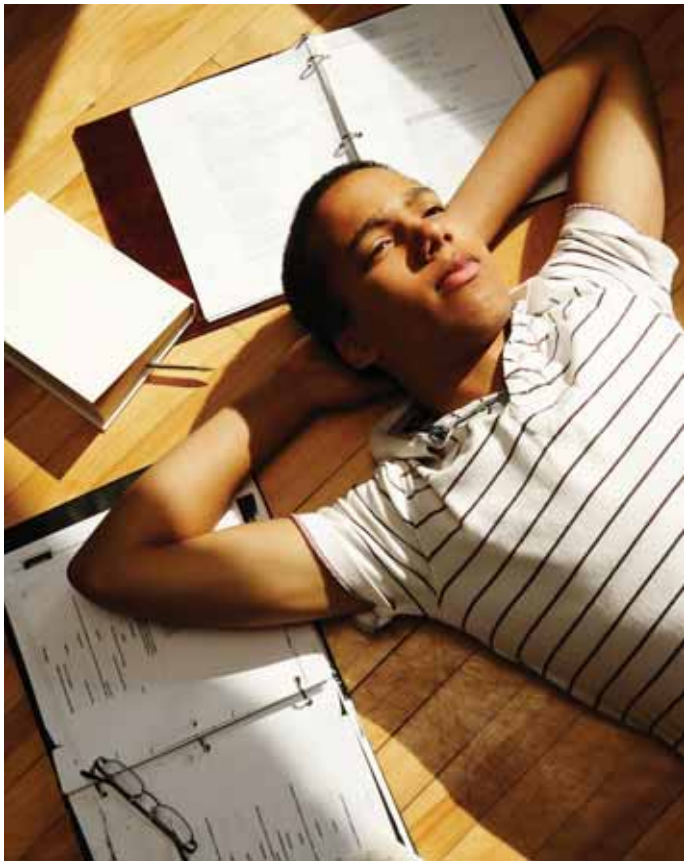
Learning Ireland
http://www.learningireland.ie/

Irish Computer Society
http://www.ics.ie/main/homepage.asp

Irish Centre for Business Excellence
http://www.icbe.ie/index.php

Students' skills shaped to industry

BCS has joined forces with Sun Microsystems to try and complement academic study with IT skills that can be directly applied in the workplace via qualifications that are recognised by industry. To do so, they are offering BCS student members the chance to study certain Java and Solaris online courses for free.



BCS and Sun Microsystems have completed an agreement that will allow all BCS student members free access to Sun's learning management system: Sun Academic Initiative (SAI) Learning Connection.

The BCS scheme opens up SAI, which provides online foundation certification courses, to many more students and universities. To date, it has been running for two years at 21 universities, which have promoted the scheme through campus ambassadors to students to study under their own steam.

Sun Customer Learning Manager Kevin Streater says: 'At the moment, corporates often run Java induction courses for graduates. Universities generally teach Java in their courses, but that doesn't necessarily make graduates industry-ready. With this initiative we're trying to build a bridge from one to another.'

Incorporated into courses

At the moment, students who sign up for the courses learn at their own pace and in their own time. One university is however starting to look at incorporating Java certification actually into its degree courses, replacing a second year module with one of the Sun courses.

'The Java foundation certification (Sun Certified Java Programmer) takes 28 hours to study online, so fits well with one year of academic study. For the Solaris Administrator certification the courses take 44 hours,' says Streater. 'It's more than students just doing the foundation programme while at university - they can then carry on with higher levels throughout their career in industry.'

Courses on the SAI Learning Connection cover a wide range of topics including the fundamentals of Java programming and the open-source Solaris operating system. 130 of Sun's 500 courses are available in the SAI, at associate and intermediate level. The high value advanced courses are not included. The aim, according to Streater, is that students at least have the foundation when entering industry and can build upon it.

