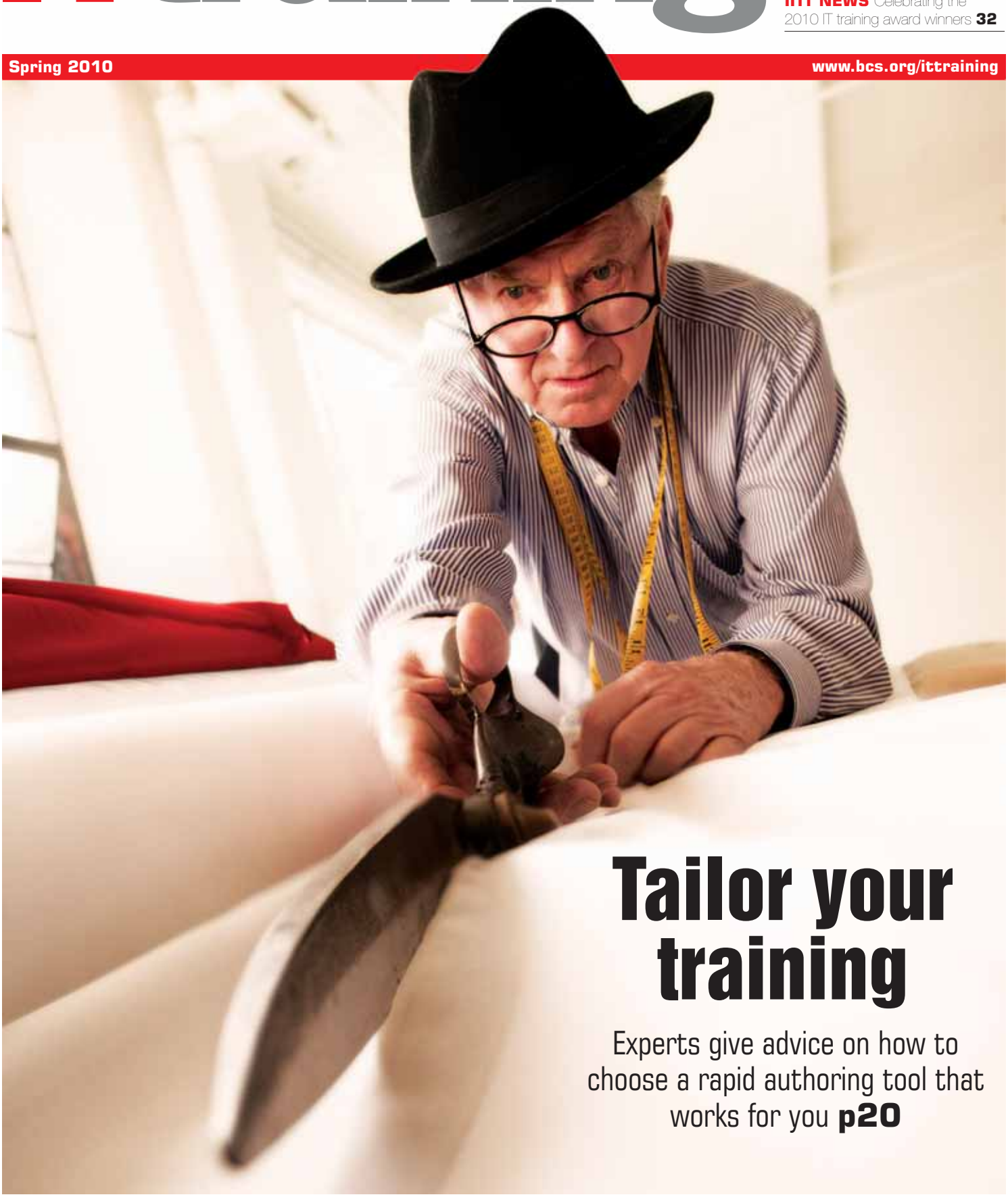
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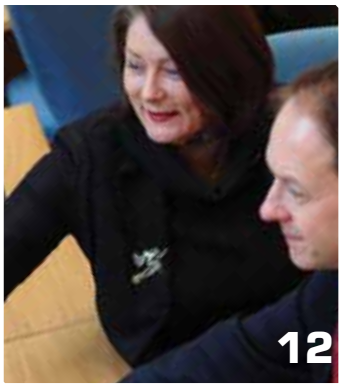
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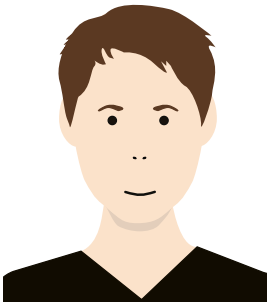
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Editor's intro

Knowing what works for you



I'm writing this editorial having just come back from a day at Learning Technologies. It was great to see that (despite the weaker-than-expected economy growth figures that had been published the day before) there was a real feeling of optimism and buzz about the place, and talking to various people confirmed that - everyone seemed to be excited about the possibilities and challenges of 2010.

With this being the first issue of IT Training of the New Year (and the new decade, for that matter), this is definitely the place to look back at 2009 and also to look ahead at the opportunities of 2010. In his column Clive Shepherd puts his predictions for 2009 to the test, and on page 24 Alan Bellinger presents us with a challenge for 2010: to rethink the traditional training cycle and the L&D approach to measurement and assessment.

2010 also appears to be turning into a big year for Microsoft as their new desktop operating system Windows 7 is taking the IT world by storm. We asked Gary Flood to investigate training and certification options and if it is worth it to pursue them.

While 'doing more with less' will still be one of the key phrases of 2010, there is generally no one right way of achieving this. Don Taylor, in his article on managed learning services finds, for example, that while outsourcing training might be the best option for one company, keeping training in-house might actually be more cost-effective and efficient for another.

Knowing what works best for you in your environment is also key when creating your own e-learning, agree all the rapid authoring tool experts I spoke to in order to find out more about tailor-making your own training. On page 20 we have advice on how to go about choosing the authoring tool that fits your needs.

This issue also takes a look at what exactly defines a 'Training Practitioner in IT'. On page 10 we present the not so straightforward results of a survey conducted by the BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group.

And finally, you can find out more about one of those training practitioners in IT: Denise Hudson-Lawson, Parliamentary ICT Training Manager, (p12) who I had the pleasure to meet and talk to about training last year. And it made me think that enthusiasm and initiative are often the most important ingredients for a successful training experience.

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IT training

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Update

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

'Hot jobs' and skills for IT professionals



'Hot jobs' for experienced IT professionals include business analysts, software testers and developers as well as project office analysts, according to IT-recruiting company Outsource UK. Technical skills such as Cognos and SAP are also very popular, and people with testing, planning, resource management, Prince2 and programme support capabilities are highly sought after.

Nurturing the talent and skill of their IT workforce is among the top three key priorities for 2010 found by a survey by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT. Respondents to the survey were asked to select their top three business issues that, by dealing with, would most help their organisation's IT function to better enable the business in 2010. Almost 40 per cent opted for nurturing talent and skills, 45 per cent chose business change, and two thirds said their top priority was strategy and planning.

Ninety-seven per cent of respondents also said that it will be important to know exactly what skills their IT team possess, and 87 per cent said it was important for them to be able to map the IT skills in their organisation against business requirements.

Continued investment in technology and technology skills are crucial for economic recovery, as research done by e-skills UK, the Sector Skills Council for Business and Information Technology showed. The research also found that employment in the UK's technology workforce has grown despite the recession. However, lack of applicants for technology positions with the required skills, qualifications or experience is a major problem for many employers.

IT research and advisory company Gartner, predicts a **shift in skills needed in IT departments** in order to stay relevant in the current environment. It identified four vital information management roles: legal and IT hybrids, digital archivists, business information manager and enterprise information architects. The company predicts that by the end of 2010, 40 per cent of people who report into IT will have substantial business and non-IT experience.

Improving non-technical skills is also on the agenda of e-skills UK's new Professional Programme. The scheme, which is currently in its pilot phase, was created by employers and e-skills UK and seeks to provide IT professionals with the business skills needed to contribute effectively to business performance. The programme covers topics such as problem solving, leadership, project management and communication skills.

Research by the IT Job Board found that 83 per cent of IT professionals are considering studying for new qualifications, with 37 per cent hoping to improve their chances of getting a job and 29 per cent planning to broaden their skills.

Just under 50 per cent of those surveyed said they would highlight the years of experience they have, and 34 per cent thought it important to have relevant IT qualifications.

The study also showed that all recruiters believe that **highlighting additional IT qualifications** improves the chances of securing a job and those with certifications that supported experience would progress further.

A survey by CompTIA of more than 1,500 IT professionals found that 37 per cent plan to pursue a security certification over the next five years, while 18 per cent were looking to get ethical hacking certifications and 13 per cent forensics certifications. Other popular certifications included green IT, healthcare IT, mobile and software-as-a-service.

Getting training right is essential to reaping the benefits, yet research done by LearningGuide Solutions found that many training initiatives fail to improve performance as employees find it difficult to retain information presented over an extended period of time. The research showed that in as little as three weeks' time after a training event, delegates had lost 80 per cent of what they had learned at a training programme.

A study by KnowledgePool also found that a quarter of all training fails to yield significant performance improvement. The result of the three-year evaluation study revealed that, while 75 per cent of learners experience performance improvement, about a quarter didn't see any significant improvements. Reasons for this lack of improvement were, for example, lack of support from line managers, ill-suited courses and bad timing.

Supplier briefs

Advent Computer Training ceases trading

Advent Computer Training ceased trading after failing to secure funding. The company sent letters to students informing them that they were unable to complete their training and that the company was making arrangements for an insolvency practitioner to be appointed. Up to 6,000 people were affected by the closure.

National Skills Academy for IT to launch in 2010

The government has approved the plan to create a National Skills Academy for IT, supporting it with a £7.9 million grant that will be spread over three years.

The academy is being developed by e-skills UK, together with a number of businesses including Accenture, BA, BT, the Cabinet Office, IBM, Logica, Microsoft, Oracle, Qedis, Sainsbury's and Whitbread.

The academy is scheduled to open in autumn 2010 and seeks to address the development needs of IT professionals.

New ways to keep CompTIA certifications up-to-date

CompTIA has announced a new certification renewal programme that will offer CompTIA certified professionals a range of ways to keep their certifications current without necessarily having to take a new exam.

Candidates who qualify for the programme will be able to earn education credits in order to uphold their current certifications, for example, by passing a bridge exam, teaching, lecturing or presenting on relevant industry topics or participating in non-degree courses or computer-based training.

The programme will be open to those certified in the most current versions of CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+ and CompTIA Security+ and is expected to launch in mid-2010.

New residential accelerate Microsoft training

Training provider QA has launched a range of residential accelerate Microsoft training programmes, Microsoft Accelerated Certified Education (ACE) at its training centre in Milton Keynes.

The programmes cover a number of Microsoft certifications and server products, including Windows server training, SQL server training and Exchange server training.

Parity to establish Centre of Excellence in Northern Ireland

Parity Solutions is looking to establish a Microsoft Centre of Excellence in Belfast after the company received £630,000 of funding from Invest Northern Ireland.

Parity will be responsible for developing information management solutions on the Microsoft platform for both public and private sector companies.

The initiative is expected to create 94 skilled software development and consultancy jobs by 2012.

Green IT exam to be delivered worldwide

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, has signed an agreement with Prometric, a global provider of technology-enabled testing and assessment services, to deliver its new Foundation Certificate in Green IT exam worldwide via Prometric's network of IT test centres.

The qualification is designed to provide candidates with a broad understanding of the regulations, legislation and policies, carbon energy accounting and how to create a green IT strategy.

Redtray acquires CareConnect Learning

Training outsourcing provider Redtray has purchased the business of CareConnect Learning. CareConnect offers NVQs and Skills for Life courses, particularly for the health and social care sector. CareConnect have relocated to Redtray's training centre in Haymarket, London.

