162 Tips and Tricks for Working with e-Learning Tools

Edited by Bill Brandon

The eLearning Guild™

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I. How to Use These Tips

A. Introduction

In October and November 2007, The eLearning Guild conducted a survey of its members, asking for their favorite tips for using software to create e-Learning. Members could submit tips in any or all of these five categories: Courseware authoring and e-Learning development tools, rapid e-Learning tools, simulation tools, media tools, and combining and deploying authoring tools. A total of 122 members responded to the survey, contributing 162 usable tips.

As usual in our past surveys, the tips range in length from one-sentence ideas all the way up to page-long discourses. Some are very basic in nature, and others are quite advanced. We have not edited the tips in any way, other than to correct spelling – everything you see in this book is in the tipsters' own words. As a result, these tips will be useful to any designer or developer looking for best practices to incorporate into their own production process.

We began the process of turning these tips into an organized collection by simply separating the tips into the five major categories of the survey. The largest group is the tips for authoring and development tools. The smallest group is the nine tips on using media tools.

Next, we tried to sort the tips in each group into sub-categories that would help readers locate the ideas of most interest to them. We were able to do this for three of the five groups, but the two smallest (media tools and simulation tools) are presented without any kind of categorization.

We follow each tip with a number indicating who contributed it, and an indexed list of Tipsters appears at the end of the book. This may help you to contact Tipsters for additional information. A few tips were contributed by "Anonymous" but in most cases, you will know who provided the idea.

We deeply appreciate the effort that contributors made to create these tips. We hope you find many valuable ideas here that can help you as you create content for online learning.

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If you're not familiar with their products for e-Learning, or if you haven't checked them out lately, we encourage you to take a look at your earliest convenience.

Synchronous events, when recorded and archived, add to the asynchronous materials. People often ignore this source of generating asynchronous content, but it is as quality critical as is planned asynchronous content.

Vic Divecha, eLearning Specialist, University of Michigan School of Public Health

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools

Tips on design

One of the primary things that an instructional designer has to remember is that your toolbox is precisely that, the method of expression for the underlying practices and procedures which establish a comprehensive set of learning around a specific focus. By focusing on the professional development of the individual behind the tool, one can enhance the application of the toolset to provide more effective training presentations with higher student information absorption and, ultimately, a better return on investment for each course. – 118

While designing courseware, being content aware is essential. Balancing synchronous and asynchronous content as complimentary resources is critical to the flow of the course. Synchronous events, when recorded and archived, add to the asynchronous materials. People often ignore this source of generating asynchronous content, but it is as quality critical as is planned asynchronous content. – 114

Organize your course material into folders on your computer. This makes it much easier to create a course structure for the learner in your LMS, and also helps you to quickly locate your course files when you want to modify them. – 86

Clustered layout: Ensure that groups of related content are clustered together in a layout that does not require scrolling or searching. For example, any text, video, or image related to a concept or thought should fit on a screen without scrolling. – 37

Before you begin developing your course content, identify five to ten course learning objectives. Ask yourself what outcomes you would like your learners to achieve upon successful completion of your course. Developing course learning objectives helps you to ensure that your content is geared to these outcomes, and simplifies the next step of developing your course map. – 18

Storyboard medium – we use PowerPoint for storyboarding for the following reasons:

1. The master slide can be used to build a template that mirrors the template(s) we use in Dreamweaver. This way, content developers know how much screen space they have to use. Also, copying and pasting into Dreamweaver is easy, since it doesn't copy over any extraneous code like MS Word does.
2. Content developers can use the Notes feature to leave directions for the coder. This way the notes are attached to the storyboard. – 90

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The eLearning Guild is a Community of Practice dedicated to meeting the needs of those involved in the design, development, and management of technology-delivered education and instructional content. It's a member-driven online information center that equips members with the resources needed to ensure that their organization's projects are successful, engages members in a professional peer network, and focuses members on expanding their own professional skills, knowledge, and expertise.

The Guild offers four levels of membership. Starting at the FREE Associate level, the benefits you can gain from each level of membership will enhance your professional experience. At the higher levels, you'll discover The eLearning Guild can serve as the core of your entire professional development program. ***Check it out!***

"Attending The eLearning Guild's Annual Gathering helped me realize the Guild's honesty and commitment to what e-Learning is all about — improving performance. Great conference, but even more — great Community of Practice!"

DAVID BRAUN, TRAINING & PERFORMANCE SUPPORT SUPERVISOR, SASKPOWER

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The master [PowerPoint storyboard] slide can be used to build a template that mirrors the template(s) we use in Dreamweaver. This way, content developers know how much screen space they have to use. Also, copying and pasting into Dreamweaver is easy, since it doesn't copy over any extraneous code like MS Word does.

Ray Miller, Program Manager, Northrop Grumman

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

People learn best by repetition. You need to make sure that important information is presented more than once, and in more than one way. Let your learner know what they will learn, teach them, then remind them what you have taught. It's an old formula borrowed from public speaking, but it especially works with online learning. My favorite way to do this with curriculum design is to have an outline or table of contents for each learning module. This lets your learner know what is coming (Step 1). Then provide them three to five examples of learning content (Step 2), and then give the same number of chances to prove they have absorbed the information in the form of a quiz for review (Step 3). The quiz can be multiple choice or any other relevant format. – 49

Tips on development

Before you start using a tool, make sure that there is enough space for your media, including sound files and video clips. How many clicks does it take for you to insert a picture? Try it out in the trial and see whether this slows down delivery for your learners. How easy is it to collect, review, and import your results, and can you sort the results and easily edit them? Before you buy, think about the FUTURE number of trainers, translators, etc. that will need a license. How long does it take you to convert existing content and to create new content? – 23

When creating content for your course offering, it is always best to test the output resolution. That way you will always know that your content will be fully visible for all screen resolutions. Simple freeware available on the internet will allow you to quickly resize any window to any screen resolution in just a few clicks. – 39

Convert as many of your content files as possible to the HTML file format. Most authoring software will have an export-to-HTML function available. This will enable your learners to look at the course material without any plug-ins or other software packages. – 86

Many current LMS / LCMSs offer a WYSIWYG editor where you can copy or paste content from external editors (for example, Word). However, the pasted content is often not of good quality and includes Word notation, etc. A good way to keep your source simple is to copy or paste the content into Notepad first, quickly format it there using simple HTML tags like <br>, <h1> or <h2> and then paste it into your WYSIWYG editor. For Firefox, copy/paste does not work via mouse; you need to paste using a shortcut (CTRL+V). – 9

Be consistent. Navigation should be consistent for all pages. – 37

Audio recording tip: Don't say "changeable things" out loud. When recording any audio narration, don't record things that frequently change. For example, if you record this script: "The price for Product X is $19.99," a price change will force you to re-record your audio. Instead, ensure you show the price onscreen, but record your script this way: "Here you can see the current

When creating content for your course offering, it is always best to test the output resolution. That way you will always know that your content will be fully visible for all screen resolutions.

Fèlix Ouellet, Trainer, Desire2Learn Inc.

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

price for Product X." That way, it's much easier to change the onscreen text, and you won't have to re-record your audio. Besides prices, other examples of "changeable things" could be: dates, speeds, computer measurements (MB, GB, etc.), procedures that aren't finalized, etc. This tip should not only save you time, but if you use paid professionals for your audio, money as well. – 27

Tips on keeping the learner in mind

ALWAYS keep your audience in mind. Don't get too advanced in technology if the user is much more remedial. When using audio, again, keep your audience in mind. If it's a Global audience, use a voice-over that has minimal dialect or accent. Speak slowly, clearly, concisely. ARTICULATE! Don't use slang. End users do what is easy, so make your modules easy to use, and easy to follow. – 74

Simplicity: Put the most essential elements up front. Subcategories should be available in submenus. – 37

When creating e-Learning, don't forget that you may still have users that have old monitors. Using the lowest common denominator of 800 x 600 will save many headaches for you and your users. Also keep in mind that if you do develop for 1024 x 768 monitors, make your actual screens at least 20 pixels smaller, or the learners will not see each entire screen, because the task bar will hide part of it. – 47

Use less text. Present only one thought or concept per screen. – 37

The user's experience is more important than the content. Always develop with the user in mind, and make sure the navigation is intuitive. An advanced user may want to move ahead quickly, while a novice user may want more hand holding. While it takes more resources to develop a package that users can control, it will truly benefit the users if you do. – 85

Convert all handouts to PDF, so that your students will be able to access them regardless of the software on the computer they are using. There are many free PDF converters available. – 17

Whatever tool you use, it is important to engage students from the start. Immediate success builds self-esteem, and gives the courage to go ahead. Most learners, and especially adult learners, are afraid of failure, so present them with a short, and very clearly formulated, test or learning activity that they cannot fail at. Following this up with immediate, positive feedback will fill the students with excitement, and motivate them to go ahead with the more challenging material and tools. – 45

The user's experience is more important than the content. Always develop with the user in mind, and make sure the navigation is intuitive.

Phil Cowcill, Coordinator, Interactive Multimedia, Canadore College

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Tap into the Power of Emotions: Recent advances in brain research in the last fifteen years have revealed the extraordinary complexities and fundamental effects of emotions on learning. This research highlights the DOMINANT power of emotions on learning. As a result, it is important to find design strategies that tap into emotions, especially in situations where you expect learners to be more self-directed and independent. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Detect what is meaningful, expected, understood, and valued. Use relevant, concrete experiences to build on what they already know. Through a good audience analysis, identify why the learner should care, pay attention, and remain engaged.

2. The best learning comes from concrete experiences stimulated by deep emotions. The level of emotion will influence how the learner will allocate attention, remember, and ensure retention and recall.

3. Ensure practice and feedback opportunities. The best learning comes from fun, repeated experiences.

4. Humans are good at copying. Help learners copy and practice expertise (e.g., role modeling).

5. Use metaphors, parables, similes, analogies, stories, and patterns to enhance enjoyment, relevance, engagement, and understanding.

6. Use mystery and captivation to stimulate curiosity and fun. We are attracted to what appeals and is useful and relevant.

More information about this research appears at: http://www.trainingplace.com/source/research/. – 63

Transitioning from printed and talking-head types of learning to self-paced study online is like trekking the wilderness off-trail. Authors may do well to offer their learners a few smart survival tools before waving goodbye! Here are a few to consider:

1. Use Clear Legends on your Map: Author new products with identifiable icons from your branding. (Add logos, your "buzz" words, recognizable titles and voices, and anything that links the online product to recognizable icons of the printed and spoken world.)

2. Share the Compass: Author new products that give people a sense of direction in their study and that make them feel on course, steadily moving in the right direction, and able to navigate the content efficiently.

3. Provision Appropriately: Author new materials in ways that meet a variety of learning needs, and offer many places for refreshing and revitalizing a genuine desire to learn and a clear sense of personal growth.

4. Welcome Them Back to Camp: Provide author resources that let learners return to camp (work) and share their great adventures around the camp fire (company outcome). – 72

Some thoughts on assessments: Many online learners stall when it comes to taking assessments. It is important to remember that the online courses will free the learner and the author from some of the constraints of face-to-face learning. So don't make the mistake of placing scored and recorded assessments in the middle of content where you want the learner to remain engaged and committed. By allowing unrecorded self-assessments, so that learners can

By allowing unrecorded self-assessments, so that learners can fail and retry without fear or embarrassment, you'll get better results on the scored and reported assessments, which you should preferably keep separated from the learning exercises.

Roger Mundell, CEO, Udutu.com

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

fail and retry without fear or embarrassment, you'll get better results on the scored and reported assessments, which you should preferably keep separated from the learning exercises. If your learner can practice until he or she is perfect, then the only challenge to achieving perfect assessment scores will be keeping them motivated and engaged. Remember to construct your course like a story, so the learner has a reason to continue and a need to know the ending. A separated assessment will also give you greater flexibility to impose restrictions, such as time limits, number of tries, deadline dates, etc. An ideal assessment might be an applied learning exercise such as a scenario or case study, rather than a memory test. – 91

Tool selection guidelines

There is no perfect authoring tool, and probably there never will be. Each tool vendor suffers from a basic struggle between making its tool easy to use and making it powerful. Can't a tool have both? Let's think about this. If a tool had only one option in it – push a big button in the middle of the screen – it would be extremely easy to use, but also not at all powerful. Whatever it ended up doing as a result of pushing that button would likely be invariable or possibly randomized, but not customizable in any way, as the developer has no other options except to click the one button.

So the tool creator decides to add more features, and to make each one easy to use. Sounds good? Of course it does. However, each additional feature, no matter how easy it is to use, requires that developers learn about those features. This increases the learning curve for the tool regardless of how easy each feature is to use. As a result, many of the features will likely never get used. Do you know all the features available in Microsoft Word or Outlook? OK, so we'll accept the higher learning curve, because now we'll have more features available to us. After all, each one is easy to use! But what does easy to use mean? Starting with the development environment, one person's heaven is another person's hell. If you use a time-line approach, you're going to lose those developers who find that mechanism difficult because they think in terms of flow lines, events triggering new branches. Time lines do not show branching easily. Those who think in temporal terms, though, detest the idea of a flow line. Just give it to me straight, they say. There are those who love to script, others who are scared at the very thought of it. So let's forget a time line or flow line.

Can't we use Wizards for all of our needs? They're so cool. After all, they're called Wizards! The trouble, though, with these little Merlins, is that they have to make a number of assumptions, or provide lots and lots of options to you to allow you the flexibility you need. Ah, there again, we are faced with a problem. Too many options make a person's head spin. Can't we have a time line instead? Or a flow line? Or both? Or...