'This initiative gives BCS student members a competitive edge as they enter the workforce,' says John Orton, BCS Director of Membership. 'Learning about Java directly from Sun – the company that invented the technology – will benefit them greatly and complement the skills gained from their degree, giving students increased opportunities for job placement and career advancement.'

Great opportunities

Michael Clarke, an MEng Software Engineering Final Year Student at Aberystwyth University and the UK Campus Ambassador Coordinator for Sun Microsystems, agrees: 'SAI is a great opportunity to get certified in a range of courses and to improve your CV – especially given the current economic climate. Not only are there fantastic courses on subjects such as Solaris Administration and Java programming, but also on a variety of other topics such as how to improve your presentation skills.'

It's more than students just doing the foundation programme while at university – they can then carry on with higher levels throughout their career in industry

Kevin Streater, Sun Microsystems

Around 150 students had enrolled on the courses through universities before the BCS scheme was announced. Java programming has been the most popular option. Around 10 per cent of the students have gone on to take the certification, but Streater said that with the BCS launch, Sun would be promoting certification more.

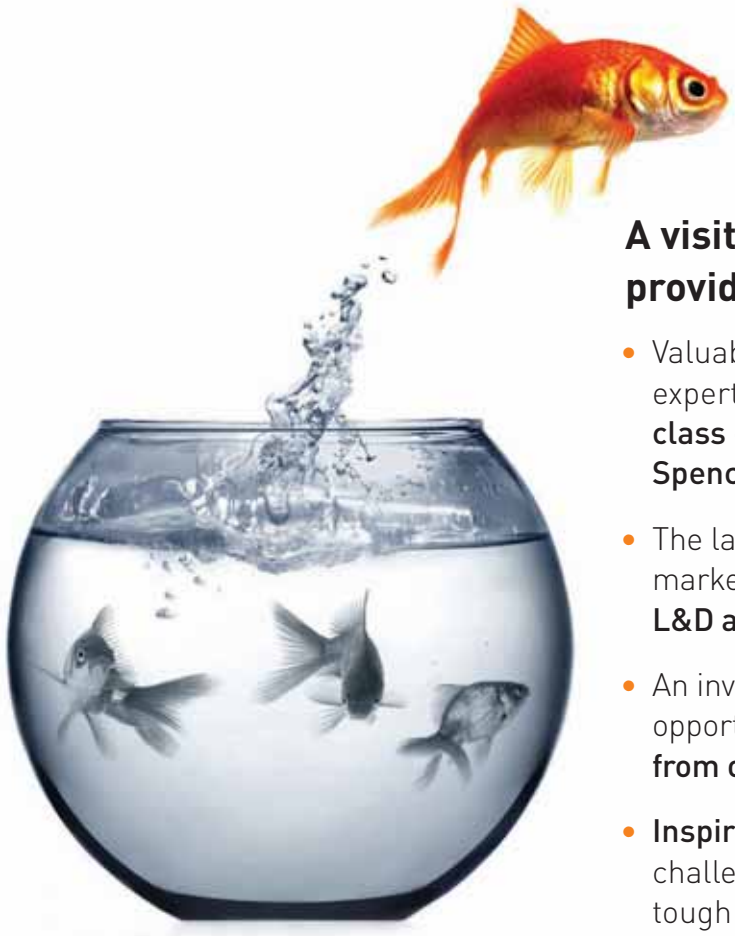
BCS student members will receive heavily discounted rates for select certification tests. They will also have access to free e-Practice certification exams to prepare for Sun certification. These web-based practice exams will include sample test questions, the correct answers with explanations and suggestions for future study.