City University London launches CIO Masters course

The City University London's interdisciplinary Centre for Information Leadership is launching a Masters in Information Leadership course, which aims to equip senior IT professionals in the library and information services professions with technological, commercial and managerial expertise.

The course is aimed at mid-career professionals seeking to progress to CIO level or other leadership positions such as Chief Technology Officer, Business Change Director, Knowledge Director or Chief Librarian.



Alan Bellinger

Collaboration - down to us?

The last few years have seen a tremendous growth in collaboration, and I believe that L&D should play a strong role in it as it requires cross-function facilitation and is directly related to skills gain across the organisation.

I'm going to challenge you with two questions. Firstly, what stage is your organisation at in terms of the collaboration maturity model? And secondly, what contribution has your L&D department made to getting it to that stage?

I've based the scores on a typical collaboration maturity model. There are six stages in all, and your points score equals the stage you've reached.

Stage 0 - dormant

At this stage, the organisation has yet to experience any real form of collaboration. It is likely to be very hierarchical, and there'll be a high level of control from the centre.

Stage 1 - communication

This is the start of the collaborative process as staff are focusing on the interchange of content.

Stage 2 - cooperation

This moves to the point at which the parties collaborating are operating in parallel; rather than just recognising feedback, it is incorporated in the final approach.

Stage 3 - coordination

The key differentiator between this stage and stage 2 is that collaboration is regular and rhythmic as opposed to irregular and intermittent.

Stage 4 - collaboration

Collaborators tend to pull content as needed rather than push content unnecessarily; there's a real shift from 'batch-&-push' to 'flow & pull'.

Stage 5 - harmonisation

Collaboration becomes sustainable, conflict is creative and both mutual respect and trust are paramount.

L&D role

And now we get to the crunch point - collaboration is likely to happen in most organisations irrespective of whether L&D gets involved, but L&D can fast-track the organisation through the stages of the model. So here's the basis for scoring this one:

0 - no involvement;
1 - we've paid some lip service;
2 - we've provided some help;
3 - we've provided advice and guidance throughout (and it's been heeded!);
4 - we're the Community of Practice facilitators;
5 - it wouldn't have happened without us.

So how did you do? Do email me your scores at **abellinger@gmail.com** and I'll let you know what I get in the next issue. I'll need your name, company and scores, but I'll ensure complete anonymity (unless you tell me otherwise).

BCS Information & Technology Training Specialist Group

Making change work through engaging users

The first I&TTSG meeting of 2010 on 13 January was a joint meeting with the Business Change Specialist Group.

The meeting was jointly hosted by representatives from each specialist group and opened with a lively group activity. When asked 'What is the biggest change you have seen in your career?' the group that had been in the profession for more than 30 years had a philosophical answer of 'everything and nothing', while the other groups saw changes ranging from 'everyone having access to a PC' to 'IT being more business-focussed'.

Paul Jagger of IBM delivered a presentation entitled 'Learning is the people side of change', in which he discussed, amongst other things, results of research done by IBM that showed that of the top 10 barriers to successful business transformation, five are related to change, communication and learning. No wonder, then, that the key to success is engaging learners.

Paul Turner of BIS Skills delivered a presentation entitled 'Ensuring the end customer is not forgotten during business change', focussing on behaviour as a key element of business change. This interactive presentation also allowed attendees to vent their customer service spleens as 'Grumpy Old Professionals'.

There are plans to re-run the event later in the year for those that were not able to join us due to the adverse weather on the day.

I&TTSG new committee member Sue Bird

Profile

Sue has been involved in learning and development for nearly 20 years, including learning strategy, design, delivery, management and innovation for organisations across Europe and the USA.

She has also designed and managed graduate development programmes for a wide range of leading companies. She is currently the European Practice Manager for Learning Solutions at Wipro Technologies.

Sue is interested in the use of web 2.0 and mobile technologies for innovative learning delivery, the development of virtual communities of practice and the use of serious games in learning.

Sue has been a member of BCS and the I&TTSG for many years, and a move back to the South of England last year gave her the opportunity to become more involved and to volunteer for the committee.

Sue lives in Buckinghamshire and lists canal boating and playing with technology amongst her hobbies.



On the ground

How do you manage a group that is self-learning in a workshop environment?



Self-learning in workshops has been proven to produce effective and long-term results as well as being a great deal of fun. I have found that the self-learning workshop method is an easier way to effectively teach a group of users, including those of mixed abilities.

Allowing users to learn in their own individual way is the key to success when it comes to self-learning in a workshop. There are various types of intellectual ability, and some of the more relevant ones for adult learning in IT are:

- linguistic intelligence;
- logical-mathematical intelligence;
- spatial intelligence
- bodily-kinesthetic intelligence;
- interpersonal intelligence.

The above types of intelligence can be used to extrapolate the different learning styles from the users in the following way:

- explain why certain skills are taught;
- task-oriented instead of memorising. Tasks should be common tasks, used in their everyday job;
- acknowledge different learning levels and experience, i.e. pairing users into groups with a mixture of weak and strong candidates. This will promote independent learning, confidence and understanding;
- allow adults to learn from their mistakes. Mistake-driven learning helps users to try things out without thinking they will cause any damage or delete files, hence promoting confidence in the user to play around with the system.

Hopefully this brief overview has given you food for thought. Generally a combination of both conventional and self learning strategies in workshops will produce the required results quickly and efficiently.

Christine Dorman, Ideal

Next issue

How do you create joint responsibility for course success?

Breaking developments

Can web 2.0 tools be used effectively for training?



Tech workers have historically been apt to seize any opportunity to add new skills and credentials to their CV. This desire to stay at the crest of the learning curve is even more pronounced during times of recession.

Whether through blogs or tweets, RSS or e-communities, wikis or podcasts, individuals use these tools to link to one another based on common interests, to share knowledge and to learn from one another.

At the organisation level, early adopters have found that blogs, social networking and customer forums offer the biggest 'bang for buck' among web 2.0 tools in terms of measurable benefits.

E-learning made possible by web 2.0 tools can easily go beyond use in straightforward, one-dimensional training scenarios. One solution is to use tests based on the model of confidence-based learning, which measures a learner's knowledge quality by determining both the correctness of the individual's knowledge and confidence in applying this knowledge. This combination helps to identify the difference between what the individual thinks they know and what they actually know.

Basing a test on this model helps to measure confidence and knowledge at the same time, which 'punishes' people who take the test when guessing wrong – unlike traditional multiple choice scenarios. If someone answers a question quickly, but gets it wrong, dynamic content delivery will trigger different questions covering the same area until confidence and knowledge are equally highly balanced.

Terry Erdle, CompTIA

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

Trainers: this is your page – please 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

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

Next issue

How do you best incorporate multimedia in your training sessions?



Defining the IT training profession

How exactly do you define the role of a training practitioner in IT? Is it only someone who, as part of their role, trains people in IT or are there a lot more facets to the job? A recent survey by the I&TTSG found that the answer is anything but straightforward.

The results of the recent BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group (I&TTSG) survey have sparked a lively debate on how precisely to define a training practitioner in IT.

The survey, which attracted nearly three hundred responses, highlighted the wide range of roles that respondents felt could be included in this area and, equally, considerable differences of opinion as to what should not be classified as a training practitioner's role. More than one third said they didn't consider themselves training practitioners, yet said that they spend at least 40 per cent of their time sharing their knowledge or skills with others - which, for many of us, would be an accurate definition of training!

Equally interesting was the fact that 55 per cent of respondents who actually belong to the I&TTSG didn't consider themselves training practitioners either.

The survey highlighted the wide range of roles [of the training practitioner in IT]

Jooli Atkins

There was a variety of reasons quoted for not being a training practitioner, for example, that training doesn't form part of their official role or title or isn't a full-time activity for them, or that their role is focused in-house only and doesn't involve teaching external parties. Several explained that their training activity is not classroom-based, but is less formal, such as acting as a mentor or delivering learning on an ad-hoc basis, or that

they teach IT at a basic level only.

One recurring comment was that respondents didn't consider themselves a practitioner as they held no formal training qualifications and one person felt they were still learning to do it - as doubtless we all do at some time!

'When we sat down as a committee to consider the question of what constitutes a training practitioner in IT, we realised that it would be very hard to define because even a small group of us each had a variety of backgrounds, qualifications and skills.

'I was delighted, therefore, by the response to our survey from both inside and outside of training as it gave us a representation of our role from a wide perspective and helped us to identify the needs of a very diverse group and also highlighted what we contribute to the profession,' said Jooli Atkins of Matrix FortyTwo, Chair of the I&TTSG.



The response to our survey helped us identify the needs of a very diverse group

Jooli Atkins

Looking at qualifications

When it comes to qualifications in the field, there was no one type that was the clear leader and a wide range was mentioned. These included vendor certifications, HR-based qualifications such as CIPD, BCS Chartered status, NVQs, more academic awards such as degrees, qualified teacher status and higher and further education qualifications as well as company training accreditations such as TAP, ELF and LFT. However, almost half (49 per cent) of those who responded didn't have any formal credentials in the field. The range of continuing professional development (CPD) activities was equally broad.

Product knowledge and professional certifications featured strongly again, but there was also mention of soft skills and management training and of formal academic study. Many people included attending conferences and networking events and there were frequent references to reading (books, journals and magazines) and web browsing. However, 54 per cent didn't detail any CPD activities - several of those who commented unsurprisingly quoted lack of time as the reason.

The breadth of training qualifications and accreditations available in this area can be very confusing for training practitioners, especially as very few of those available are aimed directly at those of us working in IT. If we're to be taken seriously as an integral - and equal - part of the IT profession, there's a clear need for well-defined career paths for training experts, which will lead to career progression and professional recognition. After all, the people who build, maintain and use IT systems are every bit as important to the ongoing success of a business as the hardware, software and infrastructure that support the systems and it's our role to equip those people to be efficient, effective and engaged with the technologies.

Equipping to do the job

With the diversity of job roles and people that make up the IT training community, it can be very difficult for those outside of L&D to fully appreciate the value that training practitioners in IT can add to a business. So how can we define the role and how best can we support those in IT training with the development opportunities, the professional community and the recognition that their role deserves?

The I&TTSG is working to build recognition of the training role as an integral part of IT and to help develop suitable pathways to professional recognition, including routes to Chartered status for members of BCS whose primary role is in knowledge transfer and development.

During the BCS Training Practitioner Week, which took place in February, five different training practitioners in IT were profiled to show the breadth and variety of the role. Currently, two of the SG committee members, Paul Jagger and Jooli Atkins, are also going through the process of becoming an assessor for CITP in order to support training practitioners in IT wanting to achieve CITP status as they have done.

Gaining recognition

The committee also hopes to gain more recognition through the SFIA framework. Currently, L&D is categorised under the heading of procurement and management support, whereas business change would be the more appropriate category. Although it is understood that the categories are only 'headings' and should not be considered definitive or limiting in any way, it is seen as an indication of the perceived lack of value of training in IT by not including it as an element of business change. 'If these are just headings, then move project management out of the business change category and see what response you get from the PM community,' said Paul Jagger, Business Area Manager for IBM Learning Development.

The SG is also working with the IITT to clarify the career path for a training practitioner in IT. Too often trainers feel that IT training is something they do at the beginning of their career and then grow out of it by moving into leadership and management training in HR.

'BCS and the IITT will work together to ensure that IT training provides a career path that means people will want to stay and be proud to say that they work in IT training,' said Colin Steed, Chief Executive of the IITT.

Get involved

Please send news about what you have done to make a difference in your organisation to **jooli.atkins@matrix42.co.uk** and Jooli will help to promote this through her BCS blog.



Peer-to-peer training

Photography by Catherine Bebbington. Parliamentary Copyright.





Parliamentary ICT Training Manager Denise Hudson-Lawson talks about her work in the world of politics and why she is so passionate about training.