So the simple crux of the tool vendor dilemma is how to make the tool both easy to use and at the same time very powerful, allowing the developer to create almost any kind of e-Learning, in the least amount of time, and with the least amount of pain possible. To this end, some tools

Choose the development tool based on the most complex interaction you'll have to build for a project. That way, you'll know the tool can handle all the interactions you'll need.

TIM JONES, SENIOR MULTIMEDIA SPECIALIST, THE CAPITAL GROUP

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

come close; others are far from good solutions. No tool, however, can do it all without some pain. If a tool vendor tells you otherwise, run away as fast as you can. An honorable authoring tool vendor will give it to you straight, and talk about the tool's weaknesses as well as its strengths. Once you've determined both, then you can decide how well that tool will work for your instructional design approach, and whether it can be used alone, together with another tool, or not all. – 53

Before you consider which set of tools to use to develop your e-Learning, you must consider several other factors first. Following are among the most important, but are not all-inclusive.

1. Consider the venue. Will the end result be on the Internet, on an Intranet, on CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, or a combination of these? Which browsers and computer platforms must be supported? Which operating systems? Will it make use of Wikis or blogs, or be blended with live classroom or Web conferencing? Be sure that the tool you use will allow for the venues that you need to use.

2. Consider the learners. Will your learners include foreign students who will need the learning in their language? Will you need to accommodate learners with disabilities? Will the tool you choose allow for performing easier translations by letting you externalize text and images without reprogramming? Will it make it easy to allow for accessible options to audio, video, on-screen text, and navigation?

3. Consider the content. Are you teaching accounting principles, software, or philosophy? Are you training paramedics, or teaching algebra to high school students? The content and the learners dictate the design you should adopt. Only when you've determined how best to serve your learners should you decide what tool will accommodate your design. Don't force-fit your design into a tool that can't handle the features you want to include.

4. Consider portability. Will the content you create with your tool be portable to other platforms or other authoring tools? This is not often considered, but can be very important when your authoring tool reaches the end of its life cycle, as happened recently with Macromedia Authorware, or if you simply prefer to move to a different tool. One portability factor may be whether the tool supports XML output. XML can be ported to many platforms and venues.

5. Consider the support you will receive. Are there free or for-pay online forums? Are there expert consultants available to get you up to speed? Are there classes available? How long will the tool vendor provide free support, and what follows after that?

6. Consider your developers. Are they programmers? Are they subject-matter experts with little computer experience? Each tool provides a different experience, from simple Wizards to lots of scripting. However, don't assume that Wizards are better than scripting just because they're easier. They may severely limit what you can accomplish.

7. Consider how well the tool works with other tools. Often, it ís a combination of tools that will give you the best bang for your buck. – 53

Choose the development tool based on the most complex interaction you'll have to build for a project. That way, you'll know the tool can handle all the interactions you'll need. – 107

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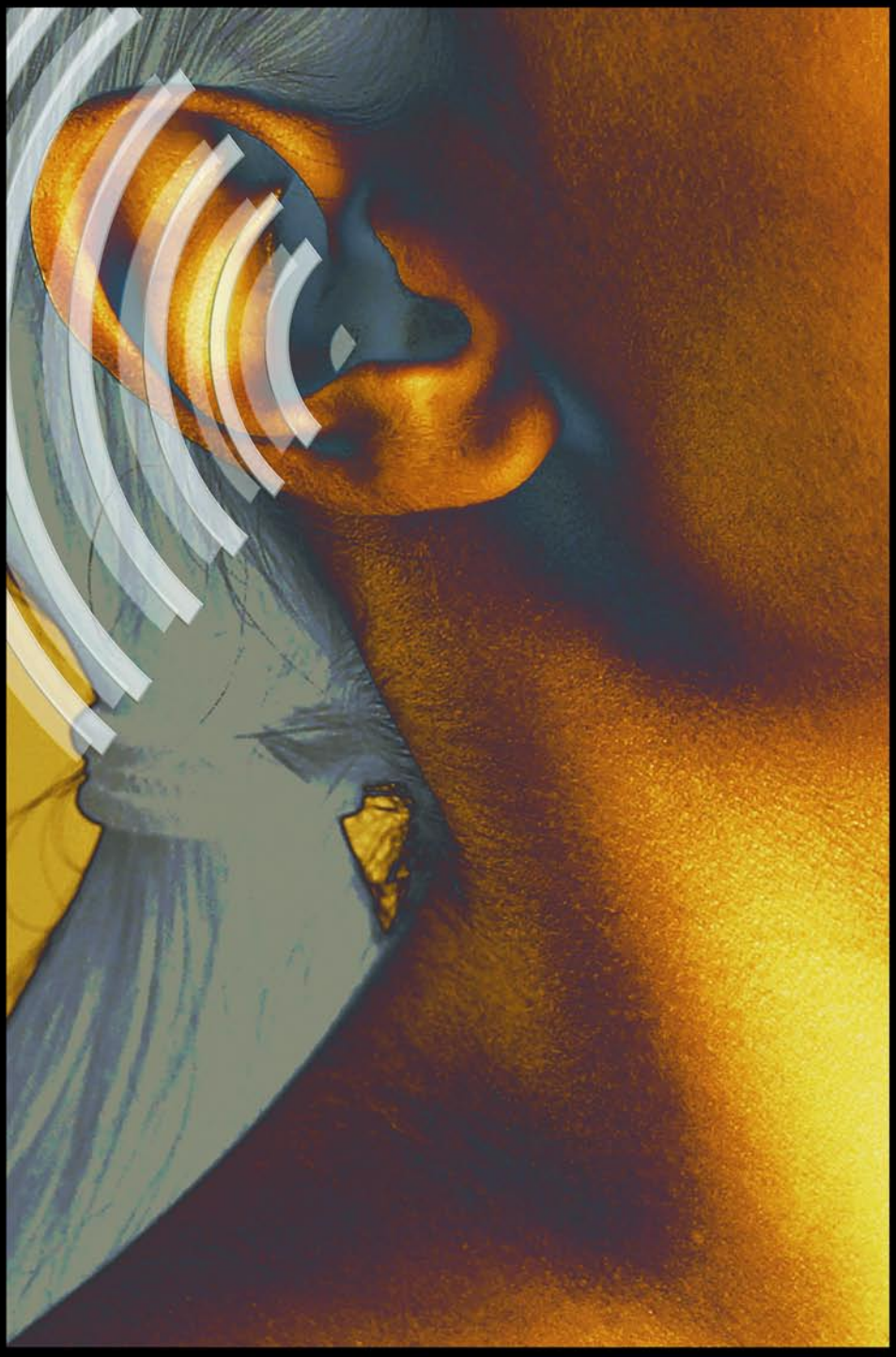

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Do not assume your students know how to use whatever tool or software you are using. Always include a tutorial session for students to get to know the tool or software. Include an exercise that is not graded, and which allows the students to get to know the tool or software and each other.

Bruna Ori, Technology Integration Specialist, Highland Park High School

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Do not look for an all-in-one tool solution. Use tools for their strengths, and combine outputs. – 5

Don't limit yourself to the capabilities of one authoring tool. If you do this, your content can soon become predictable and boring. Learn how to use other tools such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Sound Forge, and Premiere to create templates, graphics, logos, special effects, and audio and video elements that will keep your target audience interested and coming back for more. – 71

Here are a few tips to consider when selecting authoring and development tools:

1. Get a demo copy of the tool and use it to build several prototypes of your courses / modules. There's nothing like a hands-on trial.
2. Search blogs for opinions and reviews of the tool. Don't be afraid to reach out and contact peers to ask questions about their experiences.
3. Don't get "sold" by a salesperson. Always verify all features and functionality yourself. If you desire a certain feature or functionality, you may often hear, "That will be in our next release." Take it with a grain of salt. If that feature or functionality is important to you, find a tool that already has it built-in.
4. Ask about customer support. Some vendors charge for this!
5. Look for free stuff before making a purchase. Jane Knight maintains an excellent list of over 1,800 e-Learning tools, and she indicates which ones are free. You can find the directory at: http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/Directory/index.html.
6. Ask for references. Most vendors will be happy to put you in touch with a few of their existing customers. Give them a call and ask about their experience. Would they recommend the vendor and its products and services? – 10

In order to reduce development time, development templates are essential. The authoring tool is not relevant to this discipline. It also requires less training of the SME's as they are entering in content versus ISD, adult learning, etc. – 13

I've learned that e-Learning tools are as strong as you make them. Often clients specify that the deliverable be a file format that they can use. If the parameters permit it, by all means, work to do so. This often means pushing Microsoft Word or PowerPoint to their limits, but it also means learning, as a designer or developer, that Word or PowerPoint can do a lot more than you originally thought. – 19

When selecting your tool for e-Learning Development – begin with the end in mind. Be very aware, in advance, what the final file format needs to be. Whether it is an internal or external client, you will save yourself a headache in the end if you know before you complete your course whether it needs to be an FLV, SWF, HTML, a nested directory structure, or a flat directory structure. For example, Articulate publishes in a nested directory structure, so if your output needs to be a flat directory, Articulate would not be the correct tool. – 48

Who says you need a budget? Open sourceware sites such as Sound Forge provide many tools for editing audio and graphics that will kick your e-Learning up to the next level. And did I say "For free?"

Chris Wilkinson, Lead ID, ADP

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Determine the skill level of your content developers. While they can certainly expand their skills and knowledge, if the tool requires manual programming you may find yourself back where you started. There are a number of available tools that do not require content developers to understand programming code. Do some research within your organization and on the authoring tools; make the tool fit your organization and culture, not the other way around. Be prepared to spend a few months to find the right solution. – 80

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1. First and foremost, the client's key stakeholders must clearly lay down mission-critical requirements before the start of any tool evaluation. This is the blueprint that will keep the team grounded in reality, and not swayed by the bells and whistles of the tool. This means that the stakeholders must be experts in their own right, before they are able to state what they want out of the product. The requirements document also acts as the communiqué for the potential vendor, so that he understands the specific requirements.

2. Reading product reviews, and going through online demos, is a good start to get an overview of the capabilities and limitations of a tool. The next important step is to follow up with a hands-on evaluation, that is, use the tool to create a typical courseware that your organization produces. This is the phase where you will see for yourself how true the claims made by the reviews and vendor are, and what the hidden constraints are.

3. We need to involve all the end-users in the hands-on evaluation of the tool. For instance, for a course development tool, it is not enough to involve just the technical staff (e.g. programmer). It is critical for the learning designer to use the tool to start his storyboarding and online design, in order to get a good feel of the usability of the tool. Multiple perspectives from different users are required for a good assessment. It is through this experience that you can ask the right questions of the vendor. For instance, a tool may claim to be able to produce a courseware that is W3C compliant. By trying it out, you will be able to find out if it is W3C – Level 1, 2 or 3 compliant. Also the ease of doing so.

4. With the distribution of the organization's workforce globally, including places where broadband Internet is not widely accessible, content must be efficiently deliverable via the Internet. Learners should not be twiddling their fingers while waiting for the content to download. Thus, to leave no stones unturned, we should test the performance of the courseware by putting it through the entire courseware design and development process!

5. If there are doubts about a certain capability, the client should ask the vendor for a solution or a workaround. The client should test this to ensure that the solution works, and that there are no other negative implications. If there is no immediate solution, the vendor must commit to delivering the solution in a reasonable and acceptable time frame.

6. The evaluation process can be tedious due to the varied areas you must look into. Thus, keeping good documentation becomes essential. The information gathered, and decisions made at the different phases, are the building blocks for the final proposal you will make to management.

7. To conclude, an evaluation is a well-planned, systematic, and deliberate process. Buy-in of the key stakeholders is a key critical success factor. In addition, there must be a comprehensive evaluation based on established criteria, otherwise the tool purchased may end up as a white elephant! – 82

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Industry

Continuing Education

Challenge

Deliver cost-effective and quality training to individuals nationwide

Solution

Online training using Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional software

Results

- Improved quality, interactivity, and variety of course content
- Reached wide audience via the free, ubiquitous Adobe Flash Player software
- Created new revenue sources by increasing the number of classes and participants

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Acrobat® Connect™ Professional
- Adobe Connect Training
- Adobe Captivate™
- Adobe Presenter
- Adobe Flash®
- Adobe Reader®
- Platform: PCs running Microsoft® Windows®

Broadening professional development opportunities

New and interactive learning technologies are replacing the traditional classroom instruction that has often required students to travel long distances. As a result, training professionals are re-evaluating continuing education methodologies in search of more efficient career development.

Because government agencies and enterprises often have limited dollars for job training—particularly for travel—development experts are employing cost-effective web technologies to reach individuals with relevant and engaging courses. As it expands its curriculum to offer more online training via these technologies, the Graduate School, USDA has turned to Adobe solutions.

In 1921 the secretary of agriculture established the Graduate School, USDA to provide individuals with opportunities for career advancement. A nationwide institution, the Graduate School enrolls 200,000 participants annually and offers nearly 1,000 courses.

Adobe solutions for blended learning

To deliver engaging course work in synchronous and asynchronous modes to government employees, federal contractors, and industry professionals, the Graduate School uses the software of Adobe solutions—its Adobe Connect Professional, Adobe Connect Training, Adobe Flash, and Adobe Captivate.