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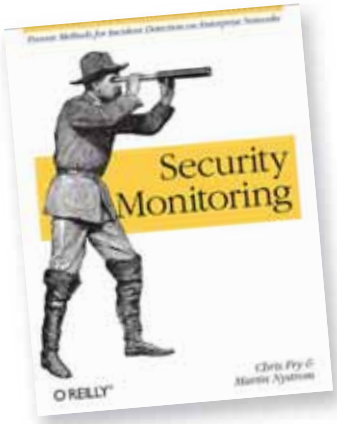
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Security Monitoring

Chris Fry, Martin Nystrom, 246pp

O'Reilly, £34.50

ISBN: 978-0-5965-1816-5

Rating ★★★★★

The authors present this subject in a very logical sequence. The problem with security monitoring is that it can actually be counter-productive if the wrong 'targets' (e.g. systems) and events are monitored; knowing what targets to focus on is one of the first steps to help achieve successful monitoring.

Various methods are discussed to help identify the key targets in an organisation, such as business impact assessment, revenue impact, legal requirements and risk profile.

Having identified the critical targets to monitor, the authors discuss what events should be collected, and the impact (e.g. on performance) of collecting such events.

The authors then discuss how such event feeds can be tuned so that real security events can be detected. This includes events from syslogs and logs from, for example, applications, databases, Windows, network devices, and the use of NetFlow. Finally, now that the events have been identified and turned into something useful, the need to, and ways of, maintaining the whole environment is discussed.

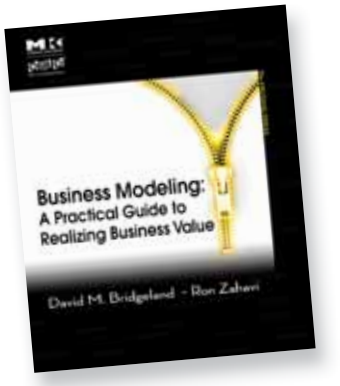
The concluding chapter is aptly titled 'keeping it real' and provides details of case studies and anecdotes where following the advice would have been extremely helpful. It also illustrates that security monitoring cannot be done in a piecemeal fashion.

The book is not intended to be an introduction to network security and tools, or system and network administration, which means that some foundational understanding of these areas are required.

I would say this is an intermediate level book; although some knowledge of network security and tools would be of some benefit to the reader, I do not believe this is essential. Also, it's not a detailed reference guide on some of the tools and techniques that are discussed, although details of further reading are given throughout.

Overall this book is well written and presented in a very clear and logical manner. The authors are very knowledgeable in this field, and the advice given is obviously based on sound experience.

Reviewed by Mehmet Hurer MBCS CITP



Business Modeling: A Practical Guide to Realizing Business Value

David M. Bridgeland and Ron Zahavi, 408pp

Morgan Kaufmann, £25.99

ISBN: 978-0-12-374151-6

Rating ★★★★★

More and more companies and central and local government agencies are recognising the need to create models of their business. But creating good business models is not a simple thing to do – it requires a new set of skills. This book provides in-depth coverage of each of the four distinct modelling disciplines: process modelling; motivation modelling; organisation modelling; and rules modelling. The book helps the reader master them all, and to understand how to effectively combine them. Its key features are that it

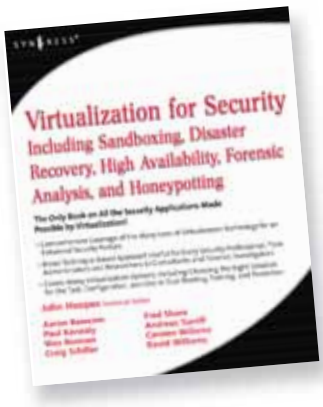
- provides an in-depth coverage of the four business modelling disciplines;
- offers guidance on how to work effectively with subject matter experts, and how to run business modelling workshops;
- details today's 'best practices' for building effective business models, and lists common mistakes that should be avoided;
- describes standards for each business modelling discipline;
- explains how to analyse, simulate and deploy business models;
- includes examples from client work and from a specific example that runs through the book.

This book hooks the reader in from the very first page and is written in such an engaging and entertaining style that it is difficult to put down.

'Business Modeling' makes modelling accessible and understandable to the beginner, while also being of great interest to those involved in systems integration – business analysts, business developers, operations managers and software engineers.