How did you get to where you are now?

You know when you have that one job at school that you never want to be? Well, I never wanted to be a teacher. My first job was with what was HM Customs & Excise in the VAT office. One day, a box turned up in the office - it was one of those dumb terminals that you can run a report on. It was delivered with a book, and my manager said to me 'you're young, you show us how it works'. So I taught myself how to work the machine, then showed the VAT inspectors how to do it, and found that I actually quite liked it. From them on, I moved through various businesses, setting up training teams, and moving on to the next. And now I've been in training for 25 years.

I didn't get a university degree and I didn't have a technology background. I'm about 90 per cent self-taught. I think you get out of things what you put into them. I was really lucky that I always had managers who saw potential and supported me. I found that a good manager is someone who doesn't pigeonhole people, and that if you believe in yourself, others will believe in you too.

So what exactly does your current role involve?

I'm the Parliamentary ICT Training Manager, managing a team of eight people. I'm responsible for ensuring that end-users are trained on MS Office and also to work with project teams if new applications or software are deployed. We do classroom training, but also one-to-one training and a lot of floor walking, which is very popular. I'm also an account manager, which means looking after the finance and HR department in the House of Lords. This role is an escalation point and liaison between the business and PICT. You have to be a 'can do' person and not be afraid to ask difficult questions should issues arise. The role is roughly 90 per cent training manager and 10 per cent account manager.

I love getting involved in things. I enjoy meeting people and networking

Denise Hudson-Lawson

Can you describe what a normal day looks like for you?

No two days are the same for me, which makes this job so interesting. Unlike in commercial training, anything can jump out. Weekly manager meetings are the only regular thing, really. There is a lot of one-to-one coaching, operational issues and customer-service issues. I make an effort to go out to the business. I ask myself 'who do I need to see?' and 'can I do anything to help?' Once the business trusts you, they come to you. It's really all about being a people-person.

And what type of training do you offer?

We provide training for everyone in Parliament, and we are also an authorised ECDL centre. We do a lot of floor-walking, especially at the moment through the current Vista deployment. It is all about providing in the 'moment of need'. Normally, people tend to ask the colleague sitting next to them if they can't do

something. If there's a trainer in the vicinity, they can ask them directly. This also gives the trainer the opportunity to offer suggestions on other aspects of the software as well. We also provide a drop-in centre for MP's and Peers with a trainer on duty throughout the day.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love getting involved in things. I enjoy meeting people and networking and I enjoy talking. I love the social aspect of my job. I also love the fact that my previous experience of IT operations and customer service is called on. Using my networking skills and experience I am able to draw people together towards a common aim.

So what would you say makes a good trainer?

Anyone who aspires to be a trainer needs to be a people person. That doesn't mean that everyone has to be the same, as we need different qualities. A good trainer has to be knowledgeable about how people learn, be passionate about helping people help themselves to learn and be able to listen and deliver a solution. Good trainers are people who think outside the box and understand what the business is saying. Adult learners are very different to children learners – they forget how exciting everything is. A good trainer is really a seven-year-old child in an adult – excited about learning.

Is training MPs and Peers any different from working for other companies or organisations?

It is different in some ways, but it's very difficult to put your finger on it. It took me a while to get used to how Parliament does things, for example, having to deliver training in small chunks because of the division bell, as Members can be called out to vote for or against a resolution at any time, or having to fit things in between recesses, but it is really getting less like that. Parliament now works very much like a business, with business plans and competency project management.

In the outside world, you would report directly to the senior management and probably have a budget to do with what you want. Here, I need the buy-in from both Houses - it's like putting in a tender - and if there's something that's radically different, we need to produce a paper, which is then reviewed by the board, and both Houses are able to suggest changes.

So what do you think about e-learning?

We are currently developing a form of e-learning, and I do think it has a place in regulatory requirements and as a supportive tool. I once had to do training on regulatory requirements, running seminars for 1,200 people with PowerPoint presentations and shed loads of pizza - a project like that would have benefitted from e-learning!

However, e-learning for e-learning's sake? Absolutely not. It has to fit business requirements, and classroom and e-learning are completely different styles. e-learning, for it to work, has to be short and interactive. If you have a 20 minute e-learning session you lose people - I'd say two minute segments at the most. It has to be pertinent to what individuals need and what is most appropriate for them.

What do you consider to be one of your greatest achievements in your current job?

I think it's that I managed to change the way people think about training and to build up a team that meets business needs and provides innovative service. People now know who we are. There has been a huge change in the way people perceive training, but I know I couldn't have done it without my team and my manager.

One of the most important things about training is to make it fun... It's like telling a child a fairy story

Denise Hudson-Lawson

Tell me about one of your most memorable experiences in your job

I'd say that was the 'ball of string'! I used this when we did some customer service training, looking at changing focus and improving soft skills. We created a mini programme to help Operations understand how a customer feels when they log a call. In the final role-play, we gave staff cards that had the various job titles on them, for example, trainer, analyst, director and so on. One person read out the call timeline, and the ball of string was passed on to whichever person took up the call. I was standing in the middle with all the string around me, and then asked the delegates if they now understood how being passed around felt like for the customer. It was as if a light had been switched on - it made the experience very visual.

Last year, you won the 'Training Manager of the Year' Gold Award. How did it feel?

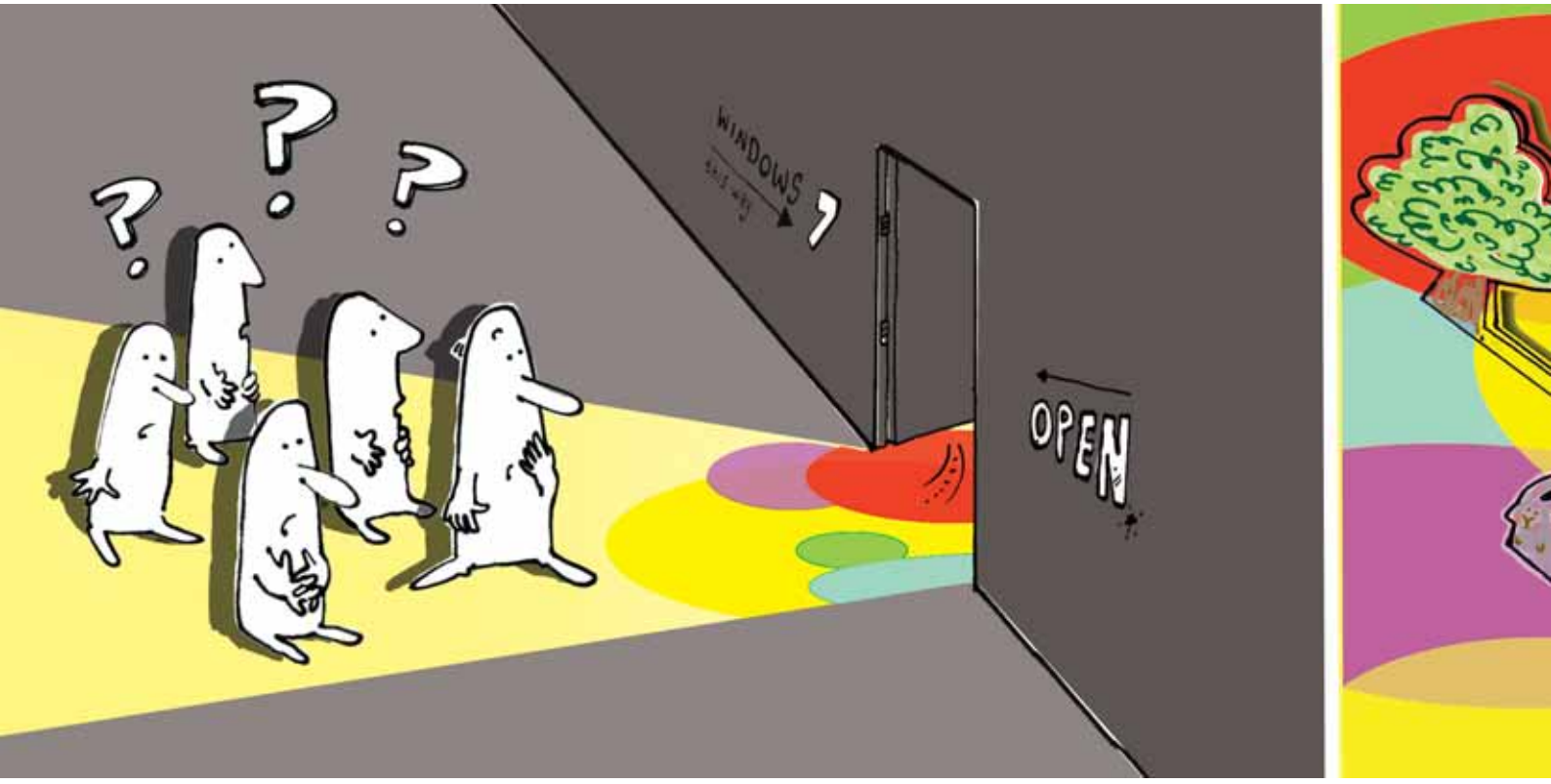
It was a shock, and I actually went into 'Gwyneth Paltrow mode' - even though I'm not really 'girlie' at all! Our team had already won bronze at the point when the training manager awards were announced, and I didn't expect it at all. Going up on the stage was probably one of the most surreal moments in my life. I couldn't believe it.

Your advice on how to provide good and effective training?

One of the most important things about training is to make it fun. If the trainer sounds as if they're bored, why should people be encouraged to listen and learn? Always deliver as if it's the first time, always use appropriate anecdotes, use things around you to illustrate, use story-telling and gestures - it's like telling a child a fairy story.

Exploring Windows 7 training

The launch of Windows 7 brings not only a new operating system, but also new training and certification opportunities. Gary Flood takes a look at the new market.



According to IDC, by the end of 2010 around seven million IT professionals globally will be working in one way or another with Microsoft Windows 7, the latest iteration of the core Microsoft desktop operating system, launched with much fanfare and slick marketing last October. Great news for Microsoft's investors, one might say: what's in it for the IT professional themselves?

Ground for scepticism preventing one from dancing the Macarena about Windows 7 is of course the ongoing economic recession and a tough employment market in IT. Is there really enough market drive in Windows 7 to make it worthwhile to get trained – let alone certified - in the technology?

You won't be surprised to learn Microsoft very much thinks so. 'The general consensus from the market is that we've got this one right,' says Chris Pirie, General Manager of Worldwide Marketing and Sales for Microsoft Learning, the company's global education and training arm, based at Microsoft HQ in Seattle. 'According to IDC, 20 per cent of the entire global IT workforce will be using Windows 7 by the end of 2010, with it being used on a wide variety of devices, from desktops to thin clients to mobile devices and beyond. Windows 7 will be used by a customer base from schoolkids to consumers to small to the largest enterprises. And many organisations will be migrating to it, some from Vista, but of course many from XP – great market momentum is what we are seeing around its take-up.'

Pirie and his team have put significant investment into a range of training packages for the IT professional (as well as the home user/consumer) to support Windows 7 adoption. They have launched, for instance, the so-called Career Assist package, available through Microsoft's 1,500 strong roster of Microsoft CPLS (Certified Partners for Learning Solutions, i.e. training providers it works with to deliver training on its product set). This is a special offer - running only until June - which includes instructor-led training, a certification exam voucher and a fully-licensed copy of Windows 7 Ultimate.

> **The general consensus from the market is that we've got this one right**
>
> Chris Pirie, Microsoft Learning

Professional development

Microsoft has meanwhile also unveiled its Career Campaign, which provides guidance, career paths, special offers and certifications for common IT job

roles performed using its software. Through customisable learning plans and special offers, it says, IT professionals can train to get certified on Windows Server, Windows client technologies, Microsoft Exchange Server and Microsoft SQL Server. The aim is to help individuals 'chart their course from their current skill level to their desired job role and skill level, from beginner through experts,' with a range of time-limited and changing special offers to help you meet your career goals.