Typical courses focus on necessary government skills, such as accounting and auditing, human resources, leadership and management, and information technology. Courses generally include live presentations, video and audio, interactive discussions, and online testing—all delivered as part of the "GS Connect" program.

According to Dr. Sharon Fratta-Hill, dean of information technology at the Graduate School, the scope and quality of these courses produces new operating revenue as more courses are added and enrollment increases. "Our goal is to add experiential value to engage learners in superior ways. Adobe Connect software enables us to do exactly that."

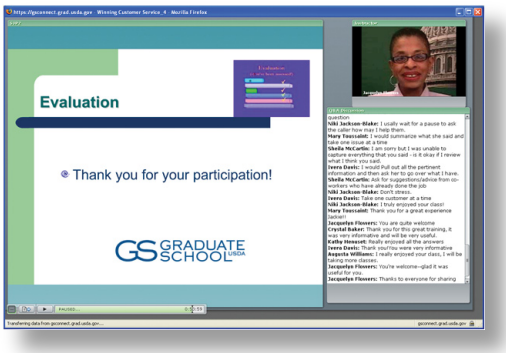
The Graduate School's first slate of online courses includes a customer service class that incorporates real-time meetings with instructors, dynamic discussions, and interactive polls. Students view videotaped examples in Flash of customer service interactions and comment on their quality.

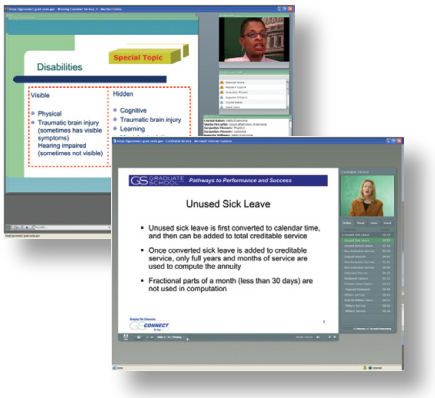
In an Earned Value Management class, participants learn from a combination of audio and Microsoft PowerPoint slides, while a pre-retirement course uses extensive video linked with PowerPoint slides.

Rapid development and secure deployment

The Graduate School's technical experts used Adobe Presenter to develop courseware and create high-quality presentations from within Microsoft PowerPoint. They augmented the content with movies in Flash as well as how-to procedures and narration recorded using Adobe Captivate

The Graduate School, USDA uses Adobe software, including Adobe Connect Professional, Connect Training, Flash, and Adobe Captivate to deliver engaging course work in synchronous and asynchronous modes to government employees, federal contractors, and industry professionals. Courses generally include live presentations, video and audio, interactive discussions, and online testing—all delivered as part of the "GS Connect" program.





"Our goal is to add experiential value to engage learners in superior ways. Adobe Connect software enables us to do exactly that."

Sharon Fratta-Hill,
Dean of information technology,
Graduate School, USDA Platform

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/

software. By abandoning a platform of limited interaction and static instruction, the School's management has adopted more interactive lessons that incorporate real-time discussions, video, audio, interactive tests, and other live elements.

Equally important, the School needed to ensure that courses would be readily available to everyone who wanted to take them, without requiring participants to download and purchase costly software. In addition, Fratta-Hill notes that "when you are training people at security agencies, they are not permitted to install extra software on computers." Because Adobe Flash Player is installed on 97% of Internet-connected computers, there is easy access to programs for everyone.

Graduate School educators agree that Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional and Adobe Connect Training are important tools for providing synchronous and asynchronous online learning solutions in geographically dispersed yet collaborative work environments. With a staff of four instructional designers, the School plans to reach its goal of deploying 20 online classes within the first year of adopting the cost-effective Adobe software and technology.

Adobe

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USA
www.adobe.com

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II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

While choosing a rapid interactivity building tool, make sure to first understand what kind of learning interactions you need (games, puzzles, software simulations, soft-skill simulations, surveys, or even 3-D worlds!). Don't go for ready interactions just because those are available. Understand your need, and then choose the interactions and the tool which provides those interactions. – 88

Get the right people. Selection of the authoring and development tool starts with selecting the right people for the tasks. The people who know the actual needs are the people who are intimately involved in the actual day-to-day operations in the process. These are the users of current tool(s), and eventual users of the new tool(s). They include the current instructional designers, developers, editors, quality assurance reviewers, and the content management expert. People who are in the leadership position, who understand the business needs and see beyond the current needs, should help to alert about current and future trends of business, pedagogy, and technology, and therefore highlight potential future needs.

While it is good to have all people involved in the selection, to better manage the learning and development tool selection project, an experienced and mature representative of each group should be in the selection team. This team is involved in the project from the analysis and writing of the requirements, to evaluation of the product, to acceptance testing of any development works that follow. This same team of people should also continue to look at enhancement to the tool for future needs.

To manage the entire selection process and the people involved, a development tool selection project manager is required. This person should, ideally, also be the implementation project manager to continue with the work after the selection process. The selection team thus includes at least the project director, the course development project manager, an e-Learning IT expert, and the learning designer. The project director is required to provide guidance to the overall project objectives. S/he has an overview of the current situation and the business needs, and provides insight to the future usage and technology of such a tool. Of high importance is how it might fit into the current infrastructure, and the future one. It is important to ensure that the technology of the tool does not become obsolete when it is finally implemented, as it is common to take weeks, and sometimes months, for the selection process, training, and implementation to complete. This depends on the amount of customization work required on top of the basic tool.

An expert learning designer should have experience and knowledge in content development, and preferably basic ideas in content management. The expert learning designer provides the overall learning approach and strategy adopted by the organization or school. S/he also provides advice on the work of the learning designer in the process of online content development, and thus the necessary tools that the designer might require to further enhance the efficiency of the work. While her considerations on the tool are for the designer, the ultimate objectives are still to ensure the best product is provided for the learners. As the tool is meant to be a tool for content design and development, both the learning designer and the developer should give the necessary input to the RFP, and later on, to the selection of product and vendor. The e-Learning IT expert understands the needs of the technology involved in learning content

Because the tools are costly, it is more difficult to get learners to add to the content even if they have their own expertise, especially in low resource areas or developing countries. But if you use a free open source tool for e-Learning, it is easier to give learners and students a free hand in developing content themselves, thus increasing their learning curve on the subject matter as well as on computer literacy.

INGE DE WAARD,
COORDINATOR ELEARNING,
INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL
MEDICINE ANTWERP

Use Save As... often, and after every major change! ToolBook files have a tendency toward corruption when the file sizes are large, and it usually happens in the 11th hour. Saving your ToolBook file with a new name, often, and after every major change, will help you quickly get back on track.

PETER VOJTIK, INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIST, U.S. CELLULAR

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

development. S/he is familiar with e-Learning standards, including recognized global standards and practices. As technology moves at a high speed, the IT expert should keep abreast of the latest development and standards in the world, and the future of this area. S/he should understand the current infrastructure of the organization, and how the new tool might impact on it. S/he provides the consultancy to the selection team in this area of expertise. As the selection and implementation process might take a long while before it is used, the IT expert should advise on the durability of the tool and technology selected. – 97

Look for an authoring tool that comes with training and support. Your organization has just spent a great deal of money to purchase the authoring tool you acquired, so make sure you take the time to learn how to use it to it's full capacity! It will make you more successful in developing e-Learning content, and you will be glad to avoid the frustrations that come with learning a new product on your own. – 113

The top three most important considerations: Who will be the audience for the training? What is the nature of the content? Who will be authoring the content? We advise our clients that the nature of the content and the audience determines the sophistication and interactivity required of both the end result and the tool utilized. The actual tool utilized depends somewhat on the sophistication and knowledge of the author. If the author in fact does have instructional design and sophisticated IT ability, then the more flexibility in utilization of a tool or tools can end up with a quality result that the audience will learn from. If, however, a fairly robust result is needed with an author with limited IT and/or instructional design abilities, then a more robust authoring tool is not only desirable, but required in order to achieve a favorable outcome. – 120

Here are the few points which should be normally considered while selecting Authoring & Development Tools for e-Learning development's work flow.

1. User Interface: Normally, instructional designers who are not tech savvy will use the interface.

2. XML output: Editing is easier and offers cost saving when it comes to rework or change requests.

3. SCORM-compliant: The output should be at least SCORM-compliant, so that deployment on an LMS is simpler and faster.

4. Design / Layout templates: The tools should contain lot of templates, so that the course you make is engaging and varied.

5. The global elements like Header, Navigation Buttons, Scroll Bar, and Navigation Menu should be editable, and modifiable by a novice.

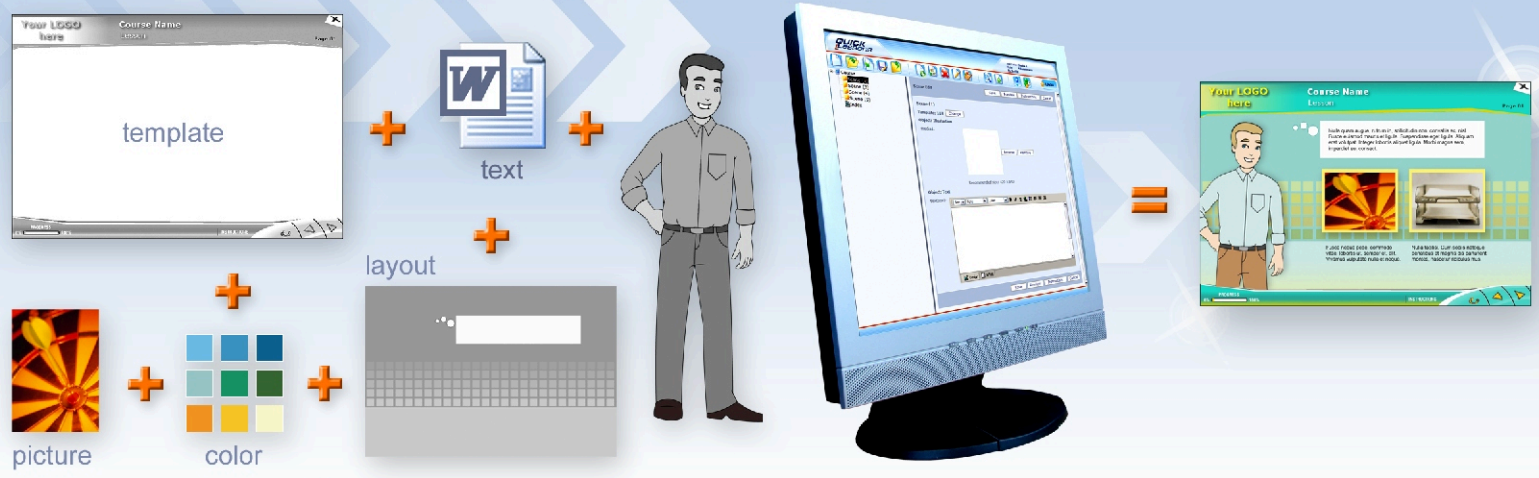
6. Cost efficient in terms of reviewing and prototyping.

7. A Web interface will be a bonus so that cross-functional teams in an organization can work simultaneously. – 89

QUICK Lessons

Now you can develop online courses fast and easy from wherever you are!

QuickLessons is a 100% web-based platform, fully featured to create and manage interactive and visually appealing Flash content.



- Use our cutting-edge library of dynamic instructional templates.
- Choose from a variety of frames, animated characters and images.
- Add your own media such as text, Flash animations, audio and video.
- Customize your project with your own logo and color schemes.
- Forget about programming navigation, bookmarks, exercises, evaluations and SCORM compliant packages.

NO programming!
NO designing skills required!
NO software installation!
YES, it's that easy!

It's all done for you!

Come put your brain into it!

Visit **www.quicklessons.com** and try it for **free**!

E-Learning delivery is different from classroom delivery. Don't just record your slides and voice and call it e-Learning. Consider that instead of one session with your content, learners may want to come back to it multiple times. This means that they should control the timing and flow of the content – not you.

Al Moser,
VP Engineering, ReadyGo

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Design and development tips for educators

Since my domain is educational technology, my tips are specific to teachers and educators. We need authoring tools that teachers and educators can map to their lesson planning, and which provide them with capabilities to build up an interactive course without demanding any HTML knowledge from them. – 76

Do not assume your students know how to use whatever tool or software you are using. Always include a tutorial session for students to get to know the tool or software. Include an exercise that is not graded, and which allows the students to get to know the tool or software and each other. Here in our high school, I always tell the teachers to book a lab the first time they introduce their Moodle site. They can then have students play on the site with each other, either in chat or sending internal IMs. Students can ask all the questions and practice. The teacher then explains their Moodle guidelines and online class expectations. We also make sure teachers cover Netiquette at this time. Teachers, just like parents, often assume students know more than they do. – 17

It is crucially important that e-Learning authoring and development tools contribute with innovative ways to use Web-based learning technology towards emerging online pedagogical design principles, like templated construction and SCORM-based Open Source authoring environment. This assists teachers and academics in the design, development, and production of Web-based learning and teaching materials. – 46

Classroom to online: considerations

There are many different approaches to transitioning from classroom training to e-Learning, and many new things to consider.

1. E-Learning delivery is different from classroom delivery. Don't just record your slides and voice and call it e-Learning. Consider that instead of one session with your content, learners may want to come back to it multiple times. This means that they should control the timing and flow of the content – not you.