Because the authors have simplified the process of business modelling, this book will not only make an excellent reference text for students of the subject, but will appeal also to an even greater number of readers from the wider business community. This book is exceptional value for money and provides extremely well researched coverage of the theory and practice of business modelling techniques by two of the most experienced practitioners in the industry.

Reviewed by George Williams MBCS CITP



Virtualization for Security John Hoopes et al., 348 pp
Syngress Press, £29.99
ISBN: 978-1-59749-305-5
Rating ★★★★☆

The aim of the book is to guide readers through the journey of using virtualisation for common everyday business issues, and how virtualisation can benefit and enhance the business operations economically and practically.

Each contributing author is an expert in their respective field, with John Hoopes acting as the overall technical editor. The book answers questions such as 'what is virtualisation?' and guides the reader through tasks such as building a Honeypot, configuring a virtual machine, forensics, etc. At the end of each chapter the book provides a brief summary with the key points, a solution fast track, and FAQs. These provide useful reference points for time-pressed individuals.

The book does provide a very good introduction and all the essentials required for the set up, management, running and maintenance of a virtual machine, backed up with further references from the web for the reader requiring additional information. The book is also supplied with a unique electronic access code for the e-book version of the book, downloadable at no extra charge.

However, if you are after an in-depth technical reference book, then this is not for you. The reader needs to be aware that no formal standards in relation to virtualisation presently exist, and if you are operating at different security levels, then virtualisation in itself presents its own issues in relation to security separation.

But virtualisation is an avenue to economically run separate environments for un-trusted users and code, and all of these are adequately covered in the book.

Reviewed by Adam Gostling MBCS CITP



Java SOA Cookbook
Eben Hewitt, 740pp
O'Reilly, £38.50
ISBN: 9-780-59652-072-4
Rating ★★★★★

'A real page turner!' is the kind of statement you might make about a good mystery novel, but in this case it applies equally well to the non-fiction book Java service oriented architecture (SOA) cookbook.

As a subject matter expert in both SOA and Java, my expectations for this book were low. However, I began reading, and every page provided clear, valuable insights into so many areas of SOA that I found it difficult to believe that such a wealth of information could be packed into one book.

It hits all the pain points in developing a service oriented architecture with Java from a technical perspective, covering XML, web services, REST, SOAP, ESB and more.

It would be worth the cover price for this alone, but the author continues providing accurate, well thought out, real world solutions beyond the purely technical; advice on designing your SOA, the roles people play, and business issues.

And then he takes it up a notch and gives more real world wisdom, for example, on the pitfalls of SOA adoption, what works and what doesn't, governance considerations and so forth.

This book assumes solid understanding in XML, Java and related technical areas. And it is a cookbook, so it follows a problem-solution-discussion format.

One final comment, there is little coverage of service development using vendor products such as WebSphere, although WebLogic seems to be covered briefly.

Most of the code uses standard Java SE 6 libraries or open-source applications (with all the latest specifications such as JAX-WS). Many readers may find this refreshing, othersannoying.

In conclusion, for the right reader who is working with Java to establish an SOA, when a book like this crosses your desk, you need just to reach for your wallet, whatever the sticker price. It will become a resource you refer to on an hourly basis.

Reviewed by Adrian Rossi



Running an Agile Software Development Project
Mike Holcombe, 350 pp
Wiley, £53.50
ISBN: 978-0-470-13669-0
Rating ★★★★☆

This excellent book is designed for any IT professional involved with projects embracing the agile methodology and its principles, from novice to advanced practitioner.

Adopting a step-by-step process, this book covers the basic principles and, through the use of a series of well illustrated cases, introduces the reader to the success process of extreme programming and the management of such projects.

The book is geared towards small to medium-sized projects, so the cases discussed are of that size and complexity.

Its price might appear quite steep for such a compact book, but should not be a deterrent for a potential reader looking for specialist literature on agile projects.

Reviewed by Elias Pimenidis MBCS CITP

For further information on these books please contact the sales team at C.B.Learning.
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First class line-up for the IITT National Conference & Exhibition

The IITT has compiled an excellent array of sessions featuring top speakers in the industry for its forthcoming National Training Conference and Exhibition 2009. The event starts on 23 September, with an exhibition and a pre-event conference welcome and networking event. The full line-up of sessions is as follows.

Keynote: Thriving in adversity: doing more with less

Bob Mosher, Global Chief Learning Officer & Strategy Evangelist, Learning Guide Solutions

Some research suggests that up to 80 per cent of learning in the workplace is informal, yet most organisations spend more than 80 per cent of their training budget on formal training.

In these difficult circumstances, it's time to understand and support informal learning, including using online communities and electronic performance support systems (EPSS).

Become an effective L&D manager

Denise Hudson Lawson, Houses of Parliament

Training managers face a wide set of challenges. In this presentation Denise Hudson Lawson shares some of the techniques she uses. Winner of the IITT 2009 Training Manager of the Year award, Denise will lead an interactive session and explain why the first step you take should be out of the training department door.

Building your career in a recession with no budget

Paul Jagger, IBM Learning Development

Even, or especially, during a recession, you should always be thinking and acting to develop your career, says Paul Jagger. In this interactive session, Paul describes practical steps to enhance your career prospects in what might seem like the most unlikely of times, and all at no cost.

Social media and training

Barry Sampson, Web Based Thinking

Is social media actually useful for learning? In this session Barry Sampson goes beyond Facebook and LinkedIn and examines what social media really means and how it can be used for training.

These pages are produced by the Institute of IT Training
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Establishing the value of training
Alan Bellinger, IITT
Now, more than ever, training has to prove its worth. While precise ROI calculations may be complex, it is usually enough to show a good estimate of a training programme's impact, argues Alan Bellinger, and it needn't be that difficult.

Developing the e-learning strategy that's right for you
Claire Line, Lovells LLP
There is no 'one size fits all' solution to creating an e-learning strategy. It will need to target specific business needs and address practical considerations to allow your organisation to make the right decisions, implement technology successfully and encourage adoption. This interactive session takes you through the practical considerations when building your own strategy.

How to succeed with large learning programmes
Gail Sadler, Hilton, and Simon Hannaford, Xerox
Sometimes the training department is asked to take on a training challenge that's far larger than anything it's ever dealt with before. In this panel, speakers who have faced tough challenges share their tips on how they won out, and what they learnt in the process.

Turning classroom trainers into multi-media superstars
Julie Wedgwood, Cheshire ICT Service
How do you take a group of classroom trainers, wary of technology-supported learning, and turn them into enthusiastic multi-media stars? Ask Julie Wedgwood of the Cheshire ICT Service. Winner of two IITT awards in 2009, including Public Sector Training Department of the Year.

A truly integrated training approach
Jim Fingland, City of Edinburgh Council
Every training manager would like to link learning to strategic objectives and to key organisational competencies. Yet not many succeed. Drawing on his private sector experience, Jim Fingland successfuly reconciled conflicting competency frameworks and ensured that a coherent learning programme was put in place at City of Edinburgh Council.

Workshops

Successful freelancing – exploring reality and exploding myths
Julia Emelogu, Maximum Impact
Julia Emelogu, IITT Freelance Trainer of the Year 2009, will share what she's done to be a successful freelancer. She will examine the risks and rewards of freelancing, and tackle some of the issues of working on your own, from the legal detail to establishing a credible online presence and considering how much you can – and should – charge.

Making the most of the National Skills Academy for IT
Genny Dixon, e-Skills UK
Next year the Sector Skills Council for IT, e-skills UK, will be launching its National Skills Academy for IT in partnership with employers in the IT sector. For the first time there will be a single national point where it will be possible not only to find out what high-quality courses are available, but also how they contribute towards development and career goals for the IT professional, and much more.