First-hand experience

So does Windows 7 training work? Jay Ferron, an IT professional, Microsoft Most Valuable Professional and a member of the STEP programme (for Springboard Series Technical Expert Panel, a community that was built up by Microsoft around Windows 7 to drive awareness of its value), notes: 'I am very happy with not just the content but the structure these days of the Microsoft certification story.

'When the MCSE [Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer] was abolished a couple of years ago there was a lot of moaning, but the problem with the MCSE was that it was too general,' explains Jay, who's also a MCITP (Microsoft Certified IT Professional) Consumer Support Technician and a MCITP Enterprise Support Technician in Windows 7 and has worked with a number of the US' top corporations and written books on Microsoft technologies, plus is very active in the Microsoft Certified Professional community. 'I don't want to sit through a five-day course on something if only two hours of it is relevant to my job and that's what was missing from Microsoft training before – it wasn't job-role specific. I am glad to see that's finally changed.'

Before, Microsoft training wasn't very job-role specific. I am glad to see that's finally changed

Jay Ferron, Interactive Security Training

Jay is happier these days, he says, to 'take this course and that exam, or send my team on them' to achieve specific qualifications that he feels demonstrate real competence in the actual jobs people need to be hired for. 'That to me means the piece of paper I get at the end is valid and shows I can do something real.'

And did the content for Windows 7 do that? 'The training for 7 is pretty much close on,' he thinks. 'If you do the course I think you will pass the test at the end and you can really get a sense of the power of the OS this way, too.'

From XP to Windows 7

Germany-based Rolf Masuch, a MCTS (Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist) in Configuration of Windows 7 and an MCITP in Enterprise Desktop Administration, with credits towards becoming an MCITP in Enterprise Desktop Support Technician for 7, seems to be equally happy with the product. 'I like the new OS very much. I think it will gain good market share and though I liked Vista too, using it you just do start to feel that 7 is better. I think there's a genuine hunger for this out there too and so adoption will be strong and there will be a big replacement market.'

In terms of the Windows 7 education material, Rolf, who is Product Manager for IT Services and Consulting at his firm, has some warning for the unwary here.



'I found it quite different – in a good way – from the equivalent in XP or Vista,' he says. 'At first glance it seemed a lot less "technical". There was much less registry tweaking. It's then that you realise this is a better way to approach things – there is a lot of technical detail once you start drilling down, but you start with a real emphasis on getting the bigger picture and how to configure the OS, very interactively, right from the start. I'd say to IT professionals coming at this for the first time to read the materials very closely to get the most out of them.'

Career opportunities

But is there a real financial incentive to do all that hard work – to make the push to get things like a new job-specific MCITP piece of paper, say? One source to help with the bigger picture is MSEmploy, a training and recruitment portal that launched in the UK last August and links companies in the Microsoft partner network with IT professionals skilled in the technology who are looking for jobs or training (it lists over 2,000 courses available from Microsoft training providers, for instance).



The message in today's market and economy, surely, is that to suceed you need to become a true lifelong learner

Chris Pirie
Microsoft Learning

'Certification is key in an economy in decline like ours is at the moment,' says Rick Tolfrey, Partner Engagement Manager at its London office. 'Experience is still very important, of course it is, but we are seeing relevant certs as being of great interest to our audience, who value it as it in turn helps their credibility and accreditation with Microsoft. The message is you absolutely have to invest in training to get on in this market.'

And Windows 7 specifically? 'I see a clear groundswell of interest, with a lot of engineers and MCSEs contacting us already asking about what they have to do to get skilled up. We've also run a couple of information events about it recently that were massively oversubscribed. There is definite interest out there.'

So there does seem to be opportunity around Windows 7 and the chance to get some qualifications that might not just be relevant to the technology for a change – they might help you get a better job. Surely we need to leave the final word on all things training and Windows 7 related to Microsoft itself, in the form of Pirie, who reminds us: 'By joining the five million strong community of certified Microsoft professionals you are proving you know something useful.

'The message in today's market and economy, surely, is that to succeed you need to become a true lifelong learner: and that, let's be frank, no-one is ever going to care so much about your career as you are. We'd like to think we are a close second!'

To find out more

The main Microsoft micro-site for all things Windows 7 training and education related
www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/training/windows.aspx

Details of the Microsoft Career Assist Package, where you get support towards a Windows 7 certificate and also a free copy of the software
www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/offers/Career.aspx#classroom

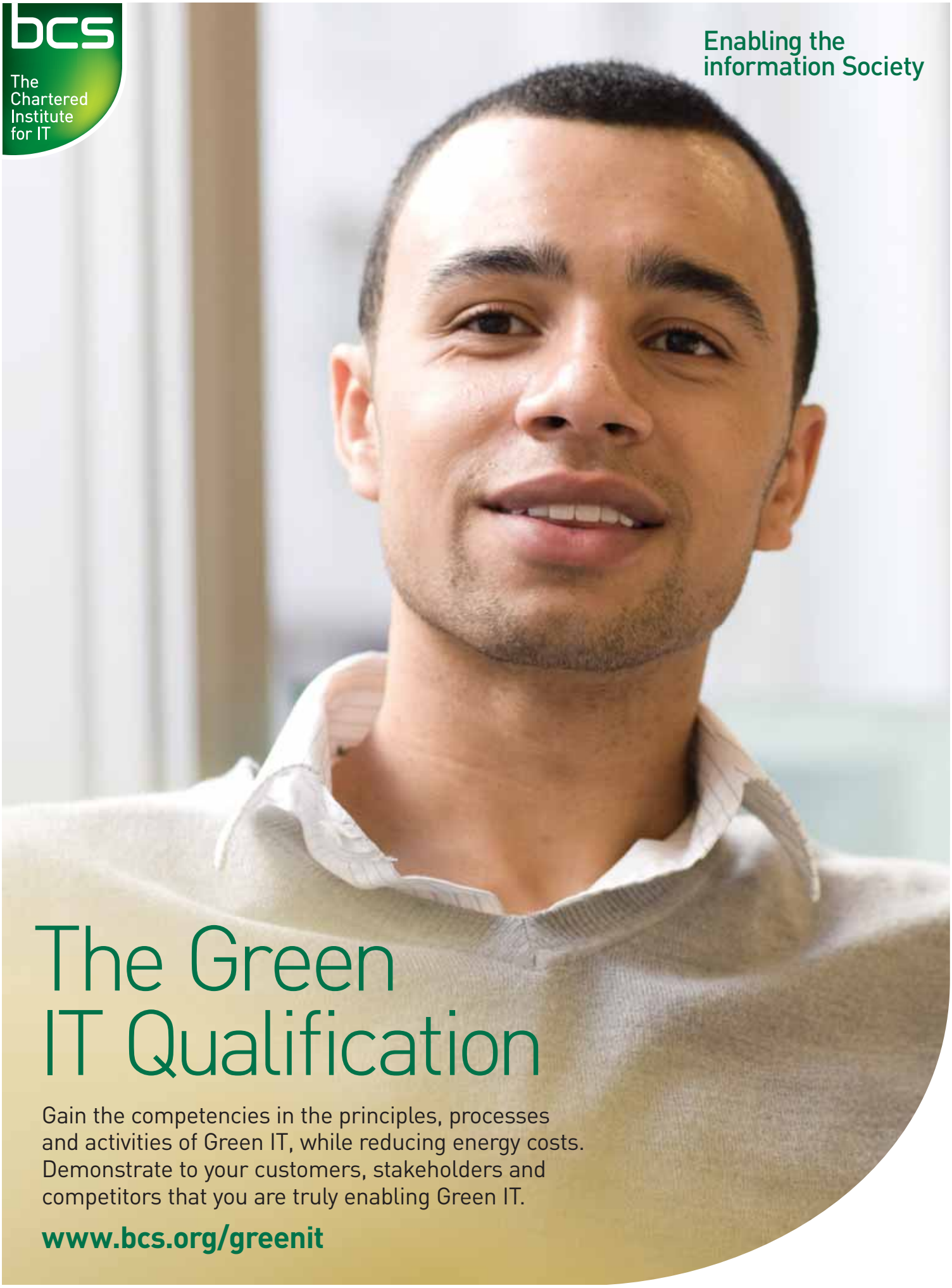
You may find studying the materials from the Microsoft 'Springboard' Website for getting started with 7 useful
http://technet.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows/dd361745.aspx

Find out if you'd be helped by the Microsoft Career Campaign here
www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/start/start-career.aspx

More on Jay Ferron's company, Interactive Security LLC
www.interactivesecuritytraining.com His blog **http://blog.mir.net/**

Details of Ralf Masuch's company
www.ABSC.de

MSEmploy, a service for matching Microsoft IT professionals with training and Microsoft partner companies for employment
www.msemploy.co.uk/Default.aspx


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Green IT

IT, while sometimes decried as one of the big perpetrators of carbon emissions, has also great potential to reduce carbon footprints and encourage savings. Two recently launched ISEB qualifications on sustainable IT look to enable people to 'go green' in IT.

In recent years, IT has developed as an effective area for reducing carbon footprints, improving a company's green credentials and adding a competitive edge to the business. In order to maximise the potential of a company's technology when creating a greener organisation, one of the first steps is to get staff on board and help them understand the environmental impact of their day-to-day use of IT – starting from things as simple as reducing printing or switching off their monitors at the end of the day.

Green IT goes a lot further - from knowing how to maximise energy efficiency and reduce power and cooling costs while at the same time maintaining a high level of IT service, to understanding how virtualisation software can reduce hardware costs and office space.

'To gain the many benefits that green IT offers, organisations need to ensure that they have qualified individuals who know how to deliver measurable business benefits, not just financial, but also the enhanced brand and reputational benefits that being energy efficient means,' explains Richard French, Product Manager Green IT at BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT.

A new qualification, the ISEB Foundation Certificate in Green IT, which has recently been launched, covers these and many other aspects of green IT, aiming to help delegates understand how to combine cost-effectiveness and resource-consciousness. 'It is the only formally accredited green qualification in the UK at the moment,' says Mark O'Neill, Senior Business & Strategy Manager for Professional Best Practice, QA. 'Having a formal qualification is a real bonus for the people coming on the course. It adds value and helps credibility.'

The course, which was developed by BCS and QA, covers areas such as understanding the relevant terminology, establishing a green IT policy to compliment the organisation's overall environmental strategy, understanding the benefits that green IT will bring to the organisation, along with identifying green IT-related regulations, legislations and standards that impact organisations.

The course helped me to structure my thoughts and understand what the legal and moral implications were

Cara Thorpe, PA Consulting Group

'The key message is to help delegates to understand - from an environmental perspective - the benefits of sustainable IT. The course highlights the economic, environmental, political and legal aspects that you need to consider as an organisation, for example, in terms of accountability to stakeholders,' explains Mark.

In many ways, most of the people who have been taking the course so far are already 'on board', he says, but they find that the qualifications helps them when pushing a green IT agenda in their organisation. Mark added 'regardless of whether an individual is driven by a personal agenda to be more environmentally aware, organisations will have no choice but to adopt green IT practices. As new legislation comes into effect over the next 6 to 18 months, such as the Climate Change



Bill, companies will have to adopt sustainable working practices, if they are to meet not only their environmental obligations, but legal ones too.'

The three-day course is a mixture of presentations, aligned to modules, discussion and hands-on exercises. 'I find myself more as a facilitator than a course presenter,' says Mark. 'We heavily encourage delegate participation, and we want delegates to share their knowledge and best practice. Also, it is an opportunity to build a network with like-minded people from a wide range of different industries.'

One of the delegates, Cara Thorpe, Business Engagement Leader, Group Systems at PA Consulting Group, attended the course as her company hadn't anything formal on green IT and she had been given the task to look into it. 'The course helped me to structure my thoughts and understand what the legal and moral implications were, as well as providing some ideas,' she recounts.