2. Each learner learns differently. It is important to provide multiple presentations of the same material so that the user can find their own best path, and can resort to a different presentation if they didn't fully understand your first explanation. Include tests, examples, etc. Narrated text is almost as passive as a movie. Test questions are the most active way to engage the learner.

3. If you stick to standards like basic Web ones, you'll have much less trouble delivering your content to people using different devices. Keep in mind that not everyone uses MS-Internet Explorer on a high-resolution screen with the latest Flash, Video, and audio plug-ins. People may

Each tool provides a different experience, from simple wizards to lots of scripting. However, don't assume that wizards are better than scripting just because they're easier. They may severely limit what you can accomplish.

JOSEPH GANCI,
PRESIDENT & CEO,
DAZZLE TECHNOLOGIES CORP.

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

be coming to your content on an older laptop computer, or a cell phone.

4. Use a Web approach (like Google) rather than a print approach (like PowerPoint) to have the most effective delivery. When you print content, it appears as a linear stream. Web experiences are best when the user can jump around based on their immediate needs.

5. Minimize use of "eye-candy" (flying bullets and dancing pigs). While these are a lot of fun to create, they are terribly distracting to the learner. Students should be able to quickly access the content multiple times. If you have flying bullets and videos, will this slow down their ability to see the content of interest?

More about these topics at http://www.readygo.com/isd. – 1

Design/development team issues

Reduce dependency on content experts by recording them at the beginning of the project giving a lecture on the course topic to the development team. This material will be the main information source for instructional designers. This strategy aims to avoid waiting for content experts to fill information gaps, and therefore to keep the development on track. Close to the end of the project, the content experts will revise the course Beta version, and identify needed changes. In our experience it's better to keep the project on schedule, even considering that it's possible that some re-work will have to be done at the end. Content experts usually are willing to cooperate, but their daily activities leave them short of time to participate in the development. To get the most from their time, we'd rather limit their intervention to both ends of the project. – 55

Thirst Burst relieves thirst, and starch makes parch. Keep the team juicy and fluid at every step in the work. Look for constant ways for everyone to encourage creative ideas, explore new venues, and stretch the limits of their tools. When teams have enthusiasm and energy, there is a momentum that pushes almost effortlessly through blocks, deadlines, and politics. Find whatever it takes to put some "burst" into your development teams and watch them wrap that energy around learning needs, company outcomes, and break-through creations! Go ahead! Get Juicy! – 72

Work methodically with the evidence! CSI: Care, Show, and Inspire! CARE: Take the time to bring content, technical, and subject matter experts together in small ways that build a sense of "terrible importance" around authoring projects. Make everyone know they are indispensable. SHOW: Build learning resources that have everyone's fingerprints still on them. The final product should have elements (fingerprints) from each contributor that they can point to and say, "I did that!" Look for ways to exhibit everyone's contributions. INSPIRE: Never compromise standards, the next level of achievement, or the next great idea. Find ways to keep your development team always engaged and excited about learning resources. Find credible ways to promote everything – even the impossible. – 72

[F]ollow up with a hands-on evaluation, that is, use the tool to create a typical courseware that your organization produces. This is the phase where you will see for yourself how true the claims made by the reviews and vendor are, and what the hidden constraints are.

Michael Ciambella, Director of Learning Programs, Genesis HealthCare

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Software Tips/Recommendations: Open Source

Who says you need a budget? Open sourceware sites such as Sound Forge provide many tools for editing audio and graphics that will kick your e-Learning up to the next level. And did I say "For free?" – 22

Xerte

Take a look at Xerte from the University of Nottingham. Free, and very powerful, editor for learning objects deployed in the Flash Player. – 119

Xerte, a free, open source authoring tool: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~cczjrt/Editor/. A quote from their site: "Xerte is an XML editor and run-time engine that makes it easy to create and deploy interactive learning objects that are highly accessible and SCORM compliant. Xerte helps you focus on interactive design by providing tools that are fit for purpose and easy to use. Users of Xerte will be familiar with Flash, and will benefit from some experience in ActionScript or JavaScript. Having proven the potential of these tools on several major projects, we are making the tools freely available to the wider e-Learning community." – 38

eXeLearning

An effective tool for authoring content is eXe (http://www.exelearning.org), an XHTML editing application that you can download onto your desktop. eXe is a free download available for Windows, Linux, and Mac operating systems, and publishes content in XHTML format which means that you can import it easily into any LMS that supports the SCORM standards without having to reconstruct the course from individual components. eXe has developed around formal elements called instructional devices or iDevices. iDevices include a range of pedagogical forms, e.g. objectives, advance organizers, and learning activities which constitute the equivalent of the "teacher talk" in content resources designed for online learning. eXe is a brilliant tool for those new to e-Learning to use, as it provides a simple, structured way of creating content that is pedagogically supported, as well as being created in a format that will ensure the content can be used again regardless of any change in LMS that is made. – 32

Student-centered learning in low resource settings, eXelearning: We all put the learner or student in the center, and try to get the e-Learner to be an e-Teacher. The only problem is that most tools are costly. Because the tools are costly, it is more difficult to get learners to add to the content even if they have their own expertise, especially in low resource areas or developing countries. But if you use a free open source tool for e-Learning, it is easier to give learners and students a free hand in developing content themselves, thus increasing their learning curve on the subject matter as well as on computer literacy. In low resource settings, it is important that students work with a tool that is downloadable (small in size) and that does not ask for specific plug-ins. One of the tools ITM uses is eXelearning (exelearning.org). With this tool,

Use the free trials! Others can't always tell you what tool will be best for you. Only you are going to know that. Take advantage of the free trials some of these companies offer, and see what the best fit is for you and your company.

Daniel Vaughn, Training Specialist, Capital Group

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

students (post-graduate and Ph.D.) from low resource settings have been contributing to content in medical courses. You ask learners/students to construct one part of a course, and to let their peers review it. This approach led to an increased understanding of the subject matter, and gave the students a better understanding of the didactical approaches as well, which they in turn could use in the field or in their health district. Making their input part of the course will stimulate them even more to explore new ways of attaining knowledge and spreading it. – 45

Moodle

Moodle. We use Moodle for athletics, activities, clubs, and committees within our school and community. It is not just for classes. – 17

Moodle: Author locally, then deploy. Too busy to author your Moodle courses online? Install Moodle in your laptop or desktop using XAMPP or MAMP. Create your course in your local Moodle instance, and then use the Backup feature of Moodle. This results in a compressed file that you can then Import later on your online Moodle site. – 92

Software Tips/Recommendations: Commercial

Use the free trials! Others can't always tell you what tool will be best for you. Only you are going to know that. Take advantage of the free trials some of these companies offer, and see what the best fit is for you and your company. – 25

Adobe Authorware

Use Authorware if you want something really interactive. Even for inexperienced developers it is possible to make nice e-Learning in a short time. And, with a little more experience, it lets you do anything you want. The only downside is that it is from Adobe now ... and they no longer invest in this perfect e-Learning tool. – 35

Adobe Captivate

When working in a tool that lets you capture software simulations, such as Adobe Captivate, you often have the option to record narration while you capture the software simulation, using a microphone plugged into your computer. The result of this is often amateurish, and of low quality. So why do it? There are a couple of reasons why you may want to consider doing this regardless of the results. First, the resulting piece may not need to be of high quality. It may have a short shelf life, and the project budget may be low. In this case, amateur narration may be acceptable.

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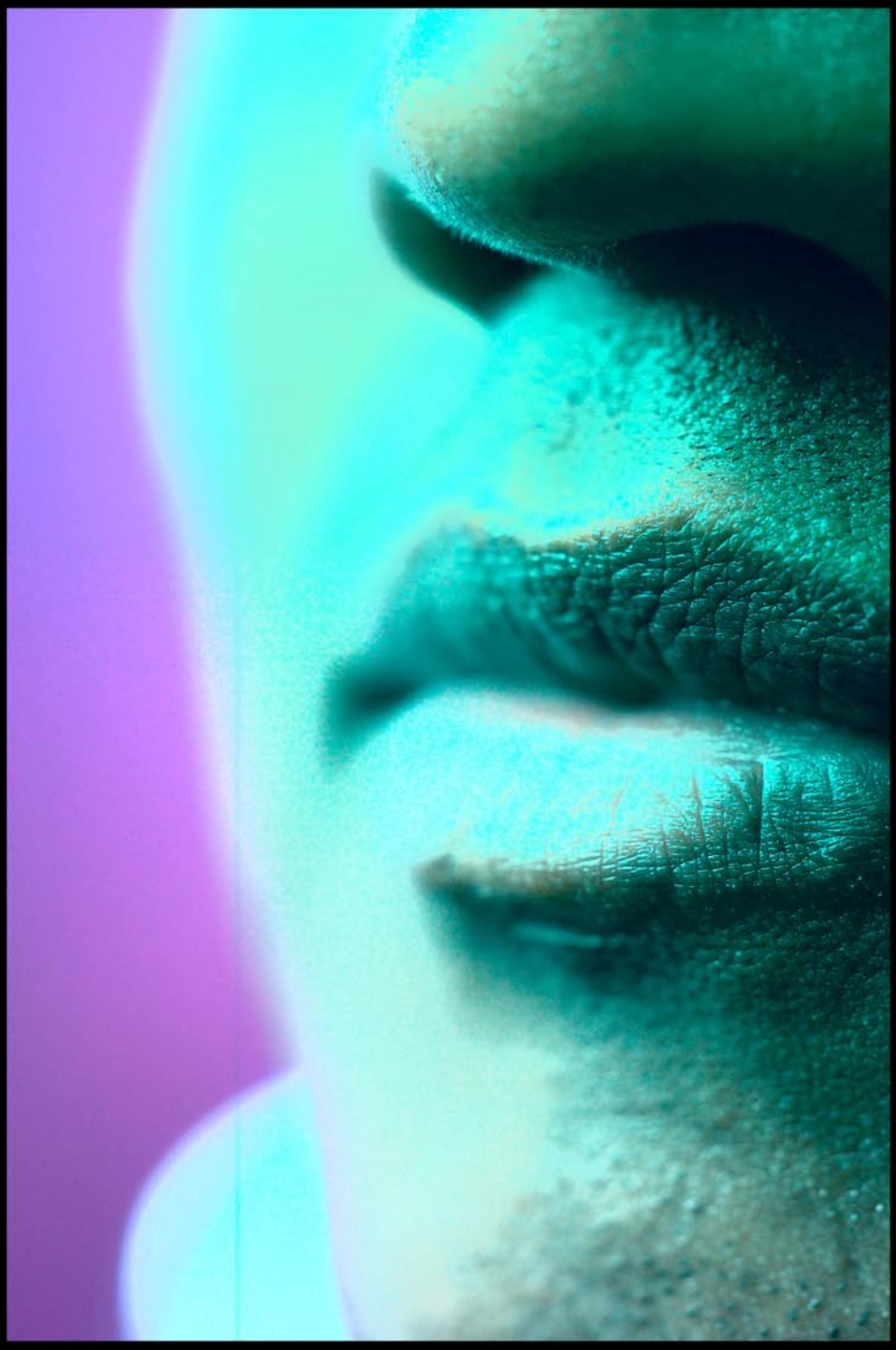

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[C]onsider recording amateur audio with the intention of later replacing it with a professional narrator's voice, because hearing the audio can be quite a different experience from reading a script. What looks good on paper may not seem that way when heard out loud.

Joseph Ganci, President & CEO, Dazzle Technologies Corp.

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Do the best you can to make sure you are in a quiet room with all potential interruptions eliminated, such as ringing phones or people knocking on your door. Don't eliminate the people (that ís a drastic step!), just put a sign on your door. Also think about those noises to which you are so accustomed that they may escape your notice, such as background air conditioner hum. Close your eyes and try to isolate individual sounds and eliminate them. Second, you may want to consider recording amateur audio with the intention of later replacing it with a professional narrator's voice because hearing the audio can be quite a different experience from reading a script. What looks good on paper may not seem that way when heard out loud. Because professional narrators (whether in your organization or outsourced) can be quite expensive, it may help to hear the amateur audio, and through an iterative process, continue to adjust the script until you are satisfied the wording is correct. After that, you need only utilize the services of a professional narrator once for the course. It may also help the narrator to hear the amateur audio to get a sense of the pace he or she should use to match the simulation events.

When recording the audio during the software simulation capture process, take pains to only speak a step to take when not clicking, dragging, or performing the actual step. For example, if you are simulating how to drop the File pull-down menu in Microsoft Word and then choose the Save As option, consider using the following approach. Step 1. [Narrate] "First, open the File pull down menu." Step 2. {Click the File pull down menu so the simulation captures it.} Step 3. [Narrate] "Now click the Save As option." Step 4. {Click the Save As option so the simulation captures it.} As you can see, we do not click or perform any other event until we have finished narrating the step to take. We alternate events with narration, rather than doing them at the same time. The main reason for this is that a product like Captivate will separate the simulation into separate slides for you to edit. If you don't make any changes to the length of each slide, no worries, because the end result will be seamless. However, if you make adjustments to the slides and change the timing of any of them, it is likely your audio will cut off in the middle of a word, or you will hear other strange artifacts. You can avoid this by ensuring that each audio narration clip is entirely self-contained within a slide. This also makes it much easier to replace the amateur audio with professional narration later. Steps like these can save you a lot of headaches! – 53

Captivate, Adobe: The quizzes in Captivate can be quite dysfunctional and finicky, so we generally find it works better to use buttons and track-points rather than use the quiz slides. – 3

Here is a little tip for Captivate users. Very often when using double-click boxes, depending on the clicking speed of the user, you might end up one slide too far. The trick is to use a dummy slide after the slide that contains the double click, it will just display for a millisecond or two, and will ensure smooth working of your simulations. Similarly, when calling a JavaScript upon successful completion of a series of slides, it can happen that the script isn't called when a (scoreable) click zone is present on the last slide. There too, adding a dummy slide at the end of the simulation will ensure proper calling of the JavaScript. – 121

Take 75% of that information that your SMEs have been cramming into those slides and use it as the foundation of your narration text. Bonus tip: Use multiple voices for testimonials, characters, and case studies.