Techniques for involving, interactive webinars
Donald H Taylor, IITT
Virtual classrooms continue to grow in popularity, partly because their low cost appeals in a recession and partly because they enable new and different forms of training. Applying classroom techniques online, though, just won't work, says Donald Taylor. To make your webinars sing, you'll need to learn a whole new set of skills.

Effective live assessment of your training team
Frank Porter, IITT
Assessment should be an essential and positive part of the regular development of any trainer. Making assessment effective, however, requires a good understanding of how to observe behaviour. Any trainer or manager, says Frank Porter, should be capable of good, objective, live assessment, given some key pointers.

Book a place at:
www.trainersconference.co.uk
or contact Nicki Kettle on nkettle@iitt.org.uk

The event fee includes access to the conference, the exhibition and a welcome reception with special guest speaker. Special rates apply for IITT and BCS members. The event takes place in London at the home of Chelsea Football Club.

IITT webcast agenda

The IITT is pleased to announce its popular IITT Webcast Programme. Full details can be found on the IITT members site: **www.iittconnect.co.uk**

3 September
Mindmapping using iMindMap software
Presented by Tim Fulford

17 September
Six steps to embedding e-learning in your organisation
Presented by Laura Overton



Clive Shepherd

Defining the learning professional

You wouldn't hire an interior designer only to inform them that you've already chosen all the colour schemes and furnishings for every room; you wouldn't engage an accountant and then explain to them how you wanted them to process your figures (unless of course you worked at Enron); you wouldn't employ a fitness trainer and then tell them what to include in your workout; you wouldn't buy a dog and then insist on doing all the barking.

So why, then, do we continue to encounter situations in which line managers tell the guys from L&D exactly what they want in terms of learning interventions, with the expectation that they'll simply take those instructions and run? You'd like a six-hour e-learning package to train customer service staff to sell over the telephone? A two-day workshop to teach every detail of a new company system to all employees, regardless of whether or not they will be using it? A one-hour podcast to teach manual handling skills? No problem. That's what we're here for, to meet your requirements.

Hang on a minute, you're probably thinking. This isn't an encounter between a professional and a client, it's simply order taking.

When asked to jump, a professional doesn't say 'how high?' They say, 'Let's talk about this a little, because jumping may not be the best solution in this situation.' If this tactic doesn't work and the professional is told in no uncertain terms that jumping is the only acceptable option, they have two choices: either they resign and get another job where their role as a professional is valued; or, because resigning is not such a good option in the current job market, they agree to go ahead, but only after having expressed quite clearly in writing that jumping is against their best advice.

Asking the expert

Learning and development isn't common sense; it isn't intuitive. If it was, then experts wouldn't lecture at novices for hours on end; they wouldn't insist on passing on everything they know, however relevant, however comprehensible.

That's why we have L&D professionals, so they can explain, in terms that the lay person can clearly understand, how people acquire knowledge and develop skills, and how best to support this process. If the customer doesn't hear this advice, they will assume that the people in L&D are just the builders, not the architects; and if no-one seems to be offering architectural services, they'll do it themselves.

A learning professional will be pretty savvy when it comes to how people learn at work. They'll know that different situations require different responses, sometimes on-job, sometimes in a classroom, sometimes one-to-one, sometimes using e-content, and often a well-crafted mix of all these. They'll know that adults like to have control over their learning; they want it to be relevant to their current problems, interactive, collaborative and timely. They'll know how difficult it is for significant new learning to take place, how easy it is to overload people with information, and how fearful adults are of embarrassing themselves in front of their peers. They'll know the importance of visualisation, story-telling, questioning and feedback. They wouldn't countenance these principles being over-ridden.

I've heard far too many feeble excuses from L&D people about the reasons why their courses are so dull and un-engaging. 'Don't blame me,' they say, 'It's what the management wanted.' OK, but you've taken the qualifications that enable you to put those magic letters after your name. You've obtained professional status, with the associated salary. I'm sorry, but that's not enough. To be a professional, you also have to behave like one.



A learning professional will know how difficult it is for significant new learning to take place

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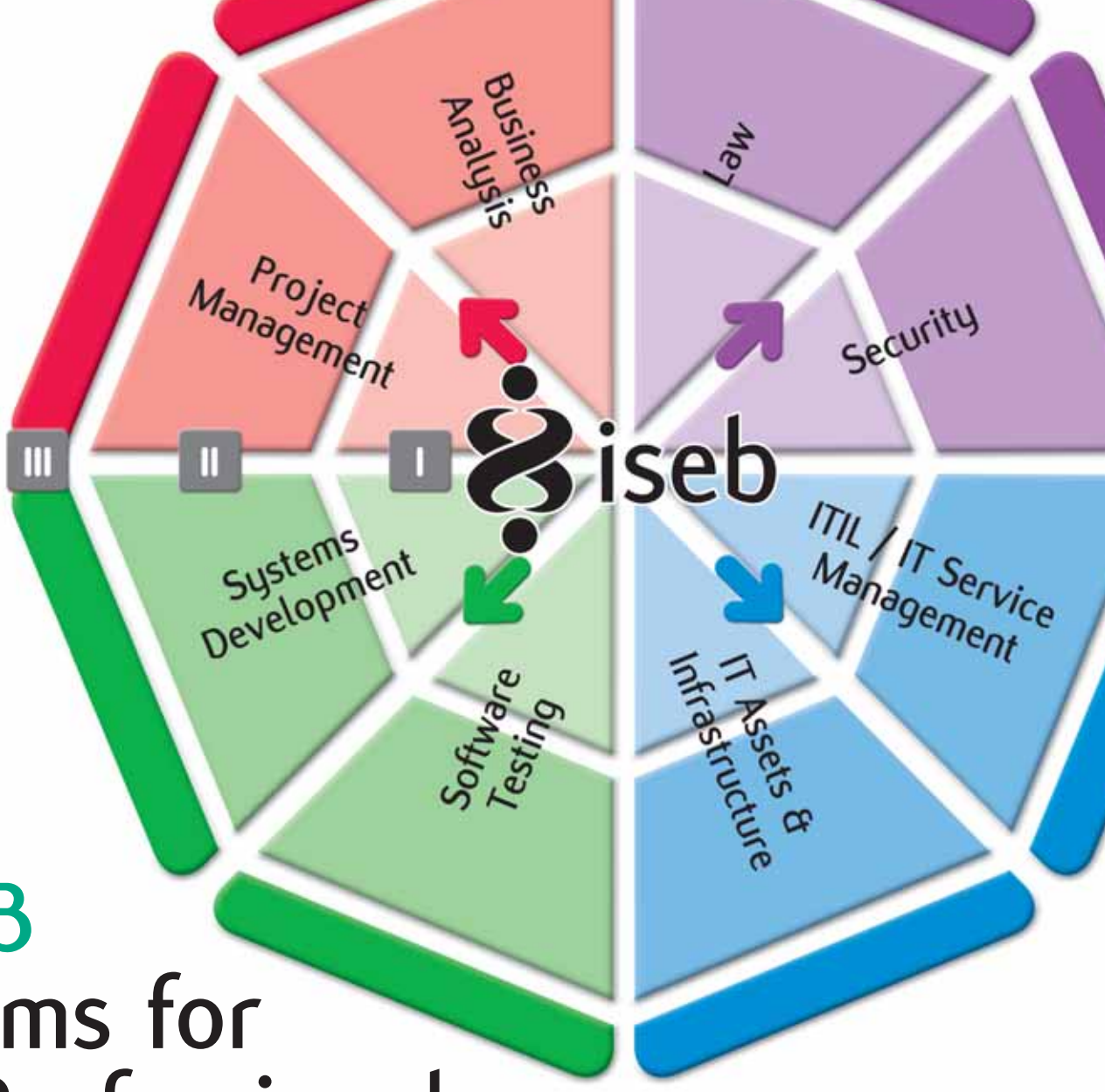
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