Having a formal qualification is a real bonus for the people coming on the course. It adds value and helps credibility

Mark O'Neill, QA

'Immediately after the course I wrote a green IT policy and worked with our procurement team to ensure they are "thinking green" whilst dealing with suppliers. I found examples of projects and BAU activities which can promote the energy (as well as cost) savings, for example, consolidating our servers, implementing new energy and paper efficient printers and recycling and re-using laptops.'

Since taking the course, Cara has organised a number of podcasts to showcase the green initiatives to PA staff as well as clients. 'The course was very practical and the lecturer was excellent, enabling me to take action as soon as I returned to the office,' she says.

Tackling energy consumption

In April 2010, the UK Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC), the UK's first mandatory carbon trading scheme, will come into effect, aiming to reduce the current level of carbon by 1.2 million tonnes of CO2 by 2020. The scheme is expected to affect around 5,000 UK organisations, both in the public and the private sector.

With data centres being one of the main IT-related energy consumers, improving their energy-efficiency will contribute significantly to reaching this aim.

However, many industries still don't realise the potential cost and energy savings hidden in their data centres. In an interview with the Daily Telegraph (8 October 2009), John Dwyer, Microsoft's International Data Centre Manager, said that it was surprising to see how little the running of data centres had changed until recently, and Zahl Limbulwala, Chair of the BCS Data Centre Specialist Group, explained that some of the standards companies work to are no longer necessary, with today's computers being more resistant to things like high temperature and humidity.

The new Intermediate Certificate in EU Code of Conduct on Data Centres, which completed its pilot phase at the beginning of January, aims to address these issues of cost and energy efficiency of data centres.

The new practitioner qualification is based on the EU Data Centre Code of Conduct, a best practice framework that was published in November 2008. The Code looks at topics such as new data centre planning and development, as well as adapting and improving existing facilities.

The idea of the qualification is to equip staff such as data centre managers, operators, designers and technicians as well as IT purchasers, architects and consultants to 'develop a realistic strategy [for data centre efficiency], rather than throwing money at it for the sake of saving a few pounds,' explains Matthew Hawkins, Senior Sales Executive for CNet Training, the training company that has been running the pilot courses. 'The purpose is to gain a clear understanding of the Code and how to move forward in implementing it.'

The pilot courses attracted delegates from all sectors of the industry, from finance, government, manufacturing and so on. 'The take-up has been very good, and delegates all found that their expectations were met,' says Matthew. 'The feedback we got was very positive.'

The three-day course is structured around presentations and explanations of the Code and round-table discussions. 'While there are aspects of the Code that are essential, there are others that are optional in terms of implementation, and these were the areas that brought about a lot of discussion,' explains Hawkins. The course then finished with a one hour exam including 25 scenario-based multiple-choice questions.

For more information on sustainable IT courses, go to **www.bcs.org/greenit**

The Green IT Foundation Exam is now also available online.



Tailor your **training**

To meet the demands of tight budgets, fast turn-around times and employees on the move or spread around the globe, more and more companies are looking into creating their own digital learning material.

Realising potential

There to help are rapid authoring tools - software packages that can be used to create and package training content deliverable to end users. While authoring tools in the widest sense have actually been around for a long time (PowerPoint presentations come to mind, or even handouts), the beauty of today's authoring tools lies in the fact that they allow for a much more 'multi-sensory' and interactive approach to creating digital learning material through the inclusion of voice-over, quizzes, instant feedback, animation, screen-capture, software simulation and so on.

The tools also have a huge time-saving potential. 'We had one company, who was - admittedly - using a very old system, and it would take them a day to create one to two slides of training material,' recounts Mike Alcock, Managing Director of Atlantic Link. 'With the right rapid e-learning tool you can create 100-120 slides of content for, let's say, a software simulation in the same amount of time.'

So no more 'death by PowerPoint'? Unfortunately it isn't that easy. As with all things, the output is usually only as good as the input, no matter what tools you use, and there is still usually a difference between L&D professionals and professional instructional designers or e-learning developers.

'Rapid e-learning', i.e. e-learning that has been created using rapid authoring tools, usually by subject matter experts (SMEs), has come under fire from many sides, claiming that while it helps to create learning content comparatively quickly and at low cost, it often results in low-quality and badly designed material that does not have any instructional value - 'PowerPoint on steroids,' as some have called it.

Realistically, it will be difficult for a non-expert to create a full-blown, self-contained e-learning course. However, creating components, i.e. short demonstrations, quizzes or simulations to support and prepare for, say, a classroom-based event, is something that should be in the remit of any L&D professional.



The biggest thing is that you find a tool that fits into what you are doing and doesn't consume a lot of time and energy to get it going

Matt Pierce, TechSmith

Choosing the right tool

So how should you go about choosing the right rapid authoring tool that serves your purpose? The fact is that the choice is vast as the number of tools available has mushroomed over recent years, with well over 100, if not more, different products on the market (for example, the Brandon-Hall Authoring Tools database currently includes over 120 tools).

One of the most important things to bear in mind is your end-user audience. Paul Stevens, Managing Director of Assima, explains, 'You need to know what your organisation's learning culture is, what the end-users' computer skills are, and also what you are trying to achieve. Is it a simple piece of technology or a complex system that is implemented as part of a business change? All these things determine the type of tool you will need.'

Secondly, there is, obviously, the budget question. Desktop-based tools are generally cheaper than server-based authoring tools, and there are also a number of open source tools entering the market. The main difference between desktop- and server-based is that, with the latter, everything you create is stored online.

Investing in a server-based tool might be worth it, for example, if you have a large amount of content, or content that changes frequently or needs small updates. They also work well for collaborative training projects, allowing for instant feedback and changes. The advantage of desktop tools (apart from the obvious one that they cost less) is that they are usually based on standard Office applications, and so are comparatively easy and straightforward to install and work with.

Most providers offer two or three day training courses on how to use their tools, and generally provide online support and tutorials for users. A rapidly growing number of

Authoring tools in the public sector

Jean Tracey, HR Consultant (IT and Blended Learning) at RBT Connect, has been using authoring tools to deliver various courses for several years now. She's been working with Learning Pool, a company providing e-learning content and authoring technology to the public sector.

'We have used Learning Pool's authoring tool to create, share and repurpose courses for a variety of subjects, and we've found it to be a cost-effective alternative to the classroom.

'The tool allows us to choose templates for the pages, for example video content, images, audio and so on. We usually insert text from a SME, and the author, usually a trainer, makes it engaging for employees and ensures they receive a consistent message.

'One of our authors is currently working with Adobe Captivate to create an ICT refresher module for about 600 users. There are four sections - dealing with enquiries, invoices, reporting and creating a new customer – and each of them has taken about an hour to create.

'The plan is that each employee will be able to access the course at their own desk and view the part that is relevant to their own duties.

By linking the course to Rotherham's DLE we will be able to report on the usage every month, and employees will also have the opportunity to give feedback at the end of each module.'

blogs and forums have also become invaluable resources. 'I'm convinced that our very active community forum provides us with a competitive advantage,' says Mark Schwartz, Executive Vice President of Articulate. 'We've got an awesome community of users who truly love to help each other become successful e-learning heroes.'

As a rule of thumb, the more elaborate you want your e-learning to be, the more sophisticated a tool you will need. For system training it is advisable to choose a specialist systems training authoring tool that allows for software simulation, screen capturing and so on. 'The biggest thing is that you find a tool that fits into what you are doing', says Matt Pierce, Training Manager at TechSmith. 'It needs to be a tool that works for you, and doesn't consume a lot of time and energy to get it going.'

For this reason, it is important to try out products (and many companies now offer free trial of the products) and plan ahead to find out what features are essential or optional. As Schwartz points out, 'If there are sacrifices that need to be made, make sure each stakeholder understands and accepts those before adoption is made.'

Creating good e-learning

Most rapid authoring tools contain features that help direct SMEs towards good instructional design. 'It is all about helping people think more creatively, while at the same time giving structure to the material,' explains Derek Wenmouth, one of the directors at CORE Education in New Zealand, which was involved with the development of eXe, an open-source e-learning tool.

'All our tools are template-based, which help to explore aspects of a new product. Your toolset needs to be part of your planning before you start to create your material,' says Lars Unneberg, CEO of Norway-based company Mohive. 'The focus always needs to be on the outcomes and objectives.'

That is especially true as it is easy to get carried away with the possibilities many of these tools offer. To include an interactive quiz or a game-based video that doesn't have any relation to the learning objectives might be fun, but doesn't necessarily produce the intended outcome. 'Having a template or an in-built structure for an authoring tool helps to get past the big problem that people get carried away with all the bells and whistles,' explains Wenmouth.

Yet with one of the main criticisms of e-learning being the fact that it is extremely difficult to replicate the interactivity of face-to-face learning alternatives, you need to make sure there is a lot of engagement and hands-on practise, as RJ Jacquez, Senior Product Evangelist at Adobe, points out.

'A lot of what we learn, we learn from making mistakes. A good authoring tool allows you to create a course where learners can make mistakes, and then learn what they have done wrong and why it was wrong,' Stevens adds.

In the end it seems that, as with creating any type of training course, the main focus must always be on the content, not on the tool. '(Working with authoring tools) is like learning a new language,' says Jacquez. 'If you are learning a language, you need to embrace it. The same is true for technology -

A good authoring tool allows you to create a course where learners can make mistakes

Paul Stevens, Assima

Put on the spot:

We've asked the experts for their top three elearning tips

Paul Stevens, Assima

1. Ensure that the examples you use are relevant to end-users.
2. Add instructional layers of advice and tips, and tell users not only how to do something, but why.
3. Create learning in small digestible chunks. Simulations shouldn't be longer than 15-20 minutes.

Mike Alcock, Atlantic Link

1. Plan, plan, plan - always tell people to draw out a storyboard on paper or in the tool.
2. Use interactivity carefully and vary between show & tell, read, knowledge check and so on.
3. Involve SMEs - they are the ones who have the knowledge.

Mark Schwartz, Articulate

1. Put yourself in the seat of the learner. As you create courses, how would you like to take the course you've just created?
2. Be creative. Use colour, mixed media, user controlled exploration, storytelling, and so on.
3. Subscribe to the Rapid E-Learning Blog **www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning** It's all about easily creating engaging e-learning with loads of practical tips.

Useful links

The Brandon Hall Learning Technology Products 2009 report can be downloaded for free here: **www.brandonhall.com/publications/learntechproducts/learntechproducts.shtml**

The Kineo website provides reviews of various authoring tools and other useful tips for e-learning and rapid development. **www.kineo.com/elearning-resources/elearning-resources-home.html**

Listen to the IT Training podcast - Episode 9 for some useful tips when creating e-learning materials. **www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.11488**

you need to embrace it, get comfortable with it, and then take that knowledge and use it.'

Bridging gaps

Most of the rapid e-learning companies have seen a positive development over the past year. 'Companies are looking for tools that help them to expand abilities and reach out to more people. They're looking to cut travel time and also allow people to prepare in advance for training courses so they can actually digest more,' explains Pierce. Also, as Unneberg points out, training has become more and more time-critical - 'it is no longer stuff for eternity.'

Other aspects that have contributed to the change in the market are legislation and compliance requirements.

'Many of our customers have had to deliver training to their employees quickly as a result of these requirements while also tracking employee compliance,' explains Schwartz.

At the same time, mobile technologies are becoming more and more ubiquitous, and learning on the move is presenting itself as an obvious means to save time and money. 'I absolutely believe that mobile is the future,' says Jacquez, 'and there are a compelling number of mobile devices out there. However, there are still two main challenges; first of all, the number of different platforms and secondly, the small screen of the devices.'

Especially the latter point seems to present a real problem. 'We do have the technology to create learning for mobile devices, but we haven't really seen anyone take it up and deploy it,' says Alcock. 'I think one of the main problems is the tiny screen of the devices - it is still not as pleasant a learning experience as if you're sitting with your laptop and can view things on a big screen.'

So maybe the next step is rather to bridge the gap between 'rapid and robust', as Schwartz puts it. 'Of course the challenge will always be how to deliver a rich feature set while maintaining ease of use for a broad customer base,' he says. 'We need to cater to the needs of both SMEs and high-end developer,' agrees Unneberg. It seems that creating good e-learning will only become easier.



Working with authoring tools is like learning a new language

RJ Jacquez, Adobe

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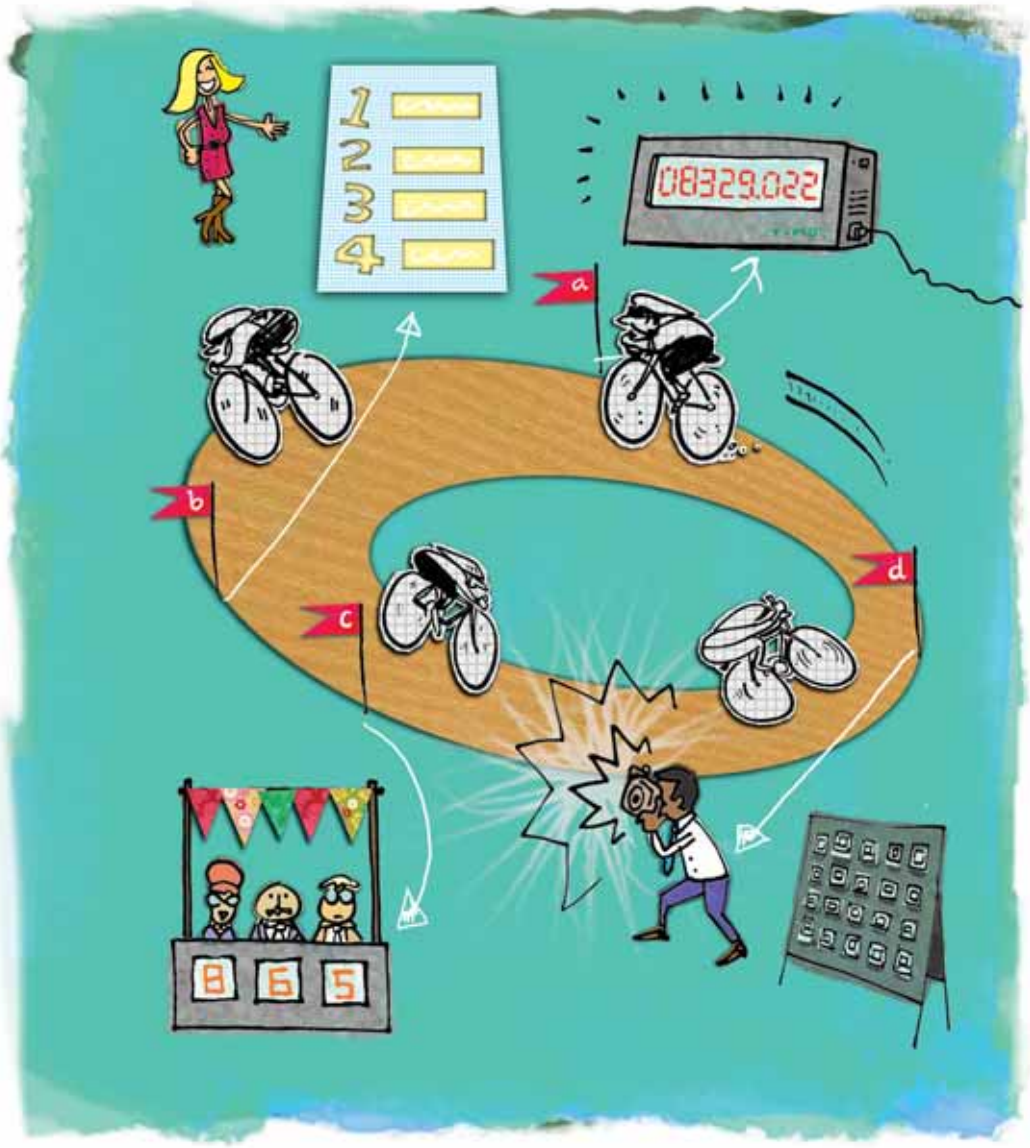
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Time to re-think

It's a new decade - a good time to completely re-vamp our traditional view of both the training cycle and the approach to measurement and assessment, argues Alan Bellinger.

Applying 'killer apps'

This is bold stuff; I'm challenging the conventional wisdom of both the training cycle and the norms of measurement and assessment for the last thirty years. I'm not saying that the old models are wrong; they're still as logically robust as they ever were. But I do believe that it's time to apply Fagin's immortal 'I think I'd better think it out again'.

The combination of performance management (PM), business intelligence (BI) and talent management (TM) is making a seed change to L&D. These are 'killer apps' that

- are cross-function;
- require close cooperation with the IT department;
- are a natural shared service; and
- fundamentally challenge our current thinking.

Traditional training cycle

First of all let's have a look at the traditional training cycle. There are various graphics and different words, but the simplified version is shown in figure 1. For many of us, this model is ingrained in our psyche; we have lived with it for so long that, faced with a new training challenge, we dive straight in at the needs analysis and then follow it through.

Kirkpatrick levels

Whenever we do get to that all important evaluation stage, we reach for Kirkpatrick/ Phillips and start to trot out the familiar concepts of the four (or five, if you include Phillips) levels of evaluation (see figure 2).

We accept that the higher the level, the more value it is, but the harder it is to do. We do our happy sheets to get the learners' reaction to the course (typically the lunch and the receptionist's smile). Maybe we even do a mastery test – and that gets us up to level 2! But when it gets to levels 3, 4 and 5 the challenge is greater and we start to question whether they're even measurable.

There are two fundamental tenets that are the basis of Kirkpatrick/ Phillips that need to be challenged. The first is that the analysis is done after the learning intervention; and the second is that the approach is based on the fact that training is an event with a definable end.

Value versus ROI

What management is really looking for from L&D is business value. The notion that in a recession L&D is the first to be cut is a fallacy. However, it will be the first to be cut if it can't be justified. Unfortunately an L&D professional who's following Kirkpatrick doesn't have a good argument to present - all they can really say is 'trust me here; I'll show you the value when we've completed it'. An argument that's not likely to do much for one's job security!

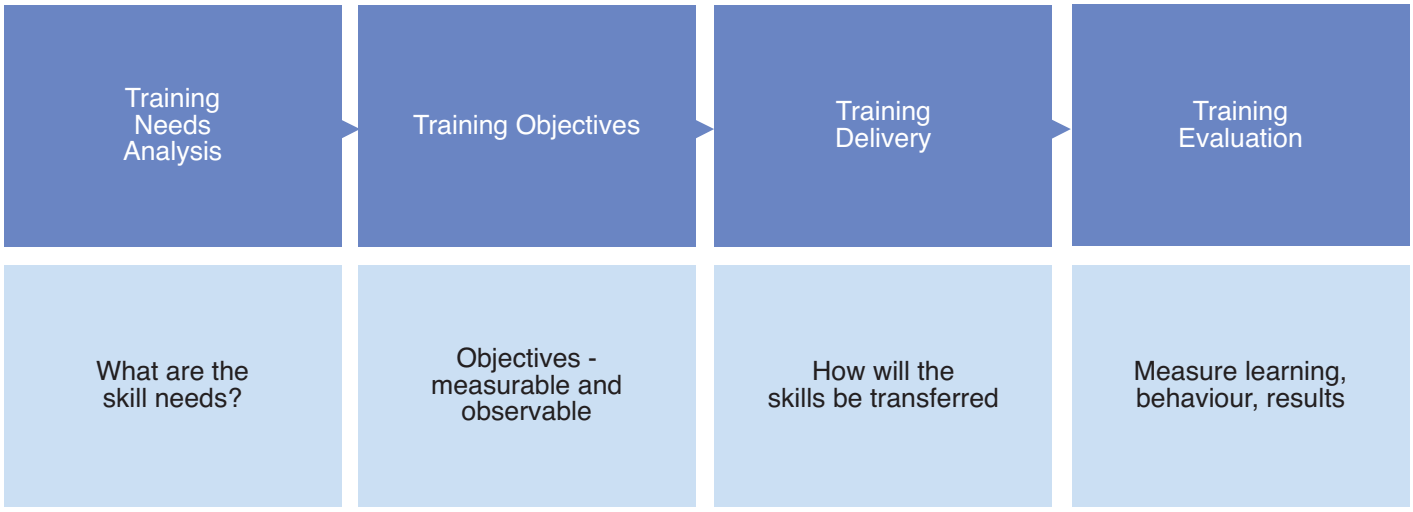


fig 1. The Traditional Training Cycle

Learning as a process

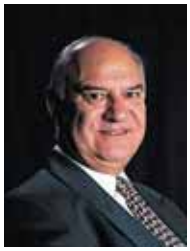
We all subscribe to the principle that learning's a process, not an event, and as we get more involved in informal learning interventions, we are making this urban myth more of a reality.

This raises fundamental issues for Kirkpatrick/ Phillips, which is based on the assumption that there's a definable end point that can be used as the basis of measurement and assessment. If there is no end (and how can there be in a continuous process?) then how do you know when to start the evaluation? There has been a clear evolution in our thinking within L&D; it goes like this:

- Learning is a process, not an event.
- Learning is contextualised.
- Learning is integrated in work.
- Learning is embedded in work.

This evolution means that L&D moves from a position in which it provides commoditised learning interventions to one in which it ensures that all learning interventions are specific to the requirements of the organisation and contextualised to the learners' needs. An example would be 'sending dunning letters' as opposed to 'using mail merge'.

Additionally, with the greater involvement of L&D in informal learning, the learning process becomes more of a reality as learning becomes integrated with work. At this point, learning interventions are much shorter and precisely at the time of need. As the process matures, learning becomes embedded with work.



What management is really looking for from L&D is business value

Alan Bellinger

And this is the point where two powerful drivers come together. Firstly, informal learning means there's an even greater need for measurement and assessment, and secondly, there's no definable point at which to measure it.

A new training cycle

The conclusion is inevitable - we need a new training cycle. But what does it look like? My suggestion is shown in figure 3 (see following page).

The problem with a continuous cycle is just where do you start. I've labelled my starting point as a 'performance issue'; this could mean addressing a perceived lack of performance, but it's far more likely to be triggered by an opportunity, such as a new system roll-out, a new corporate initiative or a new product or service. At this stage, we'll be looking at the overall issues and scoping out the options.

Additionally we need to look at the value that we will create by these incremental skills. In the private sector we refer to this as 'the business value of skills'; and in the public sector we probably should use the term 'efficiency savings'.

Steps three, four and five are conventional, but six and seven need discussion. Step six highlights the fact that, with an appropriate PM system in place, level four of Kirkpatrick turns from being extremely demanding to a 'no-brainer'. PM embeds performance metrics into work, and so we can instantly see, through the dashboard or the scorecard, just what effect a learning intervention has had. And step seven is a 'steal' from project

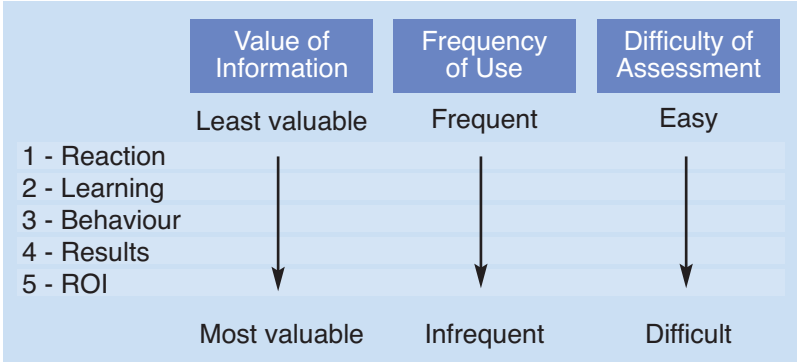


fig 2. The Four Levels of Evaluation

management; it highlights the fact that the critical activity when you're late in the cycle is not one of evaluation but rather one of 'what should be done differently next time around'.

PM and all that

My key point is that this is an absolutely critical year for all of us in L&D. The 'killer apps' I referred to earlier (the combination of BI/ PM/ TM) are right in the middle of our sweet-spot. BI gives us immediate access to information that simply wasn't available before; PM is the synthesis of BI to create performance data for individuals, teams, groups and functions. And TM is the way to leverage performance across the organisation. It is L&D's responsibility to drive this combination and make it an enterprise asset. And here's the interesting point; L&D can't do it without close cooperation from the IT department! This decade, there's a whole new meaning to 'IT training'.

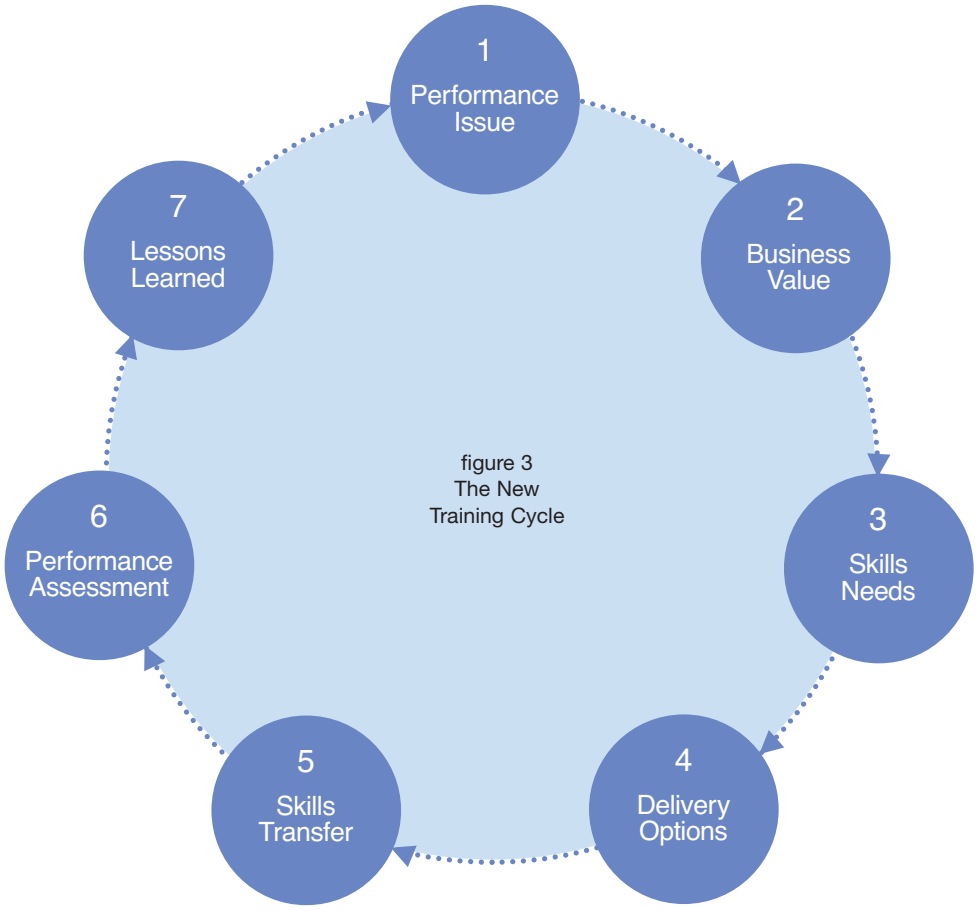


figure 3
The New Training Cycle

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Managed Services for Training

When does it make sense to outsource your training? Donald H. Taylor investigates.



How well is your organisation's learning and development (L&D) managed? In the distant past many companies saw their training departments as a cost centre that absorbed a certain budget each year in return for producing a regular schedule of courses. There was little focus on the effective use of classrooms and trainers and on management engagement with learning. The recent recession, however, has focused everyone's attention on doing more with less, accelerating an existing trend towards making the most of every line in the organisational budget - including L&D.

According to research by Managed Learning Services (MLS) provider KnowledgePool, UK organisations increasingly outsource at least some of their training, with only 18 per cent now delivering all training in-house (down from 31 per cent in 2007), while five per cent of organisations outsource all their training.

This trend has been sustained, according to Rachel Kay of Thales Training and Consulting, by the range of benefits that MLS brings. However, she adds, 'While there are plenty of advantages to MLS, in the end most organisations are concerned with saving time and money.'

As well as being a major IT training provider, QA is (according to NelsonHall) also the UK's largest provider of outsourced learning services. Director Ben Pike agrees that MLS is cost-effective, but adds that the increasingly complex nature of modern training delivery means that an external provider can also make it more efficient. 'The savings come not only from discounts, but also from ensuring that the whole learning programme is well designed, developed and delivered in the best way for your organisation.'

Not everyone agrees, though, that using a managed learning service necessarily makes sense. BT Group, for example, recently brought a substantial training programme back in-house, after having outsourced it for 10 years. So what makes MLS successful and when should training remain inside the organisation?

Reduced administration

The most common reason for seeking an MLS provider is to reduce the administrative training overhead in a large organisation. A classic example of this is IT services company Fujitsu Services, which entered a managed training services agreement with KnowledgePool in 2006.

The most common reason for seeking an MLS provider is to reduce the adminstrative training overhead

Don Taylor

KnowledgePool provides Fujitsu Services with an online self-service catalogue of over 1,000 training courses, a substantial number of them on IT. These include both public courses run by preferred suppliers and Fujitsu's own in-house events.

Over 5,000 Fujitsu Services employees book courses through the system annually - subject to their managers' approval - often taking

advice from KnowledgePool's helpdesk of learning advisors when doing so. Sue Payne, Head of Operations (People Development) at Fujitsu Services, explains 'KnowledgePool sources training courses from a wide range of suppliers, achieving better discounts than we ever could.' This translates into an average saving of 26 per cent off the retail prices of public schedule training courses.

The in-sourced solution

Some organisations choose an in-sourced solution, not completely outsourcing L&D, but developing the training department into a completely separate division with its own profit and loss budget to balance. In 1998, Thales UK moved Thales Training and Consultancy under the control of the company's corporate university, Thales Université, with an explicit remit to provide training profitably to Thales and beyond. Effectively this meant that Thales set up its own training services company.

Rachel, who is Thales' Training and Consultancy's Business Development Manager, explains why the department was separated off. 'We had 11 different sites ordering, training and maintaining 11 different L&D teams, over 500 suppliers and a lot of maverick training spend by individual managers. With 7,000 UK employees, Thales just wasn't making the most of its spending power to get discounts or to optimise training to suit the company.'

With Thales now constituting about half of Thales Training and Consultancy's business, it's clear that there is an appetite for outsourcing training. 'It's about time, money and focus,' says Rachel. 'We allow an organisation's HR people to concentrate on what they're best at, while we - as specialists - deal with the purchase, administration and delivery of training.'

In the past, says Rachel, HR has had a wide variety of roles that have now moved out of the organisation. 'Look at recruitment - how many organisations still run their own specialist recruitment teams? Increasingly - for large organisations in particular - only things that require a judgement and things that require a vision or involve strategic and cultural issues will be kept in-house. The rest of the work of training - the logistics, the organisation, the procurement - can be outsourced to specialists.'



Speed to competence is crucial to deliver what customers want

Peter Butler, BT

What-source?

For QA's Ben Pike, a managed learning services approach is not just about bulk-buying training, but also about improving the quality of learning programmes. 'The right solution for a particular client might involve, for example, a class of Excel training delivered by a specialist trainer at a higher rate per day than you might pay for an off-the-shelf course. However, with the right overall programme, the client is likely to need fewer classroom training days and may use other delivery mechanisms such as e-learning. Therefore, in the end the organisation pays less for a better service.'

What Ben calls 'right-sourcing' goes beyond running an existing training schedule for less. 'Yes, people want to consolidate their list of suppliers and reduce their administrative overhead, but there is increasing recognition that even larger savings can come from using an MLS to deliver great blended sourcing. Customers want a single supplier to pull together all the delivery mechanisms. You can try to do that yourself and cobble something together, or you can get an expert in the field to build an integrated learning portfolio for you.'

Outsourcing - always right?

Outsourcing learning provision may not always be the answer, however. BT Group's Director of Learning Peter Butler recently brought the company's training back in-house at the end of a 10-year outsourcing deal.

'It's all about speed and quality of customer service,' explains Peter. 'Speed to competence is crucial to deliver what customers want, and in today's world the old ways won't work. The market is changing at such a pace that suppliers can't keep up - with either the changing subject matter or new delivery methods.'

Whereas in the past, explains Peter, training was about providing a certain number of classroom days, it is now about enabling people to learn. For BT that has meant a large, and very successful, drive towards social learning - an implementation for 11,000 users has shown the company's internally-provided web 2.0 learning platform has improved time to competence and reduced time off the job.

In BT's current approach, the non-generic learning content is created by users themselves, for example by using podcasts, which have proved both highly popular and highly effective. 'Outsourcing would not have helped with this,' says Peter. 'It just can't help when things are moving as fast as we are, sourcing content from our own employees, incorporating customer feedback and getting it distributed rapidly so that our staff can get things right first time.'

But Peter is not against outsourcing in general. 'The routine parts of running training - scheduling and administration, for example - can be handed to a specialist agency. And if you need large amounts of content, particularly for generic IT skills, it is often better sourced externally.'

And he has a chastening thought for all those involved in L&D 'From the business viewpoint, the L&D department is already effectively an outsourced provider. They need to consider the value they are adding in the fast, modern world. And if they are only providing routine administration, are they really doing it better and cheaper than a specialist managed learning service provider?'

Book reviews

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



Cloud Security and Privacy: An Enterprise Perspective on Risks and Compliance

Tim Mather, Subra Kumaraswamy, Shahed Latif, 336pp

O'Reilly, £26.99

ISBN 978-0-596-80276-9

Rating ★★★★☆

The concepts of cloud, security and privacy are not obvious bed-fellows, and it was only a matter of time before some books were published on the topic. This book may well turn out to be one of the better ones.

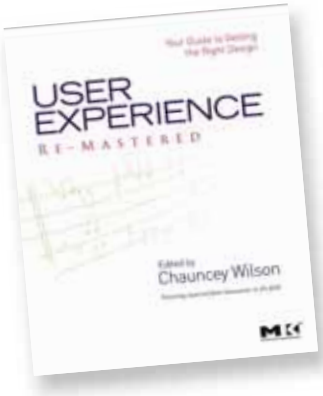
The comprehensive depth of coverage makes this book a ready reference resource for those who are serious about understanding security and the cloud. It starts out with a contextual overview of the cloud, and its position in the evolutionary timeline of the information age, which is then followed by an explanation of the SPI (i.e. software, platform and infrastructure) framework for cloud computing services. It then goes on to explore how and why security, privacy and the ability to cater for audit and compliance requirements are such hot topics, especially as they are also key barriers to adoption of cloud services in the enterprise.

The other interesting and useful aspect of this book is how the authors approach such thorny issues as identity and access management (IAM), privacy, security responsibilities, cloud service interoperability and standards, as well as the many actual and potential conflicts with regulatory compliance and jurisdictional constraints. They typically begin with a 360 degree overview of the topic, followed by a discussion on its relevance and application to cloud services as well as key implications for both the customer and their CSP.

The book also does a great job of discussing the various security standards, privacy and legal regulations and their implications. There is also a chapter dedicated to audit and compliance requirements and controls. Finally, the authors provide much needed guidance on what to look for (and what to expect) from the typical CSP, and they also provide a listing of example CSPs and their service offerings.

This level of coverage creates an almost encyclopaedic view, and perhaps, as a result, it is not a straight-forward read. Also it is not necessarily detailed enough for implementation decisions, but it does a great job of providing appropriate sources of reference for these anyway.

Reviewed by Jude Umeh, FBCS, CITP



User Experience Re-Mastered: Your Guide to Getting the Right Design

Chauncey Wilson, 396pp

Morgan Kaufmann, £30.99

ISBN 978-0-12-375114-0

Rating ★★★☆☆

Re-mastering is usually associated with music recordings when a new master copy is created from a well worn and, by implication, much appreciated original. Apart from the chapter on brainstorming, written by Wilson, all the chapters of this book are from previous publications, including bestselling authors in the field, such as Jakob Nielsen and Tom Brinck, but there are omissions and no reference is made to Steve Krug and his book 'Don't make me think'.

User experience re-mastered aims to guide students and newcomers towards getting the right design for users. It is divided into four sections: defining usability; generating ideas; designing your site; and evaluation and analysis. Sub-headings define the content of each section and the contents list, which stretches to eight pages, gives a clear indication of the structure of the book. It would have increased its relevance to the present if this structure could have referred to the recognised phases used when managing a web project.

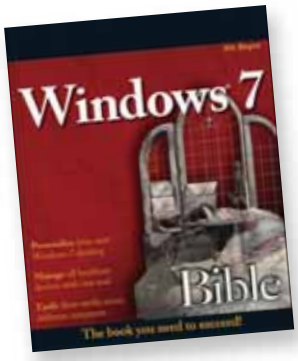
There is a balance between process and design and how to involve the user and there are plenty of diagrams and screen shots. Most chapters are supplemented by comments from Wilson, which clarify terms and explain concepts and help maintain continuity between different authors.

The chapter about persona conception and gestation, while mostly relevant, is unduly long and detailed. That on prototyping, by contrast, is short and readers would benefit from more interpretation. It is also not clear what size or complexity of website these kinds of activities are intended to cover or how and when issues of scalability will arise.

Designing for accessibility is only referred to in one brief paragraph. This is a major omission given that accessibility should be designed in from the start. As a minimum, a box discussing the similarities and differences between usability and accessibility, including legal requirements, should have been included in chapter 1 or 2.

Overall, the content is good solid stuff about usability but it is previously published material and in places the lack of currency and context shows.

Reviewed by
Angela Wheatcroft, MBCS



Windows 7 Bible

Jim Boyce, 1248pp

Wiley, £26.99

ISBN 978-0-470-50909-8

Rating ★★★★★

Windows 7 is Microsoft's new client operating system launched in October 2009. The aim of this book is to provide the reader with an insight to Windows 7, and the author succeeds in doing so. The step by step guide is easy to follow and the screen shots are helpful to those who are new to Windows 7 and have not used Windows Vista.

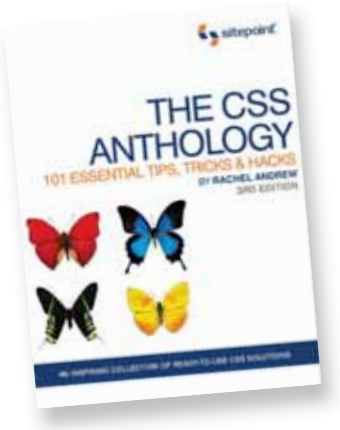
The author navigates the reader through a journey of experiencing the use of the core Windows 7 operating system and Internet Explorer 8. The first part of the book is wholly dedicated to introducing the new features of Windows 7 and getting the users started with the operating system.

Part II deals with security, part III is about personalising Windows, Part IV is all about using the internet, part V is working creatively with pictures and multimedia. Part VI addresses file management, part VII is about peripheral management, part VIII is focused working with other programs on the Windows 7 platform. Part IX is about working with hardware and performance tuning and finally part X is on networking. Each section is covered in detail.

The accompanying Note/Tip/Caution section in each chapter provided by the author is valuable. The book is very comprehensive – over 1,200 pages - and therefore is not a light read. Despite the size, the book is readable, easy to understand and packed with useful references for all.

A glossary would have been an additional bonus, but the book still scores 10 out of 10 in terms of content and value for money.

Reviewed by
Uma Kanagaratnam



The CSS Anthology: 101 Essential Tips, Tricks & Hacks (3rd edition)

Rachel Andrew, 400pp

Sitepoint, £31.49

ISBN: 978-0-9805768-0-1

Rating ★★★☆☆

The updated third edition of this popular book reinforces a problem-focused approach to designing websites using cascading style sheets (CSS). As in previous editions, there is little time spent on the design rationale of CSS and the shortcomings of HTML: the introduction briefly presents the syntax of CSS, the concept of cascading and specificity of rules and the types of selectors. From the start, it is clear that this book is for solving real-world problems, not as a general CSS reference guide.

The book is structured around solutions for some of the key problem areas for CSS developers, including forms, navigation and layouts (for example, a detailed discussion of the so-called 'Holy Grail', the liquid three-column layout). Each stand-alone tip is clearly presented, with a discussion of the implementation, code examples and how to adapt them. There is a strong emphasis on adherence to web standards throughout this book, with cross-browser compatibility issues identified and addressed. Accessibility is another strong theme, with a chapter on presenting content for users of assistive technologies, along with targeted CSS for alternative devices.

As the title implies, this book is pitched as an ideas manual, enabling easy reuse and adaptation of existing code. However, the question remains as to what audience this book is aimed at. If you are looking for a CSS technical reference manual, with a comprehensive listing of CSS selectors, this is not the book for you. If you have no previous experience of CSS, the problem-based approach may present a steep learning curve; if you are looking for an advanced 'cookbook', then it may not address some of the more esoteric problems. However, for an intermediate developer looking to further develop their repertoire of CSS techniques, this book is ideal. The pricing is reasonable for such a book, with the structure and rich content making it an easy read.

Reviewed by
Reviewed by Tom Crick, MBCS



Wireless Networking Complete

Pei Zheng et al, 300pp

Morgan Kaufman, £48.99

ISBN: 978-0-12-375077-8

Rating ★★★★★

This excellent book covers a wide range of topics varying from the basics of mobile wireless technologies to mobile IP and issues relating to the security and survivability of mobile networks.

The text is clear, simple and technically crisp. Every chapter is well supported by suitable, simple and clear diagrams that enhance the readability and clarity of the topics discussed. It is this particular feature of the book that makes it suitable for a wide readership, ranging from students to professionals and academics, as well as anyone with some basic science knowledge and a keen interest in the subject of wireless networks.

Reasonably priced for its size and quality, this book is great value for money.

Reviewed by
Elias Pimenidis, MBCS CITP

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IT Training Awards 2010 celebrates outstanding achievements

The Institute of IT Training's Training Awards 2010 were presented at a glittering gala dinner held at The Dorchester in London.

Institute Chief Executive Colin Steed, addressing the audience of over 450 people, said: 'We are here tonight to celebrate the IT Training Awards - our annual celebration of outstanding achievement, best practice and excellence in IT training.

'In December our judging panels worked through almost 60 presentations, where the most difficult task of deciding on the winners was accomplished. The job of a judge is becoming harder and harder each year. I would like to thank all of our judges, under the Chairmanship of Alan Bellinger, for giving up their time for us.

'But what it really shows me is just what influence the Institute has had in raising the standards of the world's best training and development. The standard of all of the entries has been outstanding and to be a finalist is a real achievement to be proud of.'

The event also included an emotional address from Claire Brown from ChildLine, who spoke about their counselling work for children in trouble or danger, for which the Institute raised £10,000 in its annual charity auction. This brought the total raised by the Institute for the charity to £180,000.

2010 winners

The blue riband award of Training Company of the Year was won by Verridian, with fierce competition from Bray Leino Broadskill (Silver Award) and Afiniti (Bronze Award).

Training Department of the Year was won by Ricoh Netherlands, whose trainer Mariel Blom also scooped up Gold in Trainer of the Year. The ecstatic training team at Cheshire ITC service won Training Department of the Year (Public Sector) for the second year running, whilst the Training Manager of the Year award went to Tim Hunnybun from the University of Leeds.

Two new awards were introduced this year: Learning Technologies Solution of the Year, which was won by Digital Publishing, and Instructional Designer of the Year, which went to Stephanie Dedhar from Saffron Interactive.

The Colin Corder Award for an outstanding contribution to IT training went to Laura Overton. This was an extremely well-received announcement, with Laura walking to the stage to a standing ovation. Laura was delighted at her accolade: 'I am stunned and delighted. I am so honoured to be the

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first female recipient of this most prestigious of awards.'

Other winners on the night were: Global Knowledge (Innovation in Training Services), Bupa Business Technology Training (Internal Training Project of the Year), Afiniti & Network Rail (External Training Project of the Year), The Insolvency Service (Staff Development Programme of the Year), Dennis Silverlock (Freelance Trainer of the Year) and etc.venues' Maple House (Training Venue of the Year).

A momentous year for IITT

Steed explained what a momentous year it had been for the Institute. 'Firstly, we are delighted with the support from you all for our TPMA service, which has enabled training departments and training providers to supply a Live Assessment Service for all trainers, leading to a joint IITT/BCS Certificate.

'Secondly, we have aligned our membership grades to national standards for the teaching and training profession. We would like to thank LLUK – the sector skills body for learning & development - and City & Guilds – our awarding body – for all the help, support and advice that they have given us in guiding the Institute over the past year.

'This means, for the first time, that our members - working in a commercial environment - can achieve the same qualification and status as that required for professional teachers and college lecturers. And we believe that this will at last give our members the real professional status they so rightly deserve.'

The event was sponsored by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, and was hosted by Sky TV Breakfast presenter Lucy Alexander.

The 2011 IT Training Awards will take place on Thursday, 3rd February 2011.

Full results

Innovation in Training Services
Sponsored by itSMF
Gold: Global Knowledge
Silver: SAS UK

Internal Training Project of the Year
Sponsored by SAS UK
Gold: Bupa Business Technology Training
Silver: Warwickshire County Council
Bronze: Network Rail

External Training Project of the Year
Sponsored by RICOH
Gold: Afiniti & Network Rail
Silver: Epic & The Cabinet Office

Training Venue of the Year
Sponsored by Institute of IT Training
Gold: etc .venues – Maple House
Bronze: 2e2 & BAA

Staff Development Programme of the Year
Sponsored by iSOFT
Gold: The Insolvency Service
Silver: Ricoh Deutschland

Learning Technologies Solution of the Year
Sponsored by The Open University
Gold: Digital Publishing
Silver: Assima & Xerox
Bronce: Epic & The Cabinet Office

Instructional Designer of the Year
Sponsored by the Institute of IT Training
Stephanie Dedhar, Saffron Interactive

Freelance Trainer of the Year
Sponsored by 2e2
Gold: Dennis Silverlock
Silver: Niall Shanahan



Trainer of the Year
Sponsored by BCS
Gold: Mariel Blom, Ricoh Europe (Netherlands) BV
Silver: Solene Kremer, Assima
Bronze: Peter Clark, Verridian

Training Manager of the Year
Sponsored by Assima
Gold: Tim Hunnybun, University of Leeds
Silver: Anne Grubb, Scottish Court Services

Training Department of the Year (Public Sector)
Sponsored by Global Knowledge
Gold: Cheshire ICT Service
Silver: Warwickshire County Council
Bronze: Avon & Somerset Constabulary

Training Department of the Year
Sponsored by the Institute of IT Training
Gold: Ricoh Netherlands
Silver: FDM Group
Bronze: Boots UK

Training Company of the Year
Sponsored by Prometric
Gold: Verridian
Silver: Bray Leino Broadskill
Bronze: Afiniti

Colin Corder Award
Sponsored by the Institute of IT Training
Laura Overton

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