Michael Sunnarborg,
Sr. Training Specialist,
Target Corporation

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

Adobe Flash

Flash, Adobe: When creating e-Learning content for firewall-enabled clients (learners), it might be a better idea to embed the audio in the SWF as opposed to streaming it (as an MP3). Some firewalls screen MP3 files, and to bypass this, the learner often doesn't want to be in a troubleshooting position with the his/her IT department. – 77

Articulate Presenter

Articulate Presenter, by Articulate Global, Inc., has been a fantastic tool I've used to re-engineer old boring PowerPoint presentations into interesting and engaging e-Learning modules. Here are a few tips to help make your repurposed PowerPoint presentations more effective using Articulate:

1. Articulate lets you easily add narration. If you're like me, you are tired of reading the screen. Reduce everything to only bullets and images. Then, take 75% of that information that your SMEs have been cramming into those slides and use it as the foundation of your narration text. Bonus tip: Use multiple voices for testimonials, characters, and case studies (I often ask my clients to do voiceover, and they love it!)

2. Articulate packages your presentation into a Flash-based output file, so take advantage of the compression. Have you explored the custom animation effects built into PowerPoint? Well, now's your chance! Add nifty animations and movement to those boring slides, and make your images and clipart come to life. Bonus tip: If you program each animation to "on mouse click," you will have complete control over the timing of your narration and animations when you produce the Articulate module. Trust me – this will impress your colleagues!

3. Articulate allows you to add attachments to your presentation. Make a nice PDF version of your presentation slides for your learners who'd like to keep an electronic copy (or for those diehard Boomers who need to "print it out"). Bonus tips: Create this attachment in PDF. Do not attach the original PPT slide deck, or learners may be tempted to edit the content. Also, if you have layered animations, be sure to create a special copy of the deck (for the PDF attachment) with each static slide displayed.

Best of luck bringing your dusty PowerPoint into the 21st century! – 73

Blackboard

Blackboard, Blackboard: Use a Blackboard Quiz Generator to quickly import quizzes from Notepad or Word documents into the Blackboard Pool Manager. The College of Southern Idaho generator is free for public use at http://www.csi.edu/blackboard/bbquiz/doc.asp. Use the search engine keywords “blackboard quiz generator” (without quotation marks) to find additional generators. – 58

Exporting your finished avatar files as FLVs (Flash movies) provides the best resolution and smallest file size. But when you import the FLV into Flash to add graphical elements, controls, and background images, the audio component of the FLV disappears. In Flash, import the original audio file as an MP3.

Dan Karwoski, Senior Media Designer, Intuit

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

CodeBaby® Production Studio

CodeBaby Production Studio: Exporting your finished avatar files as FLVs (Flash movies) provides the best resolution and smallest file size. But when you import the FLV into Flash to add graphical elements, controls, and background images, the audio component of the FLV disappears. In Flash, import the original audio file as an MP3. After some minor timeline adjustments, the audio file should sync up nicely with the avatar, and provide the best audio and animation quality. – 24

Dreamweaver

I've updated the L5 SCORM Producer extension for Dreamweaver so that it outputs SCORM 2004 packaged content. You can create multi-SCO packages with fairly extensive metadata, including taxonomies. No sequencing yet. You can download it at my site (free, no strings – just remember me when you're rich and famous – or have some work). http://emdeconsulting.com. Take a look. Let me know what you think. Let me know if you want to work on it with me. – 38

EZLCMS

I use EZLCMS. After a thorough search of available Web-based LCMS services, we selected EZ-LCMS for its cost ($199/month), student capacity (2500), ease of use, compatibility with SCORM 1.2, reporting, integrated assessment tools, and most importantly, the willingness of the developers to work with us to add new features. It takes our PowerPoints and effortlessly inserts them into the lessons, and allows us to insert multimedia (SWF, FLV, and AVI). We have been able to reduce the complexity and time involved in storyboarding because EZLCMS has a built-in storyboarding feature. EZLCMS is a perfect tool for any ISD who would like to offer a learning portal for their customers, customized for their company. It's ideal for measuring proof of learning, and includes an automatic certificate upon completion. – 34

Keynote

Using Keynote to quickly create engaging Flash animations: Keynote is not just an excellent presentation tool. It also allows you to export presentations into a Flash format. This way, you can use Keynote's user-friendly tools for creating engaging visuals like animated drawings, graphs, and charts. After making your slide, simply click File | Export and choose Flash. You may also export it to a movie file! – 92

ScribeStudio

A) If you plan to sell courses developed by using an e-Learning authoring tool, please ensure that the authoring tool generates a single executable file, which can be easily copy protected. If

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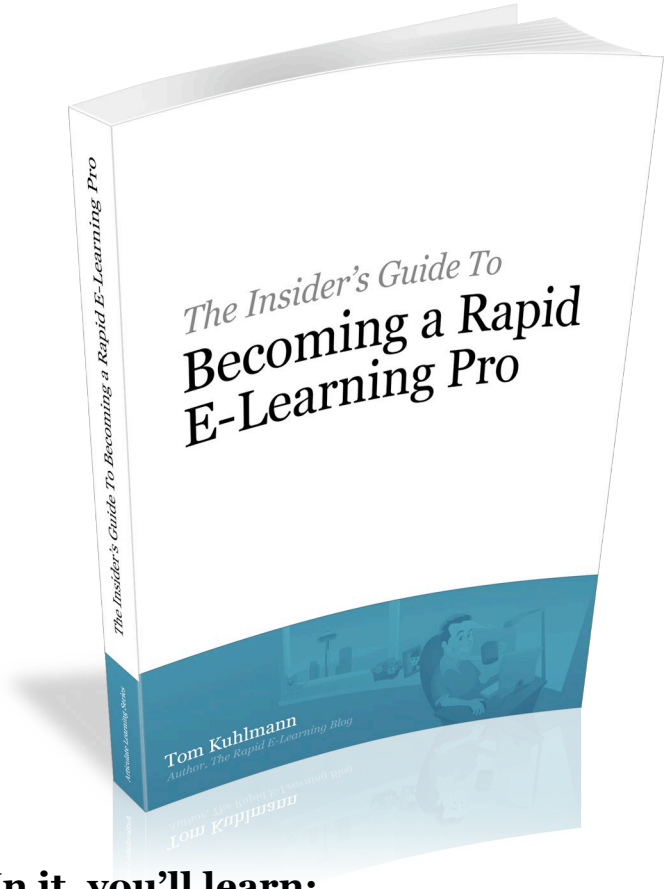

One of the great benefits of rapid e-learning is the ability to create e-learning courses much faster and easier than ever before. However, going faster and making your job easier are not the only considerations. That's where this free 46-page ebook by Tom Kuhlmann comes in.

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- Why measuring the wrong things is a recipe for disaster
- How to manage expectations and enhance perceived value
- What learners really need (and what they don't)
- Why e-learning without real world application is a waste of time
- How to leverage rapid e-learning tools for maximum benefit
- And much more...

You'll also get valuable rapid e-learning tips from Tom on a regular basis, all at no charge and all designed to make you a rapid e-learning hero. Get it now at **articulate.com/ebook**

If you plan to sell courses developed by using an e-Learning authoring tool, please ensure that the authoring tool generates a single executable file, which can be easily copy protected. If it just generates a bunch of HTML files, then it will be a big headache to secure.

Sangeeta Phadke, Director, Abhisam Software

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

it just generates a bunch of HTML files, then it will be a big headache to secure.

B) If you do not have an authoring tool, nor do you have your own LMS and would not want to invest in one, then you may want to take a look at ScribeStudio. It is an integrated authoring- cum-hosting system, where you will be typically charged on a per-course and per-group-of-students basis. The lowest tier is one course for ten students per month, and so on. Everything is Web based, meaning you can author your courses online, as well as host them, and make them accessible to anybody. Believe me, this will save a huge packet for you, especially if you are a small company or a one or two person operation. Plus, there is no headache of maintaining or upgrading any software. The authoring environment can accept most file types including HTML, Flash, audio, video, etc. The assessment tool is also pretty good, and covers most types of questions. The charges are pretty affordable too. Please note that we are not affiliates or promoters of ScribeStudio, in fact we are ScribeStudio users (customers) and this is our own unbiased opinion. – 96

SumTotal Systems Toolbook/Instructor

ToolBook, SumTotal Systems, Inc.: CUSTOMIZING THE CAPTION OF THE CATALOG. Normally the caption bar of the catalog just says Catalog, but since you have the ability to create your own catalogs, it sure would be nice to be able to change the caption to something of your own choosing, so that you can quickly distinguish the standard catalog from your own catalog. To change the caption of your custom catalogs, all you need to do is add the following new entry to your catalog.ini file: [GENERAL] Caption=My Personal Catalog. – 30

ToolBook, SumTotal Systems, Inc.: NAVIGATING THE WINDOW TO A NON-DHTML PAGE. If you are trying to create a hyperlink in ToolBook that will navigate your DHTML window to another Web page which is not a part of your ToolBook book, you will find that a new window will always open in order to show that new URL. The DHTML window will refuse to let you navigate it away from the ToolBook set of pages. This is intentional and by design – because to navigate away from the DHTML window will cause the DHTML environment, that the book is running in, to forget all information collected during the DHTML session. This would include things like scoring information, LMS connectivity, Question State Data, Variables, etc. However, if you want to FORCE it to let you navigate the window to another URL, you can do so by using the following in the Actions Editor: On click... Display URL: javascript:window.location='http://www.mysite.com/'. – 30

ToolBook: Use Save As... often, and after every major change! ToolBook files have a tendency toward corruption when the file sizes are large, and it usually happens in the 11th hour. Saving your ToolBook file with a new name, often, and after every major change, will help you quickly get back on track. – 84

While you often have the option of naming an e-Learning course when uploading into an LMS, it is important to remember to have a course title within the course itself. Different authoring tools have different places to do this.

Steve Johnson, Senior e-Learning Designer

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

ToolBook: If you know that your ToolBook course will require a lot of ActionScript code, make sure you take advantage of the Actions Editor Compression utility available in the Developers Exchange Tools. This will conserve space so you can save more actions. – 84

SumTotal Systems Instructor/Articulate Presenter: While you often have the option of naming an e-Learning course when uploading into an LMS, it is important to remember to have a course title within the course itself. Different authoring tools have different places to do this. For example, in SumTotal Systems ToolBook Instructor, under Object Properties for Book, there is a field called Book title. In Articulate Presenter, when publishing to an LMS, there is a field for Published title. These are where you would insert your course title before publishing and uploading to the LMS. If you leave these fields blank, once the courses are published and uploaded into an LMS (such as SumTotal), you may find some reports (such as the Progress Report) will say "Untitled," instead of the course title you used when uploading to the LMS. That is because you did not fill in these fields with the course name before publishing. – 101

Trivantis Lectora

Using Trivantis Lectora Professional Publishing Suite in conjunction with Adobe Captivate and Adobe PhotoShop CS allows for quick development of courses, while still ensuring the quality of the output. Lectora provides the ability to publish to HTML, AICC, SCORM, SCORM 2004, or CD/EXE. This provides flexibility when working with multiple LMSs. Stay away from LMS-provided authoring tools, unless they can publish content to a standardized output. – 4

Lectora: Sometimes you need to run actions on certain objects in Lectora, such as drop-down lists. The "On Select/Change" of the drop-down list action doesn't let you specify "Conditions." To get around this, simply create a blank group, and add the actions that you need to that group. Then on the "On Select/Change" of the drop-down list, run the action "Run Action Group," and select the action group you just created. I believe they added "Run Action Group" in version 2007. – 40

Miscellaneous

Don't know if this is what you are looking for, but it is the first thing I tell anyone about a new tool. The online user community for any tool is a great, quick resource for any problems you may be having getting the tool to work right. It seems like they are anxious to help, and many will offer to look at your course to try to figure out what is wrong. This is especially helpful if you are new to the tool. The solutions are often more usable than those offered by the help desk, and usually quicker. – 65

The online user community for any tool is a great, quick resource for any problems you may be having getting the tool to work right.

Mary Jo Coplos, Owner,
Come Right Inn, LTD

II. 73 Tips for Using Courseware Authoring / e-Learning Development Tools *continued*

My biggest concern is hackers and I.D. thieves. How can an e-Learning novice be safeguarded? Other than that issue, this is the most effective way for a disabled individual to maximize their potential. Safeguards are the biggest issue, because some of these hackers/people are genius level IQ with a warped sense of values. I wish a tool could be developed to track hackers from their intrusions into the personal lives of others. – 122

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Join the forums and message board communities for the e-Learning tool's you use. The feedback, tips and tricks, and relationships built there will save your bacon more than you know now. Be sure to return the favor, and help save others to by participating often!

Chris Wilkinson,
Lead ID, ADP

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools

Rapid e-Learning strategy tips

The first thing to know, even before you take the first step towards going towards a Rapid tool, is to realize the bare facts. No offense meant to all the good rapid development tools, but a Rapid e-Learning tool will only help you assemble and publish content rapidly, reducing costs and time to market. It only reduces the construction and publishing time. All the brain work is still your baby! In all the presentations, you only hear good things about such tools, and most of them are true. However, following are some of the basic additional facts that will prevent heart-burn post-buying. It will allow quick drag-and-drop integration of media assets, but will rely on you to visualize media elements. It will provide all kinds of content structures and templates, but will rely on you to decide the instructional flow, what to represent, and how. It will ensure that your course is Section 508 compliant. but who will cook up the ALT texts and audios and the rest? You. It will give you all the templates and interactivity, but the moment you want to go a step further and customize something, there Rapid goes away! – 112

"Rapid" indicates that you can develop and upload content very quickly. This is true – but what is also true is that you cannot necessarily proofread content as quickly as you can develop it. Even though SMEs may proof the textual content, once it is transferred to the authoring tool the context changes. Make sure to include proofreading in the program project plan. Effective proofreading usually requires more than one set of eyes. Make a proofreading checklist that includes navigation, entrance and exit strategies, graphics positioning, and content. – 21

Save a life and be saved! Join the forums and message board communities for the e-Learning tools you use. The feedback, tips and tricks, and relationships built there will save your bacon more than you know now. Be sure to return the favor, and help save others to by participating often! – 22

Content. Content. Content. Concentrate on the content, not the vehicle. Great e-Learnings that are a product of a PowerPoint to Flash conversion come from the content developed in a great PowerPoint. The best Flash vehicle can't make it look any better, or be any more instructionally sound. Concentrate on the content! – 22

Always provide a context for the learning program. Start by telling learners what's in it for them. There must be a strong and obvious connection between what they're learning in the program and how they will apply it in their jobs. Otherwise there will be no motivation for them to stick with the program. – 62

Sometimes Rapid is Slow. Road Runner, the Flash, and Speed Racer would make a great team for rapid development activites! But, it seems to me that often the work of rapid development begins with characters like Huckleberry Hound, The Tortoise without the Hare, and Sleepy without his buddies. The good news is that is really a great place to start. I mean you have to wind up a generator to power a source, and slow start-up teams have that effect. They connect orga-

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

nizational goals to the learning, identify obstacles for development teams to overcome, and build a sense of reality around the project. So, my advice is to appreciate the slow starts of rapid learning – but only until the generator powers up! – 72

PowerPoint-to-Flash tools, such as Adobe Presenter, enable instructional designers to build e-Learning quickly. Rapid development tools also allow SMEs with little to no ISD or e-Learning design expertise to push out content quickly and cheaply. That's the good news. The bad news is that it's easier, cheaper, and faster than ever to produce poor-quality online learning. When "lay" development methodologies are used, the need for creativity and instructional design integrity increases. Given new tools for rapid development, our role as e-Learning designers is more critical than ever in terms of front-end analysis and design. Unlike SMEs, we are experts in "figuring things out." We are uniquely qualified to determine what learners need in order to perform well on the job, who needs to learn what and when, and how best to convey, practice, and test new KSAs. E-Learning instructional designers can:

- Influence the quality of rapidly-developed e-Learning by guiding the use of rapid e-Learning tools.
- Help organizations decide when to use rapid development tools, and when to invest more time and money to develop more robust online learning products.
- Support rapid development by adapting the ADDIE model, without diluting industry best practices for product development and project management.
- Provide consultation on how to transform existing PowerPoint content for delivery in a self-paced, online format.
- Help our clients avoid boring, self-paced online presentations by putting creative, re-usable strategies in the hands of SMEs and trainers-turned-designers.
- Work with rapid development tool vendors to increase tool functionality, portability to m-Learning devices, and compliance with Section 508 standards, so that outputs will be high-quality, highly-accessible learning products.

Rapid e-Learning development tools are here to stay. Clients are excited about lower-cost, and quickly-created options. PowerPoint-to-Flash tools add another option to our ever-expanding toolbox of development and delivery options. The role of e-Learning designers is to carry the banner for quality and creativity, regardless of what development tools are used. We've all seen a lot of "click and read" page-turners developed with expensive authoring tools by ISDs, graphic artists, and programmers. High-end authoring tools don't always translate to high-end learning products. "Low-end" rapid development tools don't have to translate to low-quality e-Learning. As leaders in the industry, the onus is on us to figure out ways to apply rapid development tools, while maintaining high standards of creativity and instructional design integrity. – 105

High-end authoring tools don't always translate to high-end learning products. "Low-end" rapid development tools don't have to translate to low-quality e-Learning. As leaders in the industry, the onus is on us to figure out ways to apply rapid development tools, while maintaining high standards of creativity and instructional design integrity.

Susan McDonald Osborn,
Owner, Laurus Design, LLC

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One of the most valuable assets of [Articulate Engage] is the ability to build a glossary. We are in an industry that is heavy with acronyms, and this is a wonderful teaching and resource tool.

Dixie Scott, Instructional Designer, Blood Systems Inc.

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

Tool recommendations

I found a product from Wildform Software (www.wildform.com) that combines the features you normally have to get in multiple products. These include: PowerPoint to Flash conversion, screen recording, quiz creation, video-to-Flash encoding, and Flash creation. The product is WildPresenter, and I've found it to be incredibly useful at a fraction of the cost of other related products. They also have a lot of tutorials on their site, and they provide good support, which is really rare nowadays. – 102

Character Builder from Media Semantics: The only tool that provides automatic audio with TTS engines. The audio is synched with the media, and also with powerful avatars. It's fantastic for rapid learning development. – 43

Course Genie is great for MS Word-to-HTML conversion. – 6

Articulate Engage has become a favorite of mine. I have found that I can create interactions even for highly technical content, and get it across with student involvement to facilitate retention. I open a template, and see it not just as outlined in the software, but what I need to do, and how I use what is here. One of the most valuable assets of this program is the ability to build a glossary. We are in an industry that is heavy with acronyms, and this is a wonderful teaching and resource tool. The tool is easy to use, and even a beginning designer can produce high-quality training with just a little instruction. And the answer is Yes, I even use it to devise learning games. – 33

Social networking use in Oncourse CL at higher education: "Oncourse CL" was developed by the Sakai Community. Currently, campuses of the Indiana University System, such as Indiana University Northwest, have been implementing Oncourse CL in terms of electronic collaboration and learning. As an instructor, you can use the features of Oncourse CL not only for formal online classes but also for projects and even social networking. Oncourse CL itself has various features such as Syllabus, Roster, Gradebook, Assignment, and others. If you want to do electronic social networking, you might want to try the features of Forum (asynchronous) and Chat Room (synchronous). In Forum, you are able to adjust the level of permissions, authorships, and form posting palettes. Also, in Chat Room, you can modify viewing, editing format, recent chat display, and authoring. One nice thing is that you can actually use both features concurrently. For example, when you and your students implement an electronic forum in Oncourse CL, the participants actually send their questions and concerns before inputting their opinions and thoughts into the forum. By utilizing both features concurrently, you can motivate critical thinking and active learning, because the participants may have other participants' advices and resources through both features. When occurring properly, electronic social networking may be an effective tool for the participants to actively engage in learning. – 54

Make sure you find a product that's easy to learn to use. Some products require a long learning curve. If the marketing says "rapid," make sure that's the case by using the demo version to create something simple.

Shirley Solano, IT Training, Hudson Health Plan

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

Articulate – by Articulate www.articulate.com: We spent about a year researching these products. Articulate was the tool that out-performed the rest for converting PowerPoint presentations to Flash documents. It's very simple to use, provides a very familiar environment, and has become a standard development tool within our organization. On average, depending on how much of the functionality you use, you can convert a PowerPoint presentation of any size to a Flash document to load on the Web or place in an LMS within 30 minutes. – 80

Tool selection tips for rapid e-Learning

Look for these features in a Rapid e-Learning Tool – obviously every brochure or presentation will talk about all the features. Here are some pointers to look out for:

- Hygiene features – Import and export features with common documentation formats such as DOC and PPT files. The tool should be able to convert a 10 page DOC or PPT to a 10 page course.
- Collaboration – Does the license you are budgeting for allow multiple authors and reviewers to work on parts of a common copy? Most tools would ask you to buy an exorbitant enterprise version to accomplish this, and might even require substantial hardware investment.
- Publishing to standard LMSs – It is usually called a one-click publish, but even a multi-click would do. What happens if you copy and paste content from Word or PPT? The formatting should not go haywire. But it usually does!
- AICC and SCORM functionality – Not just have that, it should allow these functionalities at the click of an option button. Should not require any plug-ins or installation on client machine, except ones required to play any course-specific media elements (such as Flash player).
- Ability to export course as a standalone CBT, or executable. It should run on most browser platforms. It should at least run on the browsers usually patronized by your learners. It should have some scripting functionality so that customization is possible.
- Ability to embed various media elements such as Flash, director, and WMV.
- Advanced features: 1) Should have functionality of software simulations to be captured. 2) Ability to create custom interactivities. 3) Scripting mode should allow function calls with embedded media elements such as Flash animations
- Good to have – Especially if you have any specific Section 508 compliance needs, ensure that it has the one you are looking for. Most tools are basic 508 compliant, but may not have all the compliance parameters you are looking for. – 112

Consider first the type of content you wish to create, and then buy a tool to fit your need – and always remember that one tool will rarely meet all of your training development needs. – 41

Make use of the free trials that are available from many vendors before locking yourself into a solution. – 41

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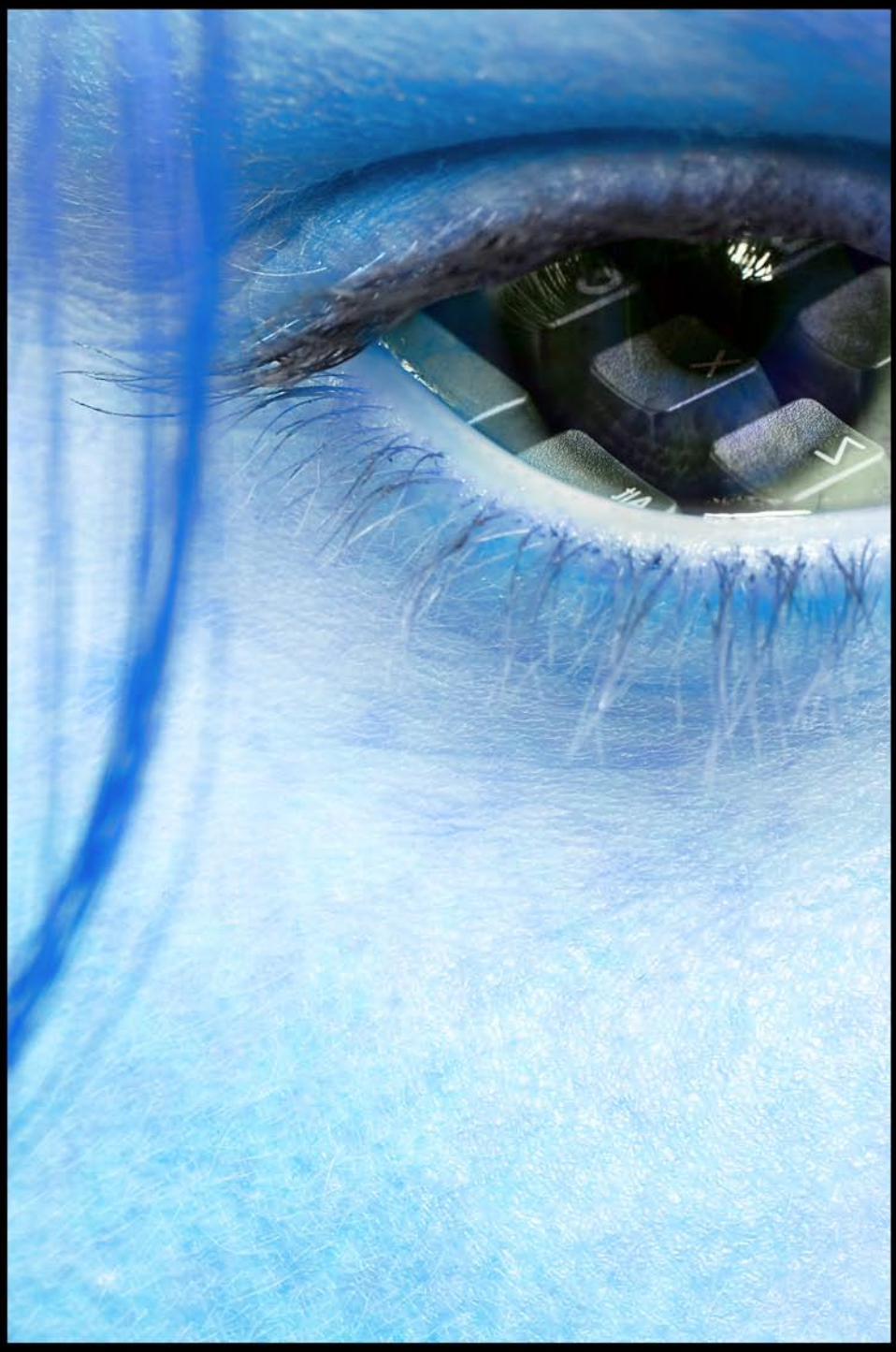

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Rapid e-Learning is only as good as the thought put into its overall purpose. Decide early on to create learning that is targeted and discrete, and that is aligned to address small learning chunks. In other words, think less about courses and curricula, and more in terms of tutorials or Just-in Time (JIT) learning.

Danny Ortegon, Training Manager, Walgreens-OptionCare

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

One of the biggest challenges of an instructional designer is to find open source software tools to cooperate with locally designed templates to automate the rapid development of content that is reusable and SCORM / IMS compliant. The open source software tools are necessary because of the lack of economical resources in the educational sector. The templates save time, and allow developers to focus on learning production. Standard SCORM / IMS compliance guarantees portability between different delivery environments. – 46

Captivate is a great tool that I have been using for building e-Learning modules, but in terms of comparisons there is nothing that gives the pros and cons in terms of measuring it with, say, Articulate or Viewlet Builder. I think we need to make sure that there is a comparison among all the best selling tools so that we know what is the best one for one's needs – 95

Make sure you find a product that's easy to learn to use. Some products require a long learning curve. If the marketing says "rapid," make sure that's the case by using the demo version to create something simple. Always use The eLearning Guild as a resource for recommended software! – 100

Thoroughly research available tools, and keep up to date with evolving releases. Before committing to one, compare them against your project's priorities, and review the tool's support forums. If none exist, steer clear of the tool. What makes an e-Learning tool great is its flexibility for customization, ubiquitous design, ease of use, and continued developer support. – 117

Specific tool tips

We use MS PowerPoint for lesson story boarding, script writing, and production notes before conversion to Flash with Articulate. Since the SME, editor, graphic designer, and voice talent share the PowerPoint file, we have devised a simple system for separating the script from production notes. Brackets, i.e. [Name – comment text] are used for the editor to ask the SME a question or [Narrator – phonetic spelling] to guide pronunciation of a medical term.

Since all are lessons that must receive accreditation, we have to endnote all references. It is unreasonable to expect SMEs to insert and format endnotes. Instead, the SME fills in the blanks on a works-cited chart and puts the author's name in parentheses, i.e. (author name) in the script. We publish the script to a MS Word document with Articulate, and an editorial assistant uses the (author names) and works-cited chart to insert and properly format endnotes. Finally, use the Auto Correct feature to replace short text strings with commonly typed phrases. For example, some of our content is specific only to advanced life support providers, and is only used for the ALS version of the lesson. Thus "[a" auto corrects to "[ALS only]", or "[b" auto corrects to "[BLS only]" or "nn" auto corrects to "no narration". – 42

Articulate Presenter Pro. If I think the learner may use search terms which do not match the words on the slides or in the Notes text, I add most-probable search terms in the Notes field. I

One item that decision-makers fail to think about is the overall file size of the training. For instance, if a training module's file size is 10MB, it may take forever for learners to download the training.

Andy Riley, e-Learning Technology Guy, Wachova Securities

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

also add probable search terms to the Notes field when inserting Flash files. Since I don't like the way Presenter removes formatting from the narration text, I wait until I have created my final version, then use Notepad to open the presentation.xml file (in the data folder) and manually insert formatting by placing the cursor in front of each new paragraph and pressing the Enter key. I found this tip on the user forum, and it has really helped me. – 81

Captivate: Here's a quick tip on how you can hide screenshot items in your training module, using Captivate. As you record your screen and mouse movements, you can always go back after the fact and edit any "screen captures." I prefer using Macromedia Fireworks for this. This is great in the event that you need to hide account numbers, or anything else that you don't want the learner to see. From within Captivate, go to the slide that needs editing, and then do the following:

- Right-click the screen and "Copy Background."
- Open Fireworks (or your preferred image editor) and start a new document.
- Paste the screen into the window, and blur out any items you don't want to appear.
- Finally, "Select All" items on the screen and click Edit | Copy.
- Go back to the Captivate movie and Right-click "Paste as Background." – 7

Articulate and any LMS: Here's a quick tip for narrowing down the Rapid e-Learning Tool for your organization. You can choose many different rapid development tools to quickly create online training. One item that decision-makers fail to think about is the overall file size of the training. For instance, if a training module's file size is 10MB, it may take forever for learners to download the training. A work-around is to use software such as Articulate. This handy, easy-to-use software will package up your entire training module into smaller, individual files which download very fast. Similar tools are advantageous from within an LMS infrastructure, especially if there is a separate "content server" involved. It just makes sense when catering to your training audience! – 7

QuickLessons, QuickMind Knowledge Management: QuickLessons' newest version brings a "Cloning Tool" so you can easily duplicate an existing course. Just open your course, click on its name, and then click on the "Save As" button at the main menu. That way you can create a new course, and still keep valuable content from the old one. When you create a copy of your course, you save it with another name and nickname in your library. You will be able to access it normally, through the home page or through the search engine. The system will duplicate every media, text, and template used in the old course. That is a handy feature to help authors who need to create similar courses, but with a few adjustments to address different target audiences. You can also duplicate Evaluations and Learning Objects by following the same procedure. – 11

Acrobat Professional, Adobe: I convert Microsoft Word documents into Acrobat PDFs with rollover fields and buttons. In these documents, I like to keep the content paired with my design notes, but I don't want to maintain two document versions. So I create information "for my eyes only" as hidden text, which remains with my source document but is not visible when

Keep Captivate recordings short. The longer they are, the longer it takes to publish them, and when you want to make small changes to one area, you need to republish the entire thing.

Deborah Davidson,
IT Educator, Butterfield
Bank (Cayman) Limited

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

the final document is created using Acrobat. For example, the source document includes hidden text describing rollover actions and appearance, hyperlinks, and other development information. It might also include notes for future enhancement. If I have to update the document later, it's easy to display the hidden text in the source document to remind me of how and why I organized content in that way. I capture information I'll only need for the short term as a comment, such as a prompt to find a suitable illustration to include. These comments need not become part of the final document if the end user doesn't need them, but they'll still be available to me in the source document. I also compose text in comment boxes that will display in rollover fields on my final document, so I can indicate which text should appear in what area. The rollover pop-ups are contained in a single Microsoft Word document, with each pop-up box created on a separate page. When you turn that document into a PDF, the resulting pages are easily turned into icon buttons in Adobe Acrobat and incorporated sequentially in the final document. This makes it simple to manage the content for all of the rollovers in one place, rather than as individual source files. – 15

Articulate Engage, Articulate: Use the Timeline interaction to create interactive knowledge checks. (1) Create a customer scenario to appear on the first screen, and include a supporting photo of the customer. (2) For each Milestone segment, insert a feature name instead of a date. (3) Instruct the learner to review the features (appearing in the timeline section), and click on the feature that best meets the customer's needs. Clicking on the correct choice reveals a "correct" feedback message, and why it's correct. Clicking on a feature that's not the "best" choice reveals a "not best choice" feedback message with instruction to select another feature. This is a nice way to convert a pre-made template for a different use, and enhance the learner experience. – 20

Captivate, Adobe: Make your Captivate screen walkthroughs sound better and more confident by recording the audio and screen actions separately. At Healthy Media we tested people's perceptions of some different screen captures in Captivate. In one series, the instructor recorded the audio as he recorded the movie; in the other we wrote a proper script, recorded the movie and the audio independently, and then synched them together by editing in Captivate. Users found that the movies with the independently recorded audio were easier to follow, sounded more confident, and were easier to understand. It may take a bit more effort, and therefore cost a little more, but in our opinion it's worth the investment if you're trying to create quality learning materials. – 28

Keep Captivate recordings short. The longer they are, the longer it takes to publish them, and when you want to make small changes to one area, you need to republish the entire thing. – 29

Articulate Presenter 5 Pro, Articulate: When you need to wrap text around images on a screen, you can use more than one PowerPoint text box to do so. However, before you publish, click on each text box, and then right-click to select Grouping | Group to group them all together. This way, after you publish your project, the text boxes won't "jump around" on the screen, and will stay in place. – 51

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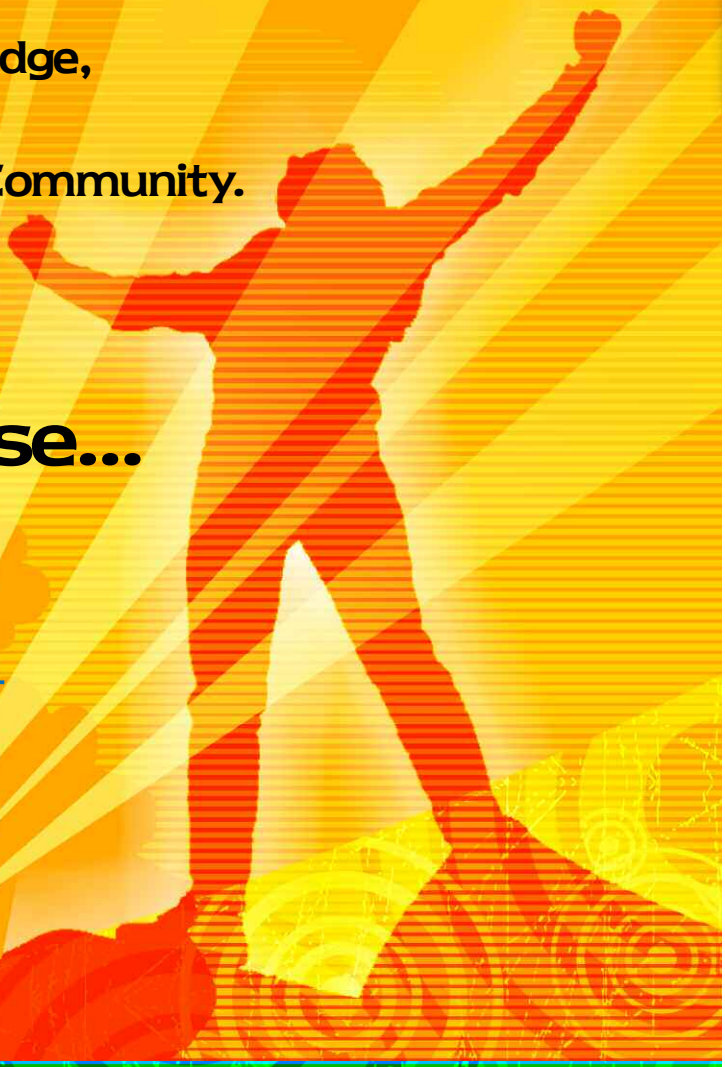

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Record your audio in a separate program. Utilizing the in-program audio recorder and editor is playing with fire. The typical file naming and organization is horrible, and the quality and capabilities are limited.

Brian Dusablon,
Instructional Designer,
Administaff

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

Captivate, Adobe: Create a narrated tutorial with just a PowerPoint presentation and an MP3. If you already have an MP3 of a presentation, perhaps from a Podcast or previously recorded Webinar, and you want to add a visual, you could import a PowerPoint presentation into Captivate and then import the MP3. When you import the MP3, Captivate will ask you how you want to distribute the audio file across the slides. If you want to manually distribute the audio, you can listen to the audio and click "Start Next Slide" to sync the PowerPoint presentation with the audio file. – 108

Time- and money-saving tips

I like easy, and I found an easy way to create a room image for use as a background in CBT development. Here is what you need: 1. Internet access. 2. Snag-it. 3. Your favorite development tool (e.g. Toolbook). 4. Photoshop, or a photo editor (such as Paint.net). There are Web sites out there that let you design a room. These are mostly real estate Web sites. I like this one from ERA: http://www.era.com/myera/createaroom/. After I create a room, I use Snag-it to grab a screen shot of it. Finally, I use the screen shot to create a background in my CBT project. – 44

Rapid e-Learning is only as good as the thought put into its overall purpose. Decide early on to create learning that is targeted and discrete, and that is aligned to address small learning chunks. In other words, think less about courses and curricula, and more in terms of tutorials or Just-in Time (JIT) learning. – 26

Record your audio in a separate program. Utilizing the in-program audio recorder and editor is playing with fire. The typical file naming and organization is horrible, and the quality and capabilities are limited. For instance, we use Articulate. Rather than record in Articulate, we record using SoundForge or Audacity, and then import the files into our project. – 16

Keep the content separate from the structure. This makes changing content very easy, and saves time down the road. – 85

Using Video-Sharing On-line Tools: Embedding video in e-Learning content has always been a challenging task for all e-Learning developers, except media specialists. Distributing large video files often meant sacrificing quality to tackle bandwidth issues, as well as fitting content onto CDs. Often the solution is to place a small video embedded in the content, or just keep the file size as low as possible. Expensive studio-produced video in high-quality e-Learning content can always be accommodated – and many courses feature video that enhances the learning experience. But what if your approach to designing e-Learning content is to make use of rapid e-Learning development tools? Suppose you don't want to have to worry about file formats, file size, media players, or that you don't have a studio to make high-quality video. Suppose that you have some short training videos in your organization, or that you have the facility to create simple videos using a modest video recording camera or Webcam. How will you go about deliver-

III. Tips for Using Rapid e-Learning Tools *continued*

ing this content as part of your rapidly developed e-Learning course? Unless you are skilled with adding video to on-line- or CD-ROM-delivered content, you need to look at an easy way to deliver your videos.

Why not use on-line video sharing sites such as YouTube or Google Video? These easy-to-use Websites make publishing video content easy, and they accept all sorts of video formats such as AVI, MPEG, QuickTime, Real, and Windows Media. YouTube is great for short videos, while Google Video accepts much larger files. Anyone can access these videos over the Web, and you do not need specialist software to view them. You can simply put a link to the on-line video in your content, and YouTube or Google Video will do the rest. You can also link to videos produced by other people – there are many examples of seminar presentations, experts giving short talks, case-studies, and other useful content. While being careful about copyright infringements, there is a vast untapped library of content available quickly to you at almost no cost. Doing a course on the development of information technology? Link to Apple's 1984 commercial for the launch of the Mac, or link to the 1995 commercial for the launch of Windows 95 including the Rolling Stones "Start Me Up" song (both available on YouTube)! What about an explanation of what e-mail spam is? Where did the name come from? Link to the Monty Python sketch about spam (where the name originally came from) for a fun, cheap, and rapid way to develop and learn. Just think, only a few short years ago how difficult this would have been to do. Of course a major worry is security, and giving access to your videos to people that you don't want or need to let see them. You can share your video with everybody and make it public, or you can restrict who views the video by making it private to viewers whom you select. By making the video private, only those that you want to see the video as part of an e-Learning program get to do so. Using video has just gotten easy! You can add video content to your course, and provide variety in the learning experience – all without expert help or high cost, and quickly too. – 31

You can use Flash as a rapid development tool if you have created a template for e-Learning. If I have a completed storyboard and screenshots, I can develop an interactive Flash tutorial in about 2 hours. The published files are also smaller than Captivate, and load faster to the user. Tip: develop a good Flash template. – 50

Make your programs as visually rich as possible. Minimize the use of text bullet points. Subscribe to an online photo site, such as Dreamstime, to obtain high quality photos and graphics for your presentations. The quality and quantity is unbeatable. – 62

When cutting and pasting text from Word or other programs into rapid e-Learning development tools, it often is helpful to paste the text first into Notepad, and then cut and paste into the tool. This step removes any formatting, and in most cases reduces the formatting needed within the rapid e-Learning tool. – 106

When cutting and pasting text from Word or other programs into rapid e-Learning development tools, it often is helpful to paste the text first into Notepad, and then cut and paste into the tool. This step removes any formatting, and in most cases reduces the formatting needed within the rapid e-Learning tool.

Taft Eaker, Instructional Designer, TIAA-CREF

When you are capturing [audio] clips, normalize each of them before you edit and save them. That can make the editing process much easier and compensate for mixing clips from different recording sessions too.

David Swaddle, Director, Healthy Media Limited

IV. 9Tips for Media Tools

Use PowerPoint 2003 as a quick graphics tool for creating banners and logos. Open a new presentation, go to File | Page Setup and select Banner (or create your own custom size). Put in a background color, add a border, insert some clip art, add a header – knock yourself out! When you're happy with the results, go to File | Save As, and in the Save As Type dialog box at the very bottom, pick GIF, JPEG, or PNG. Give your file a name and save it. You'll be prompted as to which slides to export. If you've created multiple slides and choose to save "Every Slide," PowerPoint will save them in a folder as individual graphics, naming them Slide1, Slide2, and so on. If you want to give each slide a unique name, choose "Current Slide Only" to save each graphic one at a time. This is a very quick way to create a basic graphic, and can be used by those familiar with MS Office, but not familiar with the more powerful graphics programs. In fact, even those graphics pros who use Fireworks, Photoshop, Illustrator, or Freehand might choose this when a quick turnaround is needed, but the industrial-strength feature sets are not. – 14

Normalize your audio carefully. Whichever tool you use, make sure to normalize your audio to a consistent level. Normalizing audio makes each clip sound roughly as loud as the others, and prevents users from being deafened or hearing whispering. Seeing as I make courses where the audio carries up to 80% of the information, getting the voice right is really important to me. When you are capturing clips, normalize each of them before you edit and save them. That can make the editing process much easier and compensate for mixing clips from different recording sessions too. – 28

Learn Flash! Don't be afraid, just do it. Flash is a great tool even at the basic, Timeline animation level. Take a basic course at your community college, and then explore the Web to learn from the Flash community in cyberspace. Flash, at its basic level, has helped me create interactions that I have used in both ToolBook and Articulate. – 51

Dreamweaver MX, Adobe: Keep it accessible! I always enable the features in Dreamweaver MX before I start a Webpage. Go to Edit | Preferences | Accessibility and then check all the boxes to the right (Form objects, Frames, Media, and Images). Click "OK." – 57

The Centre for Learning & Performance Technologies at http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/Directory/Tools/media.html should be your first stop for free and commercial tools. A simple, concise table lists each tool with a hyperlink to its respective Web site. In addition, it gives a summary statement and availability key for each tool. – 58

Free Web 2.0 online tools are great for quickly resizing images on the fly. No software download is required. QuickThumbnail – http://quickthumbnail.com is a favorite of mine! – 58

Snag-it (TechSmith) is a versatile and inexpensive screen capture program. Because of the robust editing features, I am often able to use the capture directly into the courseware without opening a professional paint package. – 59

Use PowerPoint 2003 as a quick graphics tool for creating banners and logos. ... [E]ven those graphics pros who use Fireworks, Photoshop, Illustrator, or Freehand might choose this when a quick turnaround is needed, but the industrial strength feature sets are not.

Bob Joyce, Senior Educational Specialist, University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center

IV. 9 Tips for Media Tools *continued*

Initially, when I wanted to include audio and video in my e-Learning content, I would reserve a room, ask for volunteers, set up the lights and sound, and then record and/or edit the video myself. This was a very tedious and time-consuming process. That was about five or six years ago; since then I have been using a company called Digital Juice, and have accumulated a large library of their products, including video clips, music tracks, and even sound effects (which help to add depth and interest to my video files). All of their products are commercial quality, and they have categorized their video clips into topics such as Family and Friends, Health, Environmental, even Extreme Sports, all of which have dozens of clips. All of their products are like pieces of a puzzle, simply use whatever video editing software you have to put the puzzle together! – 71

Remember, you can edit most clipart available within PowerPoint to suit your needs. Select the clipart, Ungroup the layers of color used to make the image, take out the layers you don't need, and regroup only the pieces you do. Clipart of an office picture could be ungrouped into a desk, computer, book, chair, etc. It's a really handy way to create what you need, without being a graphic artist. – 111

Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training

Rapidly create, manage, deploy, and track the effectiveness of highly engaging online training that virtually anyone can access instantly

With this solution, you can:

- Rapidly develop, update, and deliver engaging self-paced training
- Administer formal assessments and surveys, and measure the effectiveness of on-demand presentations
- Measure the effectiveness of course content and analyze training results
- Increase the effectiveness of instructors, and easily conduct virtual classes
- Customize the look and feel of eLearning experiences
- Manage virtually all facets of employee, partner, and customer training
- Enhance your existing corporate user and learning management systems

Organizations today face tremendous financial, logistical, and other challenges when training employees, channel partners, and customers: scarce training resources; complex eLearning solutions that make it difficult for all but technically minded training professionals to develop eLearning courses and curricula; costly custom eLearning solutions that require long development times; potential incompatibilities with existing user and learning management systems; and, of course, bland, lifeless training sessions that fail to produce results because they fail to engage learners.

Cost-effectively transfer maximum knowledge in minimum time

With the Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training, you can overcome these challenges cost-effectively and productively while increasing your ROI through faster training and better results. This solution has what training professionals need to address a wide range of training needs—development of standards-compliant content, on-demand or virtual classroom deployment, and reliable formal assessments and reporting—at a fraction of the time and cost of traditional eLearning systems. It also provides comprehensive curriculum and content management capabilities and integrates with common learning management and user management systems to help reduce application management costs.

Use one solution for all your training needs

Avoid the hassle of dealing with multiple solution offerings. With the Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training, you can build a streamlined, fully integrated training solution that includes Adobe® Acrobat® Connect™ Professional software for virtual classroom sessions; Adobe Presenter for easy Microsoft PowerPoint authoring of self-paced training courses and on-demand multimedia presentations; Adobe Connect Training for creating and managing eLearning courses and curricula; and Adobe Connect Events for managing and tracking users of large online courses.

Rapidly deliver engaging, self-paced training

With this solution, nontechnical subject matter experts can leverage their Microsoft PowerPoint skills to create engaging multimedia experiences. Using their desktop computers and a microphone, trainers can easily add voice-over narration to their content from within PowerPoint. Built-in audio editing tools make it easy to isolate and cut out embarrassing pauses or slurred speech. And integrating rich media such as talking head videos, animations, or simulations is as easy as selecting a command from the Insert menu. Finished courses can be published at the click of a button—courses are automatically converted to the Adobe Flash® format and delivered live or on demand using Adobe Flash Player, which already is installed on more than 97% of Internet-connected desktops worldwide, so learners can access them instantly without cumbersome software downloads, virtually anytime and anywhere.

Adobe

Administer formal assessments and gauge the effectiveness of courses

With the Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training, trainers don't need an IT department or database administrator to help them assess learners' skills and progress or analyze the effectiveness of their courses. Trainers can integrate quizzes with course content using a range of question types—including short answer, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, matching, and Likert rating scale—add pass/fail criteria, and use question branching and custom audio-visual feedback to guide learners in their progress. Likewise, they can gauge the effectiveness of their content using a simple, web-based interface to generate custom reports that provide slide- and question-level feedback and help pinpoint content that may have to be revised to ensure trainees get the information they need.

Provide instant access to online meetings and virtual classes

Trainers can also use this solution to set up virtual classrooms and conduct cost-effective collaborative training sessions in real time with geographically dispersed instructors and learners, complete with multimedia presentations, software simulations, application sharing, and participant polling. Classroom sessions can be easily recorded for later on-demand viewing and shared through an instructor's dedicated, personal meeting room that can be accessed instantly at any time by anyone using Adobe Flash Player, giving learners the opportunity to review content after the live event is over. And in the case of recurring classes, trainers can considerably reduce preparation time using customizable layouts, which they can save for future sessions, complete with all required content. Because the system supports permissions-based access to course content and meeting room layouts, multiple presenters can share meeting room templates as well as course content and assets, using a fully searchable, centralized content library, which makes it easy to find, retrieve, reuse, and update existing training content.

Customize and manage all facets of online training

A cost-effective training solution enables professional trainers to manage virtually all aspects of employee, partner, and customer training. With the Adobe eLearning solution, trainers can schedule courses, enroll learners, grant viewing permissions, automate enrollment notices and reminders, and track learner statistics. Trainers can also develop curriculums that drive results by combining live classes, multiple self-paced training courses, and other training content. In addition, they can easily define course prerequisites, specify optional and required modules, and establish progressive learning paths for self-paced training, live instructor-led training, and external events such as manager assessments. And, they can customize the look and feel of self-paced courses and virtual classrooms using company logos and colors, in accordance with the company brand guidelines.

Leverage your existing infrastructure

The Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training integrates smoothly with common corporate user management and learning management systems. It supports Active Directory and LDAP for user authentication, and all rapid training content produced with this solution is SCORM 1.2, SCORM 2004, and AICC compliant, making it easy for trainers and administrators to deliver and track courses through their existing corporate learning management systems.

Produce measurable results with an affordable end-to-end training solution

The Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training is a cost-effective end-to-end training solution that can help you solve your most challenging training issues. It enables training professionals with PowerPoint skills to develop progressive training curriculums and create and deploy standards-compliant, rich training modules that will engage minds and get your employees, partners, and customers on message and up to speed in no time.

For more information

For more information on the Adobe eLearning solution for rapid training, go to *www.adobe.com/products/connect/solutions/rapid_training*.

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Pre-record your audio and synchronize with your screen captures, it sounds so much better than trying to capture your audio as you navigate a piece of software.

David Swaddle, Director, Healthy Media Limited

V. 20 Tips for Simulation Tools

1. The simulation should be as close to the original software application as possible.
2. Highlight User Interface items for ease of use.
3. Include assessment questions that involve the software application. – 98

When using Captivate, split your screen captures into small segments to ease editing and republishing of the material. – 29

Don't be afraid to use tools differently than what they are marketed for to realize a greater return on investment. For example, Captivate is one of the most highly-regarded simulation tools ever. It doesn't, however, have to be used only for simulations. Engaging courses can be built solely in Captivate, and published to .SWF, .EXE, or other formats. By using the full functionality of tools such as Captivate, you can often create robust learning solutions with very inexpensive investments in time and software. – 2

For applications training, STT Trainer by Kaplan IT Learning produces all modes of training from one capture: demo, training, test, live help, and documentation, as well as being an excellent v-Tool for classroom and desktop training etc. – 61

Pre-record your audio and synchronize with your screen captures, it sounds so much better than trying to capture your audio as you navigate a piece of software. Programs such as Captivate encourage users to record their screen and audio at the same time, often leading to pretty hopeless results. – 28

At our company (manufacturing industry), we have used Adobe Captivate movies for capturing software simulations with recorded audio files attached. The audio is procedural and software system information and background as the SME navigates through system screens. The audio serves a dual purpose. Our technical writers use the audio to write work instructions for our end users. I, as the ID, use the same recorded Captivate files to create software demonstrations, using the audio as a guide to build the demonstrations without always having to call the SME. After I have created the software demonstrations, I remove the audio. This also makes the Captivate files much smaller. Works like a charm. – 8

Learn enough Flash to be dangerous (basic interactivity / coding and animation). From there, the sky's the limit. – 119

Character Builder from Media Semantics: The best tool I know for serious game development. Flash output. Comes with powerful avatars (plenty of emotions and movements), automated audio with TTS engines (TTS is key to fine-tune the content, and to international developments – very interesting agreