ITtraining

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Magazine moves to new IT home



My first few weeks of regular contact with the IT training community have been a pleasure; I've felt warmly welcomed into the fold. I'm assuming that this is largely down to the fact that trainers and learning and development professionals enjoy and are excellent at communicating with people, so I'm greatly looking forward to my time ahead with the magazine. This is the first issue of *IT Training* produced by The British Computer Society (BCS) under licence from Haymarket Media. Taking over the magazine fits in with BCS's strategy of widening its communications with all parts of the IT industry.

I've been appointed as the new editor of IT Training, having been employed by BCS for almost two years. During that time I've contributed to a range of editorial products, including editing its weekly e-newsletter. Prior to that, I wrote for and edited business-to-business titles and an in-house magazine for part of the MoD.

The cover of this particular issue of IT Training is an appropriate one as the magazine moves under BCS's wing. Although the 50 relates primarily to the report on the top training suppliers, produced by IT Skills Research, the number 50 has a special significance for BCS, as it celebrates its half century of existence.

With the magazine changing hands again, it seemed a good time to catch up with its founder, Colin Steed. This issue therefore includes the views and insights of a man who now heads up the Institute of IT Training and has a huge amount of experience in the industry.

One subject picked up by Colin is that the training industry could do more to promote itself. It's a theme that Jooli Atkins tackles in her article, setting out how to make sure training gets proper consideration in IT projects.

This issue also includes case studies on training in recent technologies, and comment from regular IT Training columnists. We'll be continuing with this sort of mix in the coming issues, which will appear quarterly. The next one is out in late August.

If you have any suggestions for content or topics you'd like to see covered, please do drop me an email. Also, if your contact details are out of date, please do send us your new ones.

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IT training

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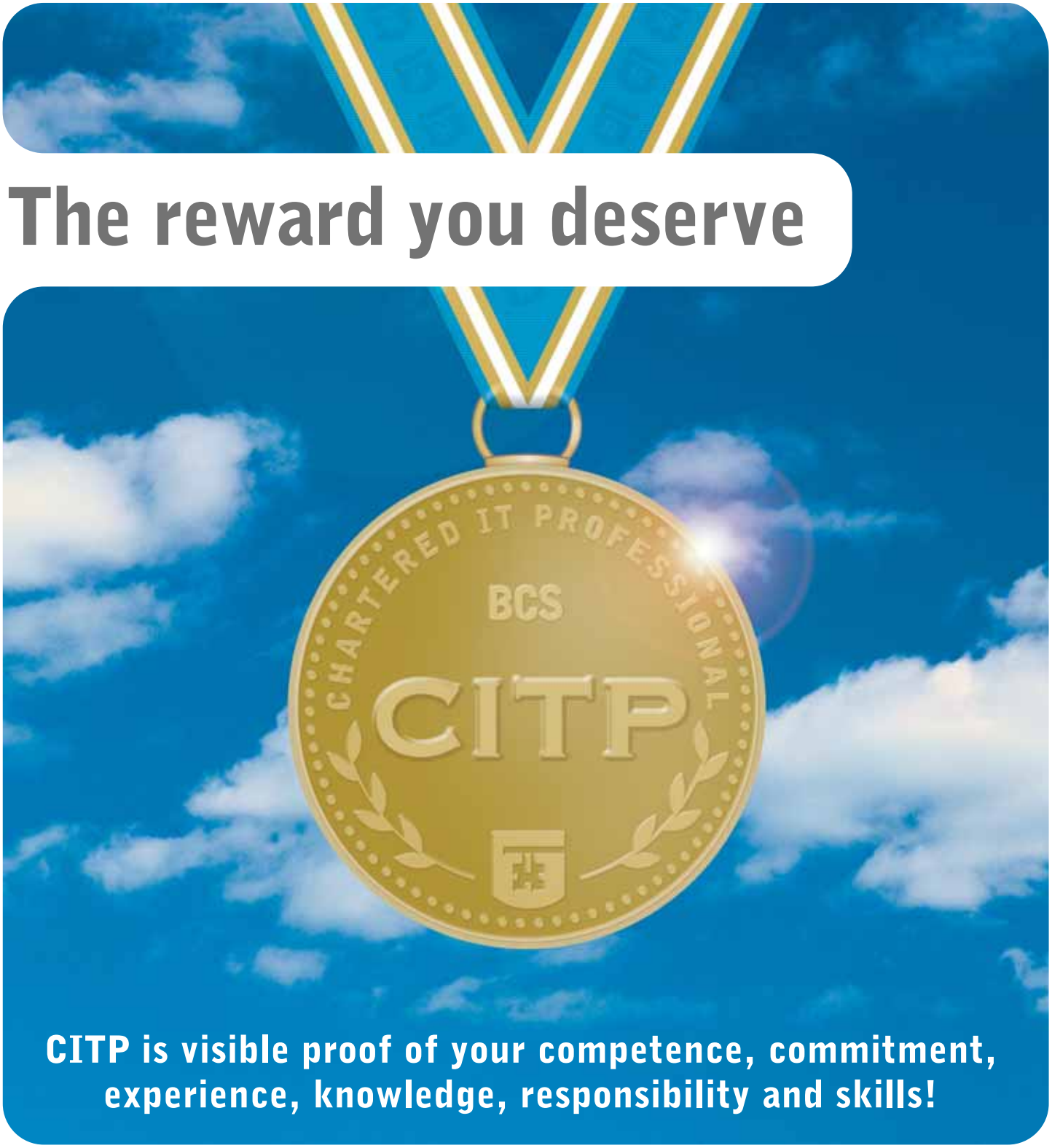
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Update

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

Businesses are failing to be impressed by **IT-related degrees.** The e-skills UK ICT Inquiry found that 59 per cent of employers do not consider an IT-related degree to be important for graduate entrants to IT and telecoms professional roles.

The lack of value placed in IT degrees is backed by another survey conducted by IT recruitment and training specialist FDM. It found that workers with on-the-job experience are by far the preferred candidates for filling IT vacancies.

Graduates from non-ICT disciplines often have key skills such as business, project, interpersonal and communication skills that are more valued by companies, according to the e-skills research.

High-end technical and management skills needed to manage outsourcing contracts were also shown to be in demand by a recent Computer Weekly/SSL salary survey that emphasised a shift in that direction.

The survey showed that the demand for management positions increased by almost 20 per cent over the three months to April, with managers in development, operations and communication most popular. There was also an 18 per cent rise in the vacancies for project managers with SAP skills compared to the first quarter, a 40 per cent increase for project manager professionals over a year ago.

Training in the workplace can help bridge the skills gap. The CBI, which represents private businesses, believes that training in the workplace needs a higher profile. The CBI has therefore urged the government to reform the qualifications framework to ensure that high quality training given to staff in the workplace is recognised. This would be in line with proposals in Lord Leitch's recent skills report.

'Allowing companies to award their own nationally recognised qualifications would be a vital first step to achieving this,' according to a report by CBI. It suggested adopting the Australian approach.

UK businesses invested £33 billion on staff training last year but only one pound in three spent was recognised with a formal award. Just 40 per cent of British adults have such a qualification compared to 57 per cent in the USA and 63 per cent in Germany. This is because employers' primary focus is on staff developing their abilities, rather than acquiring qualifications, according to the CBI.

Employers are increasingly recognising the value of **competency frameworks**. The CIPD 2007 learning and development survey showed that 60 per cent of the

Orange alert: fluctuations smoothed via outsourcing



Orange experiences fluctuating demands for customer service training in its UK call centres. When very active, it turns to KnowledgePool to supply extra trainers. It has provided induction training for temporary and permanent customer service representatives who primarily support Orange's 'pay monthly' and 'pay-as-you-go' customers. Five key trainers from KnowledgePool have also provided 'refresh' and 're-skill' training across Orange's service areas.

respondents, HR departments, had a competency framework in place for their organisation. Of the remainder, 48 per cent intended to introduce one.

The growth in competency frameworks usage is reflected by increased adoption of the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA). More than 500 organisations are now using the government-backed IT skills framework, the SFIA foundation estimates. It believes SFIA is now past the early adopter stage and into growth.

e-Skills has just published a new competency model, IT Professional Competency Model (IPCM). The aim is to provide a new, sector-wide approach to expressing IT professional capabilities. The IPCM builds on SFIA, allocating the competencies IT professionals have – in other words, what they can actually do – into a simple suite of subject-based disciplines and levels. The model also includes transferable skills, such as business and personal skills, which apply to all disciplines.

BCS will choose the IT Trainer of the Year as one of the categories in its BCS IT Industry **Awards** 2007. The accolade, sponsored by Training Synergy, is aimed at individuals who are responsible for the design and delivery of training to customers, business users or IT staff. The deadline for entries is 26 July. Last year's winner was Dave Britt of QA-IQ. 'Recognition at that level from a professional institute is fantastic,' he said.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has a category in its Star Awards for providers of lifelong learning but it is only open to its approved centres. The deadline for nominations is 29 June.

Supplier Briefs

SkillSoft completes deal

SkillSoft has completed its acquisition of NETg from the Thomson Corporation for approximately $270 million in cash.

SkillSoft says its existing senior management team will continue in their current roles under the leadership of Chuck Moran with Kevin Young (pictured, below) still heading up SkillSoft in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

The integration of the two companies' platforms and solutions are expected to be completed by end of October 2008. SkillSoft will be incorporating the NETg virtual instructor-led training solutions under the name of SkillSoft Live Learning. SkillSoft plans to support the NETg content on its flagship learning management system SkillPort and to integrate SkillSoft content with the major NETg learning management platforms.



Training for tutors

ISEB is currently piloting a new programme for ISEB tutors called Accredited Course for Tutors and Trainers. It is a tailor-made qualification for established tutors and trainers involved in the delivery of training.

ISEB has also developed a Mainframe Technology Professional qualification for ICT technicians in zSeries server and mainframe based data centres. Examinations are now available for systems programmers, operations personnel and applications developers. Examinations for other functions and disciplines will be introduced during 2007.

On way to directorship

BCS is partnering with the Institute of Directors to offer a board level programme from September 2007. The Diploma in Company Direction, aimed at aspiring executives, will cover issues of board governance.

Candidates who pass the diploma and successfully complete a professional review can apply to become a chartered director.

PM methodology

Global Knowledge has launched a learning project management methodology called SOLVE to help manage training outsourcing contracts, particularly large-scale ones.

In a separate move, the company has set up an online booking and training administration system that makes it simple for customers to book delegates onto IT courses and oversee their IT skills development plans.

Virtual environment

SAP and Adobe Systems are to collaborate on a new virtual learning environment, SAP Enterprise Learning. Available in Q3 2007, SAP Enterprise Learning will combine SAP Learning Solution with Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional – an extensible web conferencing solution.

Using SAP Enterprise Learning environment, companies will be able to help conduct, measure and track virtual classes while allowing employees to collaborate in real-time with instructors and other learners.

Maven goes residential

Maven Training is to run its PRINCE2 practitioner and managing successful programmes training courses in a new residential format. They will be held at the Node Conference Centre in Hertfordshire.

Test drive to calm jitters

Candidates can now calm their nerves before sitting computerised exams by running through the test in advance with Test Drive. Prometric, an assessment services supplier, has launched the service to allow candidates to run through a 30-minute replica of test day.

A recent survey conducted by Kaplan showed that 55 per cent of students who were tested in January would advise upcoming test takers to spend more time practicing the computer interface than studying the actual content.

Test Drive is available at approximately 500 Prometric testing centres across North and South America, Africa, Asia and Europe.

Performance support

PPI Learning Services, the company that replaced PPI Learning after it went into receivership, has launched a performance support system, AthenaAssist, in partnership with LearningGuide Solutions. It is based on LearningGuide technologies and can deliver custom designed training rollouts.



Woolies' spring clean

A 10-year leap in technology needs careful planning and effective training to be successful. Woolies is making just that sort of change in moving to Office 2007 and installing a new learning management system as well, as Gary Flood reports.

One of the interesting contradictions about the IT business is that, despite all its emphasis on the latest must-have features and functions, a lot of the technology in use in business every day is actually often a bit behind what's in the shops or on the salesman's laptop.

That's actually perfectly logical for the businessman, as there is no point in flashing the cash to replace assets that haven't yet been totally 'sweated'. But it's relatively rare to see an organisation that has been trundling on apparently perfectly content with slightly aged applications to opt for a more or less overnight revolution.

Such a massive technology spring clean has nonetheless been going on at one of the UK's best-known high street brands – Woolies. The retailer has recently seen its old Office 97 and Windows NT purged in favour of the latest and most up-to-date versions of the Microsoft desktop application system and OS.

To some extent Woolworths was taking a big risk

'In many ways we have gone from being well behind the curve to being ahead of it,' acknowledges Gordon Rennie, commercial development manager at the 32,000 strong UK corporation. And he's not joking – any IT training manager planning to introduce Office 2007 will be aware that the product is so new that not only are most big companies holding

off until service pack 2 is released and hopefully most of the bugs squashed, there is hardly any training material on the market yet. Not that there was that much available on what Woolworths had been using: most training companies have retired their Office 97 material some time ago. Basically this is a 10 or arguably 13-year jump, technology wise, in terms of hardware, software and even connection speeds.

So to some extent Woolworths was taking a risk: it was making a big leap forward in one go and couldn't be 100 per cent sure the market would have the content to help make the transition. As Russell Harper, account director at e-learning software content supplier SkillSoft, says: 'We know of no other company with Office 97 material ready on the market yet.'

The context of this big upgrade is partly historical and partly unexpected. The majority of UK retailers tend to have under-invested in their IT infrastructure, and Woolworths was no exception. The company did have a network and was hardly a computer free zone but there was no learning management system (LMS) for instance – content was held on an intranet. Woolworths has also had a tough couple of years in the market, which put IT investment on hold for a while too.

'Woolworths has been a customer of ours in one form or another since 1999,' says Harper. 'It has been using our content to develop the skills of key employees in Word, Excel and other Office applications.'

The company sensed informally that employees valued e-learning but had no clear way to measure who was using it or how successfully. There was also some face-to-face training support in a classroom in London's Marylebone, for example for the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and other business applications such as SAP.

At long last authorisation for a technology revamp was finally given last year after the pause button had been held for 18 months, with IBM being brought in as delivery partners: Big Blue also helped deliver the training. The company has swapped its ageing NT platform for a new fleet of 1,300 Windows XP and Office 2007 desktop machines spread across a number of sites, starting with the firm's HQ in London. This is part of an enterprise-wide 'significant' IT infrastructure investment.

We decided to upgrade from the simpler intranet system to a full LMS

Gordon Rennie, commercial development manager, Woolworths

That wasn't the only major step forward technology-wise. 'We knew many people in the organisation had need of skills in the latest desktop technology,' says Rennie. 'We also knew that we needed to upgrade our management of training: it is very useful to track usage and access by staff of the material, so we decided to upgrade from the simpler intranet system to a full LMS.'

The project was about two-thirds of the way through at the time IT Training went to press, with the London site nearly completed in terms of technology and training rollout. At the firms' big distribution centres in Manchester and Swindon around three quarters of staff are now trained. The target was to cross the finishing line at the end of May.

That date is important: Christmas is the peak season for the company in terms of resources, so it is really only in the first six months of the year that new systems and the like can be introduced.

Rennie – who is responsible for all IT elements at Woolworths that impact on the company's commercial development activities, including managing training – singles out IBM and SkillSoft as having been key partners in making the transition

SkillSoft, for example, decided to bridge the courseware gap on Office 2007 by employing an e-books, or to use its jargon 'referenceware,' based approach. Using its Books24x7.com technology it collated the relevant material so far published on Office 2007 by publishers such as Microsoft Press and McGraw-Hill to create a resource for Woolworths' trainees.

The training itself added up to 60 days of trainer time. The format was a number of half-day workshops, which gave people the basics with the referenceware being put in place as the immediate next step in getting to grips with the package, which has a number of features new to the Microsoft look and feel. This was complemented by a floor walking exercise by both the implementation partners and some of Rennie's team.

'You can't take that many people off line at one time as a retailer,' Rennie points out.

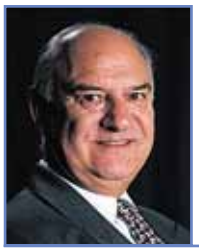
The next step was the LMS rollout, one of the first networked applications on Woolworths' upgraded broadband internal network. The network also hosts a number of Woolworths' branded frequently asked questions documents from SkillSoft, along with help desk support and other resources.

Where will the company go next? In terms of training and development, says Rennie, 'doors have definitely been opened. We can see scope for asynchronous learning and more dynamic desktop based context-sensitive e-learning. We have shown we can make being early adopters work. We have energised our whole IT training approach – and that can only be good.'

Woolworths and Office 2007

Woolworths opened its first store in Liverpool in 1909. More than four million people now shop in its 820 stores each week. Its turnover in the financial year ending January was £2.7bn. www.woolworthsgroupplc.com

Microsoft finally launched the latest version of its Office desktop productivity suite in January this year in order to coincide with a delayed release of its new Vista operating system for PCs. www.microsoft.com



Alan Bellinger

SaaS – Skills as a service?

Software as a service (SaaS) has changed application architecture beyond recognition. Could skills as a service do the same for that of organisations?

The adoption of the Software as a service approach has led to an application architecture in which most business applications have a common-or-garden web browser as their front end and rely on the application code being hosted on a server somewhere in the ever expanding 'network'.

In the SaaS world, the servers may be located inside or outside the enterprise, and, whilst they can deliver sophisticated content as a service, they are virtually invisible to the person making the original request.

Now imagine the situation if a demand for highly specialised skills worked in the same way – we'd be able to access that skill anywhere in the enterprise and apply it to the issue. In the first instance it may all sound too far fetched, but in reality that's the way in which collective intelligence works.

If you think of the organisation as a whole, then the collective intelligence within it will be enormous. Harnessing it is the problem as most organisations are still structured along functional lines. The concept that an individual who is fully loaded with immediate deadlines – and responsible to their manager for their completion – is able to drop everything to work on something else is a non-starter.

Now. whilst organisational and functional needs can be aligned, it still begs the obvious issue: software as a service works on the basis that the service will always be available; we can't assume that for people.

Nevertheless, the concept of skills as a service opens up a fascinating range of thought processes. For example it challenges our conventional notion that our primary target is the learner. Our pavlovian reaction is… that job requires this skill set, the incumbent has that skill set, how can we fill the gap? In a skills as a service world, we'd be looking at how we can source the skills in the gap.

As the level of collaboration within an organisation rises, we can begin to leverage its collective skills. By empowering the organisation as a whole, the organisation benefits.

My key point is this: the concept of skills as a service forces you to challenge the organisational position as opposed to the individual position. On one point at least, the parallel to SaaS doesn't work. In the software world, the location of the service doesn't matter; in the skills as a service world, location is key to ensuring skills transfer takes place. Once it has, then those skills are no longer required as a service – at least until the next time.

Alan Bellinger is business development director at the Institute of IT Training.

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From publisher to standard keeper

IT Training magazine is still 'very dear' to its founder, Colin Steed, now chief executive of the IITT. He returns to answer questions on his career and his current thinking on the industry.

Why did you choose IT training as a career?
I have always had a passion for helping others and way back in the early 1970s, whilst I was working in British Airways' computer department, I saw a vacancy for a training officer and immediately applied for the job.

What do you believe enabled you to make the transition from that job into related businesses?
After 10 years at BA, I wanted to progress into conferences and so joined a conference and publishing company owned by Robert Maxwell – but that's another story. From there I set up my own business, publishing the first Directory of Computer Training. I then saw the opportunity for publishing a magazine as there was nothing covering the area of IT training, so launched the magazine.

What was your favourite job and why?
It was undoubtedly developing and editing *IT Training* magazine. I learnt a lot about publishing, customer service and the IT training industry. I made a huge amount of friends from the training companies, many of which I still deal with and am friends with today. Obviously, the magazine is very dear to me and



I am pleased to see it still being published.

What do you see as your greatest achievement?
That's a really difficult one to be honest as there are two or three that are close to my heart.

Firstly, establishing IT Training magazine and seeing it grow into the official and well-respected magazine representing the IT training profession.

Secondly, I am extremely proud to have started from scratch the Institute of IT Training (IITT) – which was the world's first professional body for IT training professionals. Of course, it was developed by Nick Mitchell when he bought my company.

And finally, it is really satisfying to see the growing success of the IT Training Awards and the Institute Conference, but perhaps my personal favourite achievement is raising over £100,000 for ChildLine through our Charity Auction.

> **I would like to see the training profession respected in a way that other professions are**
>
> Colin Steed, chief executive, IITT

Is there anything else that you would like to achieve in your own career?
There are too many to mention. I just hope I have enough years to do them all. But seriously, I would like to see the training profession respected in a way that other professions are.



I will quote from one of my talks that I do on the future and how I would like to see it: 'In times like we are witnessing today, a shakeout

occurs, and from it will emerge – we ardently hope – a new age, where all of our corporations and public bodies adopt a learning culture, where quality standards are put in place, where our training professionals are trained and regularly assessed, and where people skills development and learning is a key part on the agenda of every boardroom in the country.'

Given your own highly successful career, what advice would you give to ambitious people?

If you believe – then go for it! The important thing is to give something you believe in a try – if you fail then at least you made an effort and have learnt something. I have done many things that when I look back were a bit of a gamble, but, if you have the passion, you can accomplish anything.

Do you think learning and developing managers and trainers are usually good at managing their own careers?

No, I am afraid I don't. I believe that they do not 'blow their own trumpet' enough and I think that they and the profession suffers for it. Get out there in the business, learn about it, network and get known by the business management – and then prove to them how you are improving performance in the workplace.

What do you see as the main value that the IITT has added to the industry?

Once again, it's difficult to say as one answer. If it has to be one, then it must be that before it was launched in 1995 there were no standards, no certification, no professional body in IT training.

Just over 10 years on the landscape has changed dramatically: over 10,000 people have an IITT certificate gained through the trainer activity profile (TAP) methodology, over 85 per cent of the training providers operate under our code of practice and are quality checked on an annual basis, and the majority of IT training departments are accredited.

There are over 4,000 members of the Institute who possess a recognised professional qualification and are bound by a professional code of conduct. So, the Institute has made a tremendous difference to the standards and quality in today's IT training.



We have just launched a very strict accreditation scheme for training providers of personally-funded training

Colin Steed, chief executive, IITT

Are there other areas that you would like to see the IITT involved with?

I am extremely concerned about the part of the market where individuals purchase their own training with a view to gaining employment in IT. This area – we call personally-funded training – is really open to abuse by some unscrupulous training providers – as has been documented by BBC's Watchdog programme, which I was on recently.

We have just launched a very strict accreditation scheme for training providers in this market and I can assure you only the best will reach our required standard. What must be done to make it work is to get through to government to help us bring this to the public's attention. I have a meeting with the Skills Minister soon to discuss this, so let's hope they take notice at last.

Do you think we will see further consolidation of the IT training market in the next couple of years?

The last four to five years have been very tough for the IT training market and inevitably there will be further consolidation like we have witnessed over the last few years.

The QA-IQ merger and PPI Learning going down were a shock to most people in the industry but the predictions are that we could see other mergers and acquisitions, and large players failing in a volatile market.

However, there is a continuous feed of new energetic and innovative training companies entering the market all the time. And that's very encouraging.

What training buyers must do, however, is to continue to ensure that any training service provider they use has an accreditation quality stamp from the IITT. In that way they are safe in the knowledge that they receive quality services, backed up by our complaints procedure should things go wrong.

Additionally, and importantly, in this way we can eliminate those organisations who are abusing the system if buyers insist on the IITT badge before making purchases.

Colin Steed's career path to date

1968: joined British Airways' IT department, where he took on responsibility for training computer operations staff.

1978: joined the major IT conference organisers, Infotech.

1981: founded Training Information Network and launched the first magazine in the IT training field – IT Training. Edited the publication until it was sold in 1998. Additionally, launched Management Skills & Development magazine.

1995: was instrumental in founding and setting up the Institute of IT Training.

1998: edited newly-launched magazine, IT SKILLS and founded the IT Skills Research Programme, providing IT skills and development intelligence for training providers.

October 2000: appointed as chief executive of the Institute of IT Training.

Colin's blog: http://csteed.squarespace.com/welcome/

Home carers train on hand-held devices

Mobile home carers in Glasgow typically have little exposure to IT, so training was a vital part of a BlackBerry roll-out. Brendan Murphy explains Glasgow City Council's approach.

On a daily basis more than 15 Glasgow hospitals assess and discharge patients to care in their own homes. This care often starts with a mobile home carer being assigned to ensure that the person has a safe return home and is helped for the first four weeks after hospital discharge. Consultants can release a patient late afternoon with very little notice to implement effective home care for that evening's cover.

In the past, mobile home carers were required to visit one of nine local offices throughout the city looking for detailed fax messages with details of the client to attend and provide a home care service. This method was prone to error, was costly and inefficient and the home carer and client were often provided with little useful information, making the first few visits to a new client fraught with difficulty.

To assist in delivery of this key service, Direct and Care Services, the second largest department within Glasgow City Council (which employs 9,000 manual workers), has now rolled out more than 400 BlackBerry devices. They principally allow mobile home carers to quickly respond to emergency new referrals and 'home from hospital' requests which can be made at very short notice. The benefits of these units include instant, accurate client data being made available to home carers, leading to better service for clients. Managers also have instant email access to a frontline workforce.

This initiative has had a huge effect on services, bringing managers closer both to clients and to lone workers. Lone worker groups feel less isolated, helping improve the service, and the skill level in IT of this staff group has increased greatly.

From the outset, the difficulties in training a manual, part-time workforce were not underestimated. A focus group of six home carers were initially brought together for an informal meeting to assess previous exposure to technology and determine the best way to train and deploy over 400 units.

From this group, it was obvious that the principal IT exposure was to mobile phones and this was generally only for voice usage. One week later, the same six home carers came together again for an explanation of the implementation strategy and, crucially, at this meeting a hands-on session with the BlackBerrys was conducted.

This was highly successful and the home carers themselves decided that implementation should be supported by bringing staff together in small groups to offer a hands-on experience, allowing them to take away their BlackBerry immediately after the training session.

A one-hour training module was devised and delivered to a maximum of five home carers per session. This short session ensured frontline delivery of services was maintained and that attendees were not bored.

Delivery was by a general member of the ICT support team, a decision taken to help ease any tension that the manual workers may have had when being confronted by a 'boss'. Sessions were set up to be particularly humorous to ensure that a message went round that the training was fun and enjoyable – essentially delegates sent and received messages to each other and were encouraged to help and support each other during the session – this worked.



BlackBerry devices allow mobile home carers to quickly respond to emergency new referrals

At each training session a simple fact sheet was issued detailing very basic BlackBerry functionality (receive, read, send, store emails).

Post-training, home carers also have access to an ICT support team member and drop in sessions are available daily – these are used as 'how do I do this?' type sessions or to change BlackBerry configuration or repair broken units.

The training of this very unusual workforce of low-skilled operatives has been highly successful. Hands-on sessions allow a focus on usage and immediate post-training deployment ensures that important skills learned are not forgotten. Direct and Care Services will use this method in future ICT implementations.

Brendan Murphy is head of ICT and marketing, Direct and Care Services, Glasgow City Council.

Putting just-too-late training in the bin

All too often training is left until the last minute in an information systems (IS) project. In this article, Jooli Atkins draws on her 25 years' experience in IT training and project management to suggest ways of persuading your IS colleagues to integrate training.

Trainers involved in IS projects will, no doubt, find the following scenario familiar. You are aware of a plan to upgrade one of your organisation's main IT systems and are called into a meeting with the IS project manager to discuss training. She informs you that the build phase is almost over and the project is moving into user acceptance testing, followed immediately by implementation. The reason for the meeting is that, although the planned upgrade is a 'minor' one and so 'there should not be any need for training', she just wanted to check this out with you.

On further investigation, you find that the 'minor' system upgrade has an impact on processes across the organisation as the system being upgraded is used by many workstreams. This has not been taken into account by the IS project team as they are only concerned with the system upgrade and the senior user on the project board was too strategic to be able to consider all of the operational requirements of the project.

The project manager says 'Jooli, what can you do to help us?' and you want to reply 'Nothing of any real value, because you have left it too late' but find yourself saying 'Leave it with me. We will catch up with you and deliver the training to meet your deployment schedule'. You find yourself leaving the meeting disappointed that you are not going to be able to do the job as well as you would have liked and that the training team will be in the firing line when the system does not do what the users expect.



You can help IS to 'sell' the system benefits to the users and enhance the image of IS in the organisation

Jooli Atkins, chair of the new BCS Information and Technology training Specialist Group

So, what can you do to help your IS colleagues to understand that the 'end product' of their project is not a reliable system but a competent user of that system?

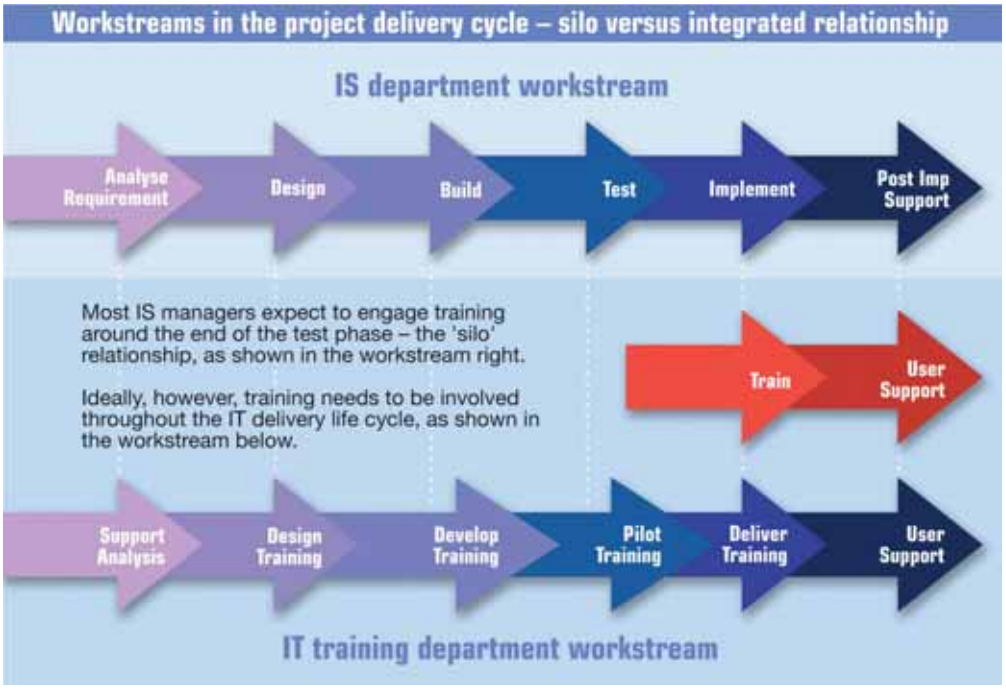
The key is timing. The project delivery life cycle of analysis, design, build, test, implementation and support, has training as part of the implementation (and potentially support) phase. Most IS managers, therefore, expect to engage training around the end of the test phase. Project boards rarely include IT training representation but often expect the IT training representatives to be up to speed with the project when they are ready to implement. They see IT training only in terms of its delivery and, provided you have sufficient time to learn the new functionality and put some support materials together, you are capable of delivering within the project timescales. This leads to a business where the system users are only able to 'press the key' or 'click the button'.

The reason for this is that two separate workstreams (IS and IT training) have been working in a silo with little or no interaction until it is too late to be productive. This causes frustration and friction.

If training is involved early in the life cycle, the true impact of the system changes on business processes can be analysed and trainers can gain a fuller understanding of the actual 'ways of working' in the to-be world, as well as adding value to the project by bringing their business knowledge. Business analysts spend much time working out 'as is' and 'to be'

Persuasion essentials

- Get to know IS.
- Ask for their help.
- Offer your help.
- Communicate as early and often as possible.
- Explain an integrated training approach – take this article with you, perhaps?
- Show benefits of early training involvement in: meeting audit requirement; reaching their customers; and enhancing IS's image.



processes, but often fail to look at the gap between the two where the user will sit.

Training design, development, pilot and delivery fit very neatly alongside the IT delivery life cycle and the more the two workstreams work alongside each other, the easier the sharing of knowledge and 'cross-fertilisation' of ideas. The diagram above can help you illustrate your point to your colleagues in IS.

As well as explaining how you would like training to ideally be involved in projects, you can also highlight the benefits of that approach to IS. With the IS world moving from hierarchy to accountability, and embracing service management, they are becoming more accountable to their customers. You can help them to reach their customers in a user-friendly way, 'selling' the system benefits to the users and enhancing the image of IS in the organisation. You are the face of IS for the users and working with you can help to enhance its image in the organisation. It does not help anyone in IS to have a stressed and under-prepared trainer delivering their product. In these situations, all too often trainers feel that they have to 'justify' their lack of preparation (and perceived lack of professionalism) by blaming IS when in front of the users. In truth, IS should be accountable if they do not integrate training.

The more that IS and training work alongside each other, the easier it becomes to share knowledge and cross-fertilise ideas

Jooli Atkins, chair of the new BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group

Another benefit of an integrated relationship is that you can help them with their audit requirements – a headache for most IS managers at the moment. Mention how you can help to get them some audit brownie points (for example for Sarbanes-Oxley) by ensuring that users are aware of the system's impact on their business processes and are competency tested in their use.

Having explained the theory of integrated training, you then need to be proactive in making sure that you get wind of projects early and get yourself invited along to project meetings, as well as involved in document review and approvals. Add IS to your document review and approval lists and they may begin to realise that they need to reciprocate.

Making friends with the IS department is one way to start getting them to remember you. Why not invite them to your meetings and user forums? You may be surprised what value they can add, and with a bit of luck they will return the favour by inviting you to their meetings.

Ask for their help – they know far more about the system than you do, and you might be able to enlighten them on how it is used at the same time. They can help you to set up a training environment for the new system, for example. What else do they do with the user acceptance testing (UAT) environment when they have finished UAT anyway?

And offer to help them – your skills as business analysts or UAT testers could be really useful to them and it is a great way of getting, and staying, involved.

It does get easier

Sadly, most of the above means continual effort from you; integrating training is not an action taken once, which then just happily ticks over but my experience is that it does get easier as you go on. Best of all, you eventually find that IS automatically include training because they know you will be on their case if they don't.

Go on, get a reputation for working alongside IS rather than behind them and help consign last-minute training panics to the waste basket.

Jooli Atkins MBCS MIITT is chair of the newly formed BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group, as well as being an active member of the IITT. She works with both public and private sector clients managing training for IS and business change management projects, as well as designing and developing the Excellent Learning Facilitation programme for Matrix FortyTwo. Jooli can be contacted on 01759 304321 or by email: jooli@matrix42.co.uk

The next meeting of the BCS Information and Technology Training Specialist Group is on 14 June at 6.30pm in London. Rob Impey will give a talk entitled 'How to get on with project managers'. www.bcs.org/ittsg



ITIL integrated approach takes off

A new set of ITIL core books, version 3, has just been released, and a suite of other products, including new qualifications, will follow. They set out best practice in service management from a lifecycle approach. Helen Boddy reviews the changes.

Service with a smile is not always literally possible when you are dealing with customers over the phone or via the internet. So to make sure they make the best impression possible on their customers, without needing to display a happy grin, many companies have adopted the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL). It sets out processes for best practice in service management.

The popularity of ITIL has mushroomed over the last two decades, expanding from a UK government philosophy to becoming a widely adopted global framework for service management. Almost 450,000 people have taken ITIL examinations globally with either ISEB or EXIN, the two providers that have been offering examinations since the they began in the mid-1990s.

The syllabus will be similar in terms of amount of time needed and in what it covers

The ITIL philosophy grew up around the guidance contained within the ITIL core books and the supporting professional qualifications scheme. In the 1990s, the ITIL core books were updated to

version 2 and accompanying qualifications were developed by ISEB and EXIN in agreement with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), and the user's forum, the IT Service Managment Forum (itSMF).

However, in line with the fast developing nature of the industry, service management as a concept evolved, so in 2004 the OGC decided it was time to refresh the ITIL guidance.

The ITIL Refresh project began back in November 2004 with the aim of improving the usefulness and applicability of ITIL, and clarifying the link between employment of the best practices and business benefits.

Ten years on

'The current version of ITIL is now ten years old and if you think how far the IT service industry has come in ten years, there's been a huge progression towards different types of services in the market, such as outsourcing,' explained Sharon Taylor, ITIL Refresh chief architect and chief examiner, in an interview published on the BCS website. 'What were best practices 10 years ago are actually current practice now, so the entire library of best practice needed to be brought up to date to what is current now.

'The consultation phase of the project took place in the early part of 2005 under the guiding principle that ITIL has grown into a globally adopted practice and is in use around the world – experiences that users and practitioners have are very valuable in terms of what is missing in the guidance today and where it needs to go in the future.'

Authors were chosen to write five new core ITIL books based around a life-cycle approach to service management best practice.

'Previously, there was no sort of particular approach of how you went from one book to the other,' said Vernon Lloyd, one of the authors. 'These news books form a single entity and are very much joined.'



Users and practitioners' experiences are very valuable in terms of what is missing in the guidance today and where it needs to go in the future

Sharon Taylor, ITIL Refresh chief architect and chief examiner

Each of the five books was reviewed by almost 50 representatives of industry, representing different sized companies and various sectors, in public and private enterprise. The final version of the five titles have been kept under close wraps and were due to be unveiled on 30 May, as we went to press. They replace the eight titles in ITIL version 2 and are available as hard copy, either singly or as a set, e-books or pdfs.

The five core ITIL version 3 books are as follows:

- service strategy;
- service design;
- service transition;
- service operation;
- continual service improvement.

A sixth book, also due out shortly, is an introduction to ITIL service life cycle, aimed at anyone who wishes to understand the changes or have an overview of ITIL.

Other complementary publications are due to be published in June, including a foundation level version 3 study guide along with web support services, according to Sharon Taylor.

Qualifications developed

Now that the core guidance has been set out in the books, ITIL qualifications are being developed in line with the new publications. The syllabus for foundation level version 3, the starting point of the three levels, has already been approved.

'At this basic level there are not many changes from version two,' said Taylor in a briefing to ISEB training providers. 'The syllabus will be similar in terms of amount of time needed and in what it covers. The difference is that it will have a broader scope as it will be based on the five new books rather than the existing two [in version 2, examinations only related to two of the eight books – service delivery and support]. More weighting will be given to elements such as sevice delivery while service strategy will only be covered in brief at a high level.'

The examination panel has recommended that a foundation course should be delivered in three days, including, time for the examination. However, Taylor stressed that one of the aims with the new qualifications was to allow

ITIL: A brief history

1980s: In response to the UK government IT department's difficulties, the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) developed the first incarnation of ITIL (version one), the Government Information Technology Infrastructure Management (GITIM). It was adopted by Government agencies and other large organisations in the UK.

1990s: ITIL begins to be adopted across Europe and examinations begin.

2000: ITIL version 2 was released, aligning ITIL and the BS15000 service management standard.

2002: BS15000 was significantly revised.

2006: BS15000 went international – ISO/IEC 20000.

2006: OGC appoints APMG as the new accreditation body.

2007: ISEB and EXIN sign an agreement with APMG to continue as ITIL examination providers.

2007: version 3 of ITIL is released.

providers some flexibility in delivery. There would be a recommended number of contact hours but it would be up to training providers to decide on the details.

The new foundation examination will follow the same format as the previous one with a closed book multiple-choice exam of 40 questions to be completed in one hour.

As we go to press, the examination providers are planning to run the first examinations for foundation version 3 from the 13 June onwards. The current version 2 foundation level exam will continue to be examined until the end of this year.

Those who have already passed ITIL foundation level version 2 will be able to take a course to convert to version 3, if they wish, to keep up with the latest thinking. As we go to press, it has not been decided if that will be in the format of an examination or certificate of attendance.

Training providers are already preparing to deliver courses for the new exams. Rachael Kavanagh, BCS Qualifications manager, said: 'We think that approximately 30 of the 65 training providers currently accredited by ISEB to deliver ITIL will start using version 3 as soon as it becomes available.'

Pink Elephant, for example, has already developed its course for the new ITIL version 3 Foundation and will be running courses from mid June. It has also developed a one-day 'v2 to v3 ugrade', available from June. QA-IQ has announced it will start v3 foundation courses in June, and Global Knowledge has said it starting one-day v2 to v3 conversion courses from 4 June.

That said, Michiel van der Voort, EXIN VP business development, believes that providers who offer the examinations in languages other than English (12 languages in total) would not be so quick to take up the syllabus.

Higher levels

At the time of IT Training going to press, the ITIL qualification board (consisting of representatives of the accreditor, examining institutes, and itSMF), had not approved details of examinations for other levels. The 15-member examination panel has made recommendations to the board for consideration and approval.

The panel is proposing that the second, management level, will culminate in an ITIL diploma, replacing both the current practitioner's and manager's levels. Candidates will work towards the diploma via a points-based modular structure. A new third level, advanced, would result in an ITIL advanced diploma. Planning for the advanced diploma will not begin until details of the second level have been approved.

The levels are built around the Blooms Taxonomy of learning: the basic foundation level assesses an individual's knowledge and comprehension; the management level is about comprehension and application; and the advanced level tests application and analysis.

The panel has proposed that there would be two different streams that candidates could follow to obtain a diploma – a manager's stream based on the five books, and a service capabilities stream with clusters on the subjects of: portfolio and relationship management; design and optimisation; monitoring and control; and operation and support. After following either stream, or combining modules from both to gain the requisite points, a candidate would then have to take an overarching exam called 'managing through the lifecycle'.



If you think how far the IT service industry has come in ten years, there's been a huge progression towards different types of services in the market

Sharon Taylor, ITIL Refresh chief architect and chief examiner

The panel has recommended that those who already hold the manager's ITIL version 2 certificate will be able to take a conversion examination to receive the diploma, if they wish, which will be offered from the end of August. For those starting the diploma level from scratch, examinations for the manager's modules are planned for the end of October, for the capability modules at the end of September, and for the overarching managing through the lifecycle module at the end of November.

Taylor stressed that certification for version 2 would still be valid for individuals; version 3 is simply an updating of skills. Also, training companies will be free and no doubt will continue to offer overviews to service management and ITIL that do not relate to the accredited examinations.

With regards to corporate service management programmes, Taylor said: 'There are a number of companies certified at different levels. We need to recognise that these qualifications still hold merit in the industry, and offer a chance to upgrade to the next level without forcing them to retake certifications.'

Alan McCarthy, director of Pink Elephant, commented: 'Organisations will simply take on board the changes to the existing processes when it suits them.'

The ITIL Refresh team is going on a worldwide road show explaining the changes to ITIL Refresh. Examination providers are holding seminars for the training providers, who will in turn explain changes to their customers.

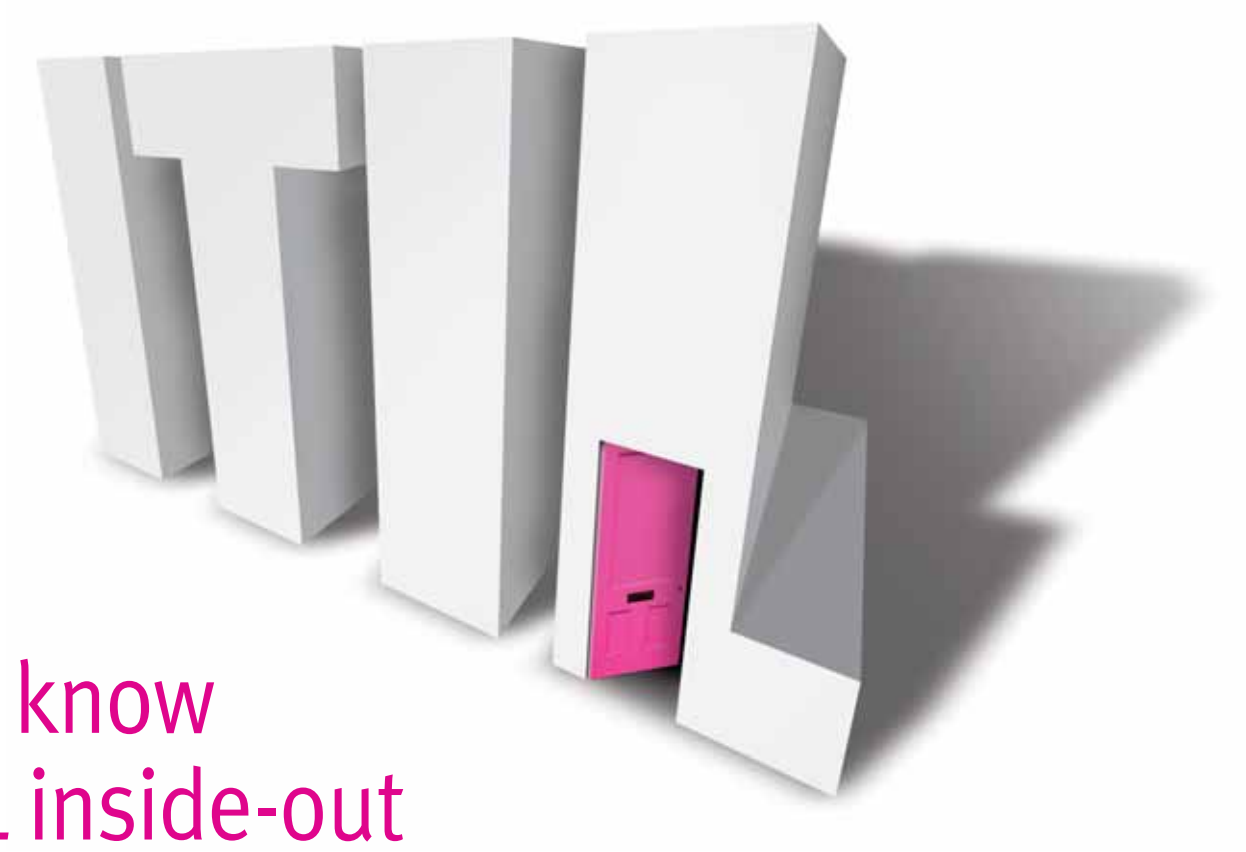
Updates will also be available on the websites as listed left.

Useful links

IOSM: www.iosm.com
OGC: www.itil.co.uk
itSMF: www.itsmf.com
ISEB: www.iseb.org.uk

EXIN: www.exin-exams.com
APMG: www.apmgroup.co.uk

Interview with Sharon Taylor on the BCS website:



We know ITIL inside-out

If you're looking to take advantage of the latest developments in ITIL® – especially with the launch of ITIL version 3 – you need to work with a provider with experience. One that's at the forefront of ITIL's evolution.

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Is big bountiful?

A sole supplier now has more than a 12 per cent share of the UK training market, according to estimates by IT Skills Research. Helen Boddy examines the new look top 50 line-up and the impact of the latest round of consolidation.

All good things come in small packages, according to one saying, while another claims that big is beautiful. Popular sayings often seem to contradict each other – perhaps because everything is not always so clear cut.

As the UK training industry has its first giant player, QA-IQ, the question is whether big will prove bountiful for companies and their customers and lead to further consolidation of the market.

Mergers, can compromise quality, cultures can clash, and then customers suffer

One thing is for sure: consolidation has stamped its mark on the leading positions in the table of the UK's 50 largest training companies in revenue terms, compiled by IT Skills Research.

The number one spot is now taken by QA-IQ, a combination of QA and Interquad, number one and two respectively in the 2006 table. Interquad's purchase of QA has put QA-IQ miles ahead of the field in revenue terms. Its estimated revenue in 2006 was £60 million while closest placed rival, Learning Tree International, made an estimated £22.5 million in the UK. QA-IQ's 12 per cent market share is in stark contrast to 2005's results when the top five companies only brought in revenues of between £19 million and £27 million apiece.

Global Knowledge goes up

The other acquisition that has shaken up the upper echelons of the top table is Global Knowledge's purchase of Azlan Training. Although it was March last year when the transaction was completed, this is the first time that the two companies appear as one entity in the top 50 line-up.

Global Knowledge has now risen to 5th position from 19th the year before. Its estimated revenue in 2006 was £18.5 million, an increase of 2 per cent over the combined revenue of the separate companies in the previous year.

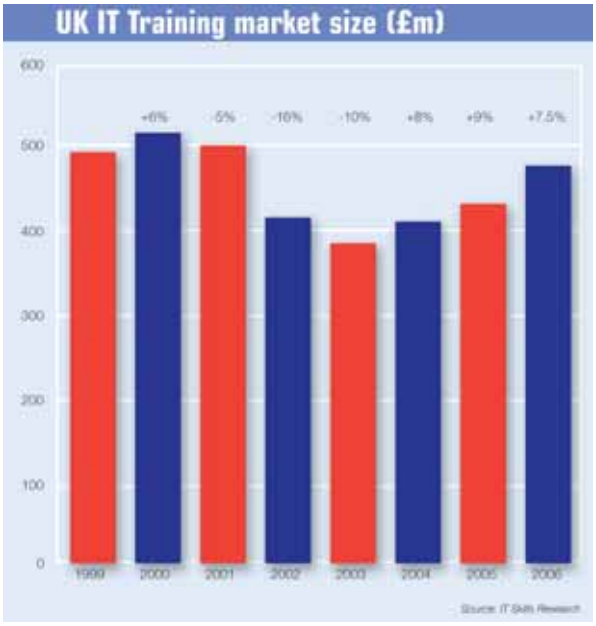
Another company, SkillSoft, is poised to break the mould of the top five suppliers in the next line-up through its purchase of NETg from the Thomson Corporation. The acquisition was finally completed on 14 May 2007, so this year the two companies appear in the table as separate companies.

If SkillSoft achieves in 2007 the combined revenues of the two companies or more in 2006, it could move up to second place, assuming no other large mergers take place.

Other smaller mergers this year included Afiniti buying part of Learn IT and DNS Arrow acquiring InTechnology's training business.

Mergers are in many ways good news for customers, IT training buyers. Large companies are likely to have a wide portfolio available at multiple locations.

'We now offer more products, have greater variety of vendor lines, and more locations,' said Frank Hojgaard, UK managing director of



Global Knowledge. 'It's also about scalability – we can invest more in services which benefits customers.'

The result is the opportunity to buy training as a one-stop-shop. For instance, the combination of Interquad with its roots in public delivery, and QA, which specialised more in service delivery and customisation, means QA-IQ has many bases covered.

'Bringing QA and Interquad together means we can meet the curriculum needs of most organisations,' claims John Kauffmann, managing director, QA-IQ.

Larger training companies can also meet buyers' large procurement needs, from the perspective of both curriculum and resilience. According to Kaufmann most training companies will only currently buy around a maximum of £1 million business from any one supplier.

Improved resilience

'A company wishing to procure £5 million of training would be concerned about spending it with a £20 million training supplier, in case it doesn't have the resilience', he says. 'The risk is too great. Now we're a £60 million plus business, we're talking to organisations about spending £5-10 million with us.'

Being larger gives us advantages of scale, leading to efficiencies, which we can put back into the service offering

John Kauffmann, managing director, QA-IQ

Mergers, of course, can go badly wrong in performance terms, as has been well documented and studied by academia. 'Quality can be compromised, cultures can clash, and then customers suffer,' points out Robert Chapman, co-founder of The Training Camp, a training company that has relied only on organic growth to become a £5.7 million business in the UK in the space of six years.

Kauffmann and Hojgaard are of course at pains to point out that no such woes are inflicting their businesses.

Kauffmann says of QA-IQ: 'It's nearly a year since the acquisition – over that time we have retained customers and business has grown.' QA-IQ's estimated revenue for 2006 is indeed £8 million higher than the addition of the figures for the two businesses in 2005.

'Culturally, we are one big happy family today.' continues Kauffman. 'We used Deloitte's integration consultants to plan the integration and its project management office at the point of integration.'

Hojgaard echoes him. 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating,' he says. 'I think success is about communication with your customers. It's also important to get the sales teams re-aligned immediately and not to underestimate possible cultural clashes.'

Of course, it is still early days to see the real fall-out of these mergers. Nevertheless, it looks as if mergers are now set in motion with several factors likely to motivate further consolidation.

For training providers, consolidation can help overcome tight margins through higher classroom occupancy, and some savings on centralised cost – accounting, marketing and so on.

And many companies' margins in the industry are still not healthy, despite overall revenues of the training market growing for the third time running this year – 7.5 per cent on average with the overall market size now estimated at £480 million by IT Skills Research.

'From our quarterly surveys, we know that suppliers are facing pricing pressures and suffering from the competitiveness of the market, which is leading to pressure on profitability,' says David Pardo of IT Skills Research. 'There is an increasing imbalance in supply and demand with the number of suppliers rising but demand fairly static.'

Hojgaard agrees: 'We are continuing to see a competitive market with price pressure and demand. Suppliers and customers are the losers. We think that the market needs more consolidation.'

With one big fish at the top, others may well consider following suit to survive. After all, QA-IQ's increase in business has had to have been at the expense of it competitors, as well as possibly also taking part of the growth in demand.

'In the last six months we have had more approaches made to us about acquisitions than we have made – perhaps that is a sign that others are struggling against us,' said Kaufmann.

Chapman agrees: 'Others in the same market, especially others in the top 10, may consider mergers to be able to compete with QA-IQ. However, I can't see how acquisitions would make sense for The Training Camp. I can't see how we could say we were passionate about accelerated learning if we then bought, for example, an e-learning business.'

The big could get bigger

QA-IQ may well grow bigger still, if it has its own way. 'It's no secret that we are acquisitive,' says Kauffmann. 'Consolidation gives us advantages of scale and a common infrastructure, leading to efficiencies, which we can put back into the service offering.'

'The company is also aiming for at

Top 50 The full list

Rank 2007	Rank 2006	Company	Revenue £m	Change %	Website
1	1/2	QA-IQ	60.4e	12%	www.qa-iq.com
2	3	Learning Tree International	22.5e	-5%	www.learningtree.co.uk
3	6	SAP	19.7	9%	www.sap.com/uk/education
4	5	IBM Training	19.0e	0%	www.ibm.com/services/learning
5	19	Global Knowledge	18.5e	2%	www.globalknowledge.co.uk
6	4	Parity Training	18.4	-8%	www.parity.net/training
7	12	LogicaCMG	16.5e	10%	www.logicacmg.com
8	10	Xpertise Training	15.9	4%	www.xpertise.co.uk
9	8	Thomson NETg	15.3e	-5%	www.netg.co.uk
10	9	Computeach International	14.2e	-11%	www.computeach.com
11	14	SkillSoft	14.1e	10%	www.skillsoft.com
12	7	Oracle University	13.0e	17%	www.oracle.com/uk/education
13	17	Assima Group	12.2e	20%	www.assima.net
14	21	New Horizons	11.5e	44%	www.nhtraining.com
15	15	Training Synergy	10.6	3%	www.trainingsynergy.com
16	16	Sun Microsystems	10.0e	0%	uk.sun.com/training
17	13	PPI Learning	9.7e	-31%	www.ppilearning.com
18	20	Remarc Group	9.6	16%	www.remarc.co.uk
19	22	KnowledgePool	9.3	33%	www.knowledgepool.com
20	18	HP Education Services	9.0e	0%	www.hp.com/uk/education
21	24	ThirdForce	8.8	24%	www.thirdforceplc.com
22	–	RWD Technologies	7.7e	-29%	www.rwd.com
23	23	The Matchett Group	7.6	7%	www.thematchettgroup.com
24	–	Business Training Partnership	7.1	61%	www.btp.uk.com
25	25	The Training Camp	5.7	33%	www.trainingcamp.co.uk
26	41	ILX Group	5.0e	100%	www.ilxgroup.com
27	36	Steria Training Services	5.0e	72%	www.steria.co.uk
28	–	Afiniti	4.5	221%	www.afiniti.co.uk
29	32	BT Training Solutions (NI)	4.1	28%	www.bicsystems.com
30	26	Red Tray	4.0	8%	www.redtray.co.uk
31	29	Key Training Solutions	3.8e	7%	www.keytraining.co.uk
32	–	Symantec Education Services	3.7e	12%	www.symantec.com
33	30	Red Hat	3.6	6%	www.redhat.com
34	27	WDR	3.6e	0%	www.wdr.co.uk
35	44	Kaleidoscope Training	3.4	41%	www.kcct.co.uk
36	28	Sage	3.3e	0%	www.sage.com
37	35	iTrain	3.2	10%	www.itraineducation.co.uk
38	34	BroadSkill	3.1e	7%	www.broadskill.com
39	–	Fast Lane	3.0e	200%	www.flane.co.uk
40	40	WWP Training	2.9e	16%	www.wwp.co.uk
41	39	DNS Arrow	2.7	4%	www.dnsarrow.co.uk
42	–	Northgate Information Solutions	2.5e	14%	www.northgate-is.com
43	46	Happy Computers	2.4e	9%	www.happy.co.uk
44	47	StayAhead Training	2.4	4%	www.stayahead.com
45	43	Host Computers	2.4e	0%	www.hostcomputers.co.uk
46	48	Xansa	2.4	-4%	www.xansatraining.com
47	50	PremierIT	2.3	15%	www.premierit.com
48	–	FDM Group	2.3	60%	www.fdmgroup.com
49	42	Bytes Technology Group	2.3	-8%	www.bytes.co.uk
50	49	Ajilon Learning	2.3	10%	www.ajilonlearning.co.uk

How the top 50 was compiled

This table of the top 50 training companies in terms of revenue was compiled by IT Skills Research.

The revenues shown in the table (rank 2007) are for each company's financial year ending in 2006 or cover the calendar year 2006, and relate to IT training delivered in the UK. Eligibility is open to companies with revenues derived principally from the sale of training to employers for their staff, excluding colleges, universities and firms selling to private individuals or delivering publicly funded training.

For companies whose results are on public record, the actual turnover from their accounts has been used. For those with no published turnover, an estimate has been made based on available data, shown by an 'e'. Some revenues given in last year's table have been restated, and growth relates to the updated figure.

This information has been carefully researched, but we cannot guarantee its accuracy or completeness, and will not accept liability for any direct, indirect or consequential loss arising from its use. For further information, visit www.itskillsresearch.co.uk.

Footnotes to Top 50

InterQuad acquired **QA** in 2006, and rebranded the combined company as **QA-IQ**. Figures shown are combined full-year revenues. **Global Knowledge** acquired **Azlan Training** in 2006. Figures are combined full-year revenues. **Xpertise** acquired **Watermans**, a soft skills training business, early in 2006. **Computeach** closed its **SkillsIT** subsidiary during 2006. **SkillSoft** completed its acquistion of **NETg** in Q2 2007. The companies have been listed separately this year. **PPI Learning** went into administration in December 2006. Its assets were acquired from the receiver, and the new company is now trading as **PPI Learning Services**. The figures in the table relate to the old company. **Afiniti** bought (part of) **Learn IT** in 2006, which it replaces in the table. **DNS Arrow** bought **InTechnology's** training business, which it replaces in the table.

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least 10 per cent organic growth per year.

Global Knowledge is aiming for a double digit increase in business this year, according to Hojgaard. 'We will pursue consolidation rather than organic growth. Consolidation can be very effective if properly done as demonstrated with the Alzan acquisition. We'd like to lead future consolidation, but it's not just about size, it's also about raising the bar in terms of quality.'

SkillSoft believes that by becoming larger it can improve its service. 'By significantly expanding our customer base and the products we offer, we will be able to devote more funding and resources to the research and development of new product areas,' said Chuck Moran, SkillSoft's chairman. The other advantage that SkillSoft highlights in a press release is creating shareholder advantage.

Mergers can also help reduce suppliers' risk by diversifying their portfolio. 'It's no use a company just concentrating on one technical skill that may go out of favour,' says Chapman.

Going global

The Training Camp plans to get its breadth and resilience another way: by spreading its risk abroad, according to Chapman. It already has a thriving business in Germany, and is looking to expand elsewhere in Europe.

'France, Scandinavia and Holland are markets that all look interesting to us,' says Chapman.

'Other companies don't go international because it's a big gamble. Often they go for franchises, so that they don't take the risk. There is a demand from multiple geography companies. We're finding that as we go along.'

The latest round of mergers also took globalisation of the market one step further. Global Knowledge and Azlan Training had a European and US presence respectively, while SkillSoft is a US-owned company.



We are continuing to see a competitive market with price pressure and demand. Suppliers and customers are the losers

Frank Hojgaard, UK managing director of Global Knowledge

Hojgaard said that the Azlan Training acquisition had most impact in the UK in increasing Global Services' geographical spread and coverage, but the company is looking at further consolidation in the UK and abroad.

'We are seeing more interest in managed services, some of it international,' says Hojgaard. 'A single point of contact for international businesses is a powerful selling point. For instance, the big financial institutions may be based in the UK but they do business everywhere. We are looking at further consolidation both in the UK and other markets.'

QA-IQ is also not ruling out looking abroad, although at the same time focusing on developing its UK business.

'A lot of the opportunity is in the UK. All our plans for organic growth, particularly, are in the UK,' says Kauffmann.

So there's little question that, training companies are motivated to merge, and plan to do so. Does that mean the demise of the small player?

'There will always be new small players as the barriers to entry to this market are low,' says Chapman. 'It will always have a long tail.'

Also, in the way that larger buyers often prefer larger suppliers, smaller companies often prefer to buy from companies of their own size and league.

So, this time next year, the head of the market may have had another facelift, but the tail should still be wagging – just probably to a different beat.

New entrants to Top 50

RWD Technologies

Business Training Partnership

Symantec Education Services

Fast Lane

Northgate IS

FDM Group

Learning Tree International

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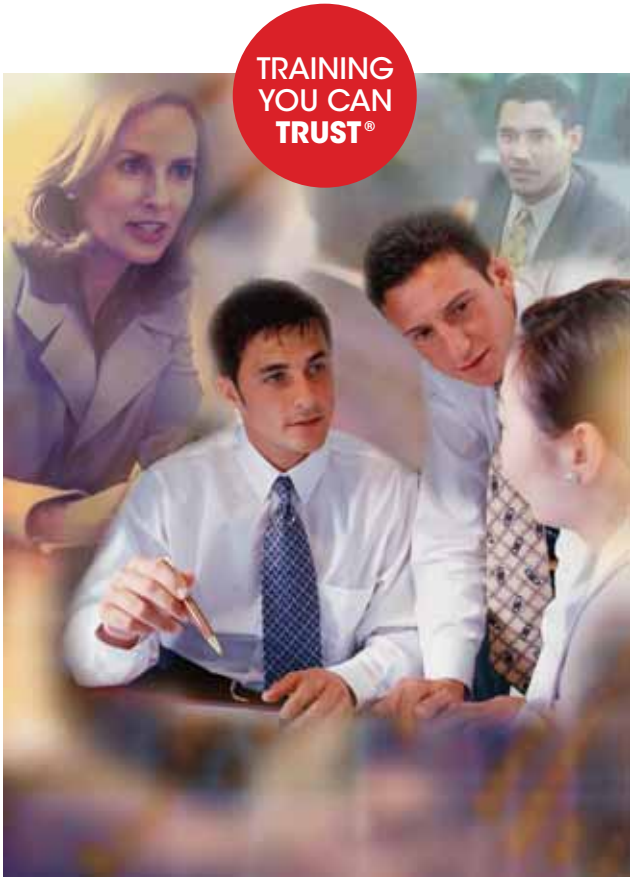
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Early preparation will help move to Vista

Vista is Microsoft's first major release of Windows client software for over five years. Barrie Charles looks at the changes and the implications for those responsible for IT training.

In the month following the official full release of Windows Vista on 30 January, 20 million licences were issued worldwide, according to Microsoft. Although many of these were probably to home users or PC vendors for pre-loaded software, for most corporates and government bodies it's not a case of whether they will move to Vista, but when.

Ovum predicts that up to 15 per cent of users will have made the transition to Vista by the end of 2007. 'With the announcement of the finite lifetime on XP, it's going to motivate more people to take Vista seriously,' says David Bradshaw, principal analyst at Ovum. 'Our expectation is that towards the end of the year you're going to see some of the early majority beginning to roll out Vista.'

Vista has some significant improvements, and the long gap since the last desktop release probably helps too, but there are also some major downsides. The operating system is more demanding, so many PCs will need upgrading with more memory and a decent processor, plus a better graphics capability should the organisation want to take advantage of the new Aero user interface.

Then there's the question of whether old applications work with the new system.



'There are also compatibility issues,' says Bradshaw. 'It has been a complete rewrite of the software. There are going to be applications and drivers for different devices that aren't going to work with Vista.'

Vista is based on Windows Server 2003 technology rather than XP, and a key requirement before any major roll-out will be to check out all the applications and devices in use throughout the business. New drivers may need to be obtained and old peripherals could have to be replaced.

Vista is just one piece of the jigsaw

Alex Keay, area sales manager for Western Europe, Microsoft Learning

Home users will probably opt for Vista as they buy new hardware, but most organisations will probably be more cautious, waiting for the early bugs to be fixed and ensuring that everything works before they take the plunge. Might some companies decide that now's the time to disconnect from Microsoft entirely and opt for Linux on the desktop?

'All the evidence from the volume of training and the interest in Vista suggests that isn't what the market is going to do at the moment,' says Dave Britt, principal technologist at

QA-IQ and BCS Trainer of the Year 2006. 'The demand and interest seems more significant than it was with XP; earlier in the life cycle.'

New features

So what are the system's attractions? The most visible new feature in Vista is the 3D Aero user interface, which, as well as being stylish, promises many user productivity improvements. Thomas Lee, chief architect at Global Knowledge, likes the new interface. He gave the example that when renaming files only the filename is now highlighted, thereby reducing the risk of changing the file extension.

It is highly unlikely that an organisation will make the investment just for the sake of a better user interface, but they may do so for improved security. BitLocker allows hard drives to be encrypted – a major boon for protecting the data on laptops, especially for people like Lee who is in and out of airports and taxis.

'With that kind of running around, laptop losses are a question of when, not whether,' he says.

User access controls (UAC), which introduce more levels of privilege and protection in the system, are another benefit which will reduce support costs. 'Users can do less,' explains Lee, 'therefore there's less they can mess up.'

IT professionals need to understand BitLocker and UAC, but how to set up user PCs is perhaps the biggest change they'll see. 'I think where they really need help is in deployment,' says Lee. 'The basic deployment method is the same, but every single tool is entirely different to XP.'

Office 2007 was also fully released in January, and when corporates roll out Vista, they will most likely include the new release of Microsoft Office. Again the user interface is changed, with, for example, the 'Ribbon': a set of tabs that organises commands into related activities.

For developers, the big news is .NET Framework 3.0 and WPF, Windows Presentation Foundation. Although applications written to .NET 2 should work on Vista, programmers need to use WPF and direct calls to a revised Windows application programming interface to take full advantage of the new Vista look and feel.



In hindsight, a lot of people felt that maybe they'd left their preparation too late for previous window releases

Dave Britt, principal technologist, QA-IQ

New skills

Vista and Office 2007 will be the first major change to the desktop interface for many organisations for a few years, and some user training will be required. 'We've got out of the practice of helping users with new interfaces and tools,' says Britt.

This time around, training is likely to be made up of e-learning, lunch and learn seminars or virtual lab sessions rather than sheep-dip courses. 'Training is a big word for what we need to achieve,' says Britt. 'Users really need to know how to do everything they used to do in the new interface; we don't need to tell them every new fantastic feature. We need to smooth the path.'

Roll-outs and bulk user training may be some way off for most, but developer training is a bit more pressing for those who want to ensure their applications run well on Vista. Perhaps most urgent is gaining an understanding of UAC so as to be able to advise users on how to set up their systems correctly for the application, but then comes getting to grips with .NET 3.

Microsoft offers some e-learning modules but does not offer any corresponding classroom courses for developers at present, although a 'first look' clinic is available and offered by several UK training providers such as Xpertise. The subject is also covered in more detail by QA-IQ in their own courses and in a dedicated WPF course from July.

However, the bulk of the training demand now and for the immediate future is for IT professionals, the implementation and support staff. Many are updating their skills, even if the major roll-out is a long way off. 'You can begin to experiment, prepare and evaluate now, and that's where some of the early training is most important,' says Lee.

Dave Britt agrees and believes that organisations have learnt the lessons from insufficient preparation around previous Windows releases. 'In hindsight, a lot of people felt that maybe they'd left it too late and should have started their planning earlier. People are being a little bit more strategic about Vista.'

Microsoft has a full set of official curriculum courses and corresponding certifications available for IT professionals.

Later this year, the replacement for Windows Server 2003 is expected in the Longhorn release, which will throw up a lot of additional training requirements for IT professionals. Those responsible clearly need to look at the whole picture when planning training provision over the next 12 months.

'Vista is one component,' says Alex Keay, Microsoft Learning area sales manager for Western Europe, 'but there is absolute relevance for developers in the .NET framework and with IT Pros the forthcoming Longhorn release as well. Vista is just one piece of the jigsaw.'

Further information

Global Knowledge
www.globalknowledge.co.uk

Microsoft Certification
www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp

Microsoft Vista training
www.microsoft.com/learning/windowsvista

Ovum
www.ovum.com

QA-IQ
www.qa-iq.com

Xpertise
www.xpertise.co.uk

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Institute of IT Training

How training works for us



Amanda Lowe HR strategy manager, Ofgem

"Past staff surveys have shown that learning and development opportunities are seen as one of the biggest benefits of working at Ofgem (the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets). Ofgem is the regulator for the gas and electricity industries and employs approximately 300 staff in two offices – London and Glasgow.

Ofgem's HR team coordinates a programme of core training which allows staff to develop the basic skills that enable them to undertake their duties and effectively contribute to the delivery of Ofgem's business objectives.

This core programme includes IT training courses such as Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Access. Courses are generally run off-site, mainly at intermediate and advanced level due to the specialist and technical nature of staff.

At the end of each course delegates complete an evaluation form to assess their immediate reaction. Several weeks later, interviews are held with the delegate and the line manager to assess whether delegates are using their new skills in the workplace, possible improvements to the course and any additional training needs of the delegate.

In general, delegates say they find courses enjoyable, their understanding of the particular package increases and they usually start using their skills on their return to the workplace. However, there is some demand for IT training to run in a modular format, which would fit in better with staff time constraints and overcome the problem of some of the course content being less relevant to some people. Something to consider for the future.

IT surgeries are also an important feature. Although these are more costly to provide than standard courses, they are often more effective as individual sessions can be tailored to staff requirements and realistic action plans formulated for implementation in the workplace. They can also be tailored around the staff member's own timetable.

Training needs are identified through ongoing discussion between staff and line managers. If a need is not covered by the core programme, staff are encouraged to find their own courses with the help of an intranet page with links to past courses attended by staff. Recently, these have included Java and Dreamweaver courses.

Ofgem's IT department has its own training budget and a number of its staff have studied for their Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer and undertaken further specialist training. Members of the IT team also attend the Microsoft conference every year to keep up to"

Comment

Changing skills



Technology transforms businesses. Regardless of company size or sector, IT is making an increasingly vital contribution to competitive advantage, productivity and customer service. So it is not surprising that the UK's IT industry is growing at five to eight times the national average. Around 150,000 entrants to the IT workforce are required each year.

However, the job profiles and potential career paths open to the members of this IT workforce are changing significantly. The impact of globalisation means that traditional entry level job roles are increasingly sourced offshore. IT professional roles in the UK are becoming focused on high-skill, customer-facing areas such as project management, business analysis and solutions design. As a result, business and communications skills are becoming as important as technical skills.

This has far reaching implications for the education, training and development needs of IT professionals at every stage of their careers. For example, new entrants into the IT workforce need to be able to progress more rapidly into higher level roles. They must be able to achieve, within a couple of years, the knowledge, skills and competence that in the past might have taken many more years to acquire. Supporting this need requires innovation in the education system and new types of development programmes for recruits to the sector.

In addition, changing business models and the impact of globalisation and emerging technologies mean that the skill set of experienced IT professionals needs to be constantly updated. IT professionals need to develop their skills throughout their careers, with access to recognised qualifications.

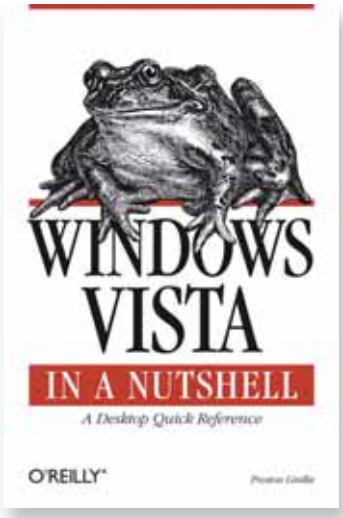
This is at the heart of the drive to professionalise IT. As part of the Professionalism in IT Alliance, e-skills UK is developing a professional competency framework that will support the recognition of capability and the development of talent across the workforce – presented in clear, simple language and applicable to businesses of all sizes, across all sectors.

The constant evolution of the global landscape for IT professionals will only accelerate with time. It is vital that we continue to understand and address the skills and development implications of these changes so that the UK has the IT professionals it needs to succeed.

Karen Price is CEO of e-skills UK, the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms

Book reviews

Our IT experts review a selection of recently published books covering an array of subject areas.



Windows Vista in a Nutshell

A Desktop Quick Reference Guide

Preston Gralla, 750pp

O'Reilly, £24.99

ISBN: 978-0-596-52707-5

Rating ★★★★★

At first this would just appear to be another in a long line of 'In A Nutshell' books and one of a large number of 'How to' books for Windows latest release, Vista. However, when the book is opened even for a short glance it is quickly obvious that this is definitely not the case.

This book is a comprehensive guide to the Windows Vista operating system even down to, the very surprising, level of the ancient MSDOS command line prompts which takes up a whole chapter. This shows that even though Windows continues to advance, the original core aspects are still present.

This book uses none of the gimmicks of some of its competitors and is all the better for that. It does use over seven hundred pages to cover fourteen chapters and five appendices. Apart from the appendices the book is split into two parts, 'The Big Picture' and 'Nutshell Reference'.

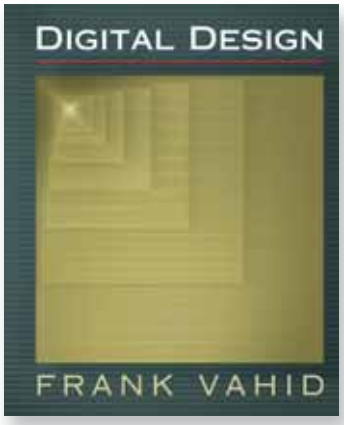
'The Big Picture' takes the reader through the new elements of Windows Vista as well as the nuances of its various editions, this version of Windows having more variations on usage than previously.

It continues, as you would expect, with chapters on the specifications required to support the new operating system and the upgrade paths. The final and most significant chapter covers the changes to the more common parts of the Windows environment, e.g. the Desktop, Files & Folders, Starting Applications.

The 'Nutshell Reference' section, which should really include the Appendices, forms the major part of the book and goes into the details of how the major functions operate within the Vista system and the installation process may be undertaken. There is some overlap here with previous versions of Windows, but again the differences between the old and the new are highlighted.

This book would be a worthwhile expenditure for anyone about to make the transition to Windows Vista.

Reviewed by Len Keighley FBCS, data warehouse consultant.



Digital Design

Frank Vahid, 592pp

Wiley, £34.95

ISBN: 978-0-470-04437-7

Rating ★★★★☆

Frank Vahid's Digital Design is not about the design of digital documents for the internet age, but is about the design of the digital circuits at the heart of the devices of the digital age. These devices include everything from day-to-day items such as mobile phones to life-saving medical devices.

The book is aimed squarely at students of digital design and distinguishes itself from older books by separating the topics of basic design and optimisation. It is very much a course book and each chapter concludes with a series of exercises.

The author presents the material in a logical way covering basic implementations of digital technology and the underlying prerequisites of Boolean logic and algebra before addressing the architecture and building blocks of digital components.

Later chapters go into sufficient detail to illustrate the principles behind more complicated implementations including a digital video device, programmable ICs and hardware description languages.

Failure to grasp the initial concepts will have a knock-on effect to the later discussions, making it more of a serial text rather than a reference book.

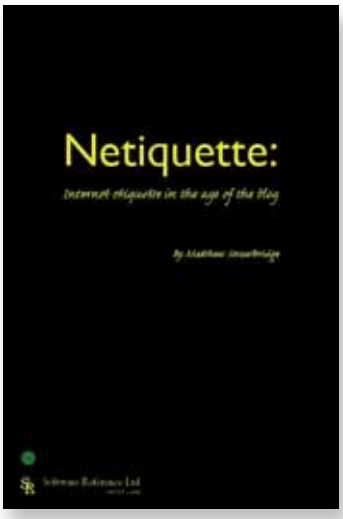
The topic of digital design is by its nature very technical and very complex. Good use of analogies backed up with illustrations helps to explain the concepts. Product profiles and personal profiles of digital engineers also provide some relief to the challenging concepts.

The author correctly identifies industry's need of engineers who are both sufficiently technically minded to be effective digital designers as well as sufficiently personable to understand the requirements of end users. However, his suggestion for verbally expressing base ten numbers in a more intuitive way betrays how this might not be possible.

The author intersperses the text with interesting historical facts and anecdotes which help break the technically heavy text.

As a course book, this text is undoubtedly robust enough to provide the curriculum. It would also prove useful to digital design students looking for a text to support them in their existing studies.

Reviewed by Adrian Hibbert MBCS, technical manager, Strand Technology.



Netiquette: Internet etiquette in the age of the blog

Matthew Strawbridge, 168pp

Software Reference Ltd, £12.95

ISBN: 978-0-9554614-0-8

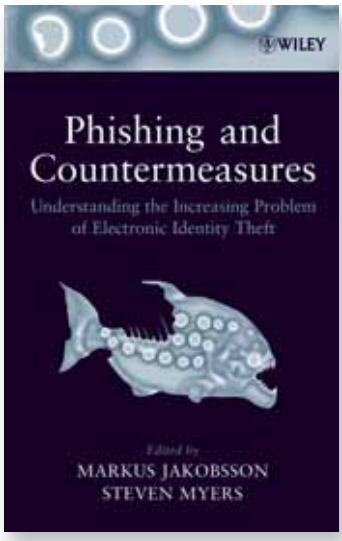
Rating ★★★★★

This is a first class little book and I thoroughly recommend it to beginners and experts alike. However, I feel that the title perhaps undersells its appeal. Although it is true that it covers all aspects of best practice when using the internet – from simple email to online auctions – the detail goes far beyond just etiquette. It is really a very handy reference guide to all aspects of getting online. It describes and explains what all the online services are and looks into their origins. Where does 'spam' come from, what is a blog or a wiki, how do forums work?

Running through the book are 157 'rules', each cross referenced and summarised for easy look up, and grouped under headings such as: email; forums; advertising; on-line services; and security. A bibliography and glossary complete the material.

Everyone can learn something. For example, did you know what 'address munging' was? I didn't. (It's anonymising your address.) Do you know how a 'troll' uses 'flamebait' on forums? Buy the book and find out. It will be £12.95 well spent, I can promise. Author Matthew Strawbridge, software engineer, copy editor and technical author knows his stuff and how to put it across. You'll even learn what a colophon is.

Reviewed by Alan Pollard FBCS CITP, BCS vice president member services.



Phishing and Countermeasures

Understanding the Increasing Problem of Electronic Identity Theft

Markus Jakobsson, Steven Myers, 700pp

Wiley, £47.50

ISBN: 978-0-471-78245-2

Rating ★★★★☆

Prior to reading this book I assumed the term 'phishing' referred to a technique of fraudulently retrieving users' confidential information primarily via email. Although this is partly correct, it is also a far too simple definition and this book elaborates on the correct and broader definition of the term.

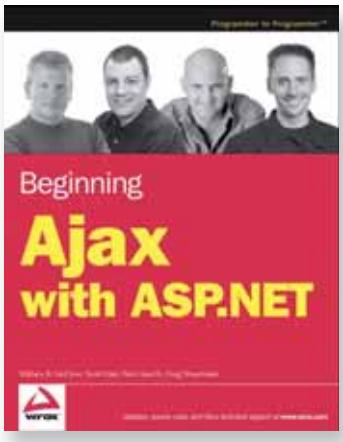
The types of phishing, pharming and spear phishing attacks are discussed, such as spoofing, malware, DNS-based attacks, man-in-the-middle and password attacks. Strategies and countermeasures for each form of attack are presented, each with their own merits and weaknesses.

Despite the title of this book the content also includes broader security topics, particularly in the context of countermeasures. This includes cryptography, honeypots, password technology, biometrics, trusted computing and authentication. There is also an interesting chapter covering tools available for browsers that help to detect phishing sites.

Case studies throughout the book help to reinforce the key points.

Given the target audience of technical managers, security professionals and computer science students, the book is well written and comprehensive.

Reviewed by Mehmet Hurer MBCS CITP CEng, OSS solutions designer, BT Exact.



Beginning Ajax with ASP.NET:

Wallace McClure et al, 432pp

Wrox, £25.99

ISBN: 978-0-471-78544-6

Rating ★★★★☆

This book is intended mainly for developers who are familiar with ASP.NET 2.0 but wish to learn Ajax. The book's style is very practical, with many source code examples and screenshots. The reader is walked through the example code in a step-by-step, click-this, type-that fashion. The server code is written in C# and the client code is written in JavaScript. The source code examples can be downloaded from the publisher's website.

The book divides into three main sections. The first introduces the techniques that support Ajax: DHTML, JavaScript, XML, JSON and XMLHttpRequest. Much of this material may be familiar to existing web developers.

The second section mainly describes how Ajax is supported by ASP.NET, particularly the use of script callbacks.

The last section gives an overview of Microsoft's Atlas framework for Ajax. It describes Atlas scripting, controls and integration with ASP.NET. There are useful web links for further Atlas resources. The book concludes with a good, general section on debugging Ajax on both the client and server sides.

The book is good value for money, a very comprehensive introduction. The publisher's website has good support including details of errata and a blog. I recommend it. ■

Reviewed by Simon Clarke CEng FBCS CITP.

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IITT seeks to clean up the marketplace

The Institute of IT Training (IITT) has launched a new accreditation programme for training providers who provide training for individuals who pay for their own training.

This follows the pledge made by the Institute of IT Training chief executive Colin Steed to clean-up the personally-funded training market when he appeared on the BBC TV's consumer programmes Inside Out and Watchdog earlier in the year.

The Institute's new accreditation programme is specifically aimed at training providers who sell directly to the public.

'We have been working solidly since autumn last year with some of the leading players in that market to ensure that we cover all bases and focus specifically on the sales processes and job guarantees, and I am delighted to announce that we shall be launching the new accreditation on 5 June 2007,' said Steed. 'We have been consulting the Office of Fair Trading and our code of practice should be available soon on their approved list.'

Watchdog investigation

Appearing on Watchdog on BBC 1 in April this year, Steed said that the Institute had launched a campaign to protect the public from unscrupulous providers with their hard sales techniques and from the widespread practice of promising unrealistic jobs that are plaguing the industry and giving the commercial training market a bad name.

'We get very few complaints about our commercial providers but receive many complaints from the public about mis-selling and broken promises from this area of the market,' said Steed.

'We are extremely concerned that the rate of these complaints is growing by the week and causing even the good providers to be viewed with suspicion. The market is worth multi-millions of pounds and the less reputable training providers in the market are earning fortunes at the expense of the public.

'This is a pity as there is a real need for this training to help individuals change career or get started in the IT industry and the IT industry needs this influx of new, well trained staff.'



Steed explained that the Institute invited all of the Institute-accredited companies operating in this marketplace and formed a steering group of training providers, including Computeach, Cerco and JustIT, in order to compile a rigorous accreditation programme for the personally-funded training market.

'The new accreditation programme will still encompass the quality of the training delivery, but will provide a strong focus on the training providers' sales processes,' explained Steed. 'We shall set up the scheme so that the buyer is protected against mis-selling in much the same way as the FSA has cleaned up the financial services industry.'

Steed reiterated that he wants the Government to help him in the campaign. 'The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) should be particularly interested in joining up with the Institute as the LSC Career Development Loans are used in the majority of cases,' said Steed.

'We need them to work with us on this campaign so that, for example, only those providers who are institute accredited will receive CDLs from them. In that way we can make a real difference and cean-up this market.

'We are making every effort to get to the right people in the LSC, but our efforts to date have been fruitless.'

Government gets involved

However, Steed explained that he had approached Barry Sheerman MP, who heads up the Parliamentary Education Committee, and has an interview with him regarding the situation.

'I am delighted that at last someone from Government is taking an interest. I am hopeful that this initiative, with Government backing, will eliminate the cowboys and protect the public.'

The Institute will issue a new accreditation logo, a kite mark specifically for the public and shall be embarking on an extensive publicity programme very soon.

'We shall be utilising TV advertising and working with the recruitment agencies and job sites in order to get the programme known to the public,' said Steed.

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MPs to investigate Career Development Loans scam highlighted by IITT

A government-backed student loan scheme has been targeted by fraudsters, leaving victims with no tuition and debts totalling millions of pounds. Now the powerful all-party parliamentary education committee is to investigate how the government failed to vet companies registered for the Career Development Loan (CDL) scheme, allowing criminals and failing businesses to profit at the expense of students.

The scandal has echoes of 2001 when the Individual Learning Account initiative collapsed after mounting evidence that no tuition had been provided by some of the companies that picked up government grants.

The education committee found that the learning accounts debacle had cost taxpayers up to £400m. Barry Sheerman, committee chairman, said he would now turn to CDLs: 'We are going to be asking some probing questions about this.'

The scheme gives students access to interest-free loans of up to £8,000 if they train with one of 2,000 training providers named on a register at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). So far more than 100 firms on the list have gone bust, leaving students with debts to pay off but no courses to attend.

Banks handing out the loans and industry leaders have expressed dismay that companies with poor track records were allowed to join the scheme. A source inside one bank admitted that it would consider pulling out of the scheme if procedures were not improved.

'The fact that the council has no quality control over its learning providers is appalling,' said Colin Steed, chief executive of the Institute of IT Training. 'While anything that helps improve skills-based learning is to be applauded, quite frankly the way in which this scheme is administered suggests that the LSC is failing in its duty of care.'

Sheerman said it was wrong that people left without training should have to repay the loans: 'The government and the LSC should be responsible.' However, he highlighted the fact that many others had benefited from the scheme.

Why 'stand and deliver' is never enough

Training professionals must turn current thinking on its head and move from reactive suppliers of what managers ask for (but don't know they don't need) to proactive managers of an organisation's capability. That was the message from Reuters global head of learning Charles Jennings, in his keynote address to a packed audience at the Institute's Training 2007 annual conference and exhibition this month.

Jennings said: 'In short, training professionals need to shift from the comfort of the 'conspiracy of convenience' (where nobody questions the value of training), to thorough engagement across the organisation – including challenging where necessary, understanding its business language and processes, and sharing in its risk.

'A decade ago we were trainers. Now we're learning and development professionals. Apart from the addition of nine syllables to our job titles, has anything really changed?'

In his challenging keynote, Jennings argued that if it hasn't yet, it must. While training summed up the idea of the individual as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, 'learning and development' indicates an interest in helping individuals grow – growth that best occurs with their active and enthusiastic participation.

Jennings illustrated his keynote session with practical examples from Reuters and elsewhere. 'This is not a sales pitch for a complicated theory of training return on investment that the L&D department brings to the organisation. It is, simply, a set of principles to help a learning and development department do its job well: making the organisation more effective at whatever it does.'

Training jobs on the IITT Connect site

Institute of IT Training members now have their own job board for training vacancies. The jobs are now available on the members Connect site.

Updated monthly on the 21st of each month, you will find training jobs from organisations who specifically want to recruit from the Institute of IT Training membership.

Currently there are three vacancies showing as IT Training goes to press. Please take a look and see if there is a job for you.

If you wish to advertise a vacancy, please contact Kim Arnold on 0845 006 8858.

www.iittconnect.co.uk



Clive Shepherd

Openness helps smooth change

While at an e-learning conference in Boston recently, I was lucky enough to attend a keynote presentation by change management guru Peter de Jager. Now normally this is one of those topics that sends me to sleep, but somehow Peter's approach seems simpler, more memorable and more applicable to the world of e-learning.

The most striking of the ideas that Peter suggested was that people don't actually resist change, in fact we voluntarily and enthusiastically engage in all sorts of massive and highly risky changes throughout our lives. How about getting married, having kids, moving from one town or country to another, even changing careers? Clearly these are not trivial changes.

It seems that what people resist is being changed, that is change that they haven't instigated for themselves. After all, change is a threat to the status quo, to the investments you've made in time, energy and other resources to become what you are.

What people resist is being changed, that is change that they haven't instigated

Resisting change does not make you a Luddite or a 'difficult person'. Everybody resists some changes, which is only right and proper, because not all change is necessary or beneficial. We would be weak-minded if we simply adopted every suggestion and acted on every order, however senseless.

The fact is that you will not commit to the pain and chaos associated with change unless you understand why it is necessary. You are therefore often provided with no explanation or one that is either patronising or superficial.

Managers so often underestimate the intelligence of their subordinates. If they were more open and truthful about the reasons for the change then they would be a good way along the road to gaining your support. If they allow you to participate in the development of the solution, rather than presenting you with a fait acccompli, then you'll be as committed as they are.

All very well, but what has this got to do with e-learning? Well, these ideas have an impact at three levels. At the top level, they may influence how you gain support for a new e-learning initiative. The key here is not to try and impose a solution but to engage with the key stakeholders and ensure their participation in developing the solution.

Consult learners to ensure your proposals provide them with clear-cut, positive advantages compared to their existing training, not just cost-savings at the expense of quality. Work with managers to ensure your e-learning strategy will be easy for them to operate and support. Work with IT to remove the barriers to your success but without compromising the security and reliability of the network. Most importantly, work with other trainers to ensure they have a role to play in the use of technology and are not left on the sidelines without the skills to contribute.

Change management works at a more tactical level as well, such as the implementation of a new training programme. Mandated programmes (other than those that provide you with the essential skills of your job) are naturally going to be resisted.

If they really have to be mandated, for compliance reasons, then at least be prepared to explain why, with absolute honesty. You may not be able to guarantee that employees will be motivated enough to learn more than they need to in order to pass the test, but at least they'll make an effort to comply.

I believe that change management operates at a micro level as well. After all, learning changes the brain, for good. If it doesn't, then it hasn't happened. The learner is the gatekeeper to their brain. No amount of lecturing, instructing, prescribed reading or showing of videos will make any difference if employees are not convinced that they want their brains changed.



For the gates to be opened, learners have to recognise that they have a gap in their knowledge or skills that they believe is worth filling. And they will be much more committed to the process – and the learning will be much deeper – if they have discovered the learning for themselves.

Psychologist Carl Rogers once said that 'nothing worth learning can be taught', which is probably going a bit far, but there's little doubt that learning by doing, conversation, reflection, discovery and inductive (non-directive) questioning will be more effective than simply telling. Actually that's not really such a micro issue for trainer – it's MASSIVE.

Peter has written a book called 'A pocketful of change' (de Jager and Company, 2007: www.technobility.com) which is only 60 pages long, not at all theoretical and easily readable in an hour. If you don't get the opportunity to hear Peter speak (or even if you do), it's a good read.

Clive Shepherd is e-learning director of The Training Foundation.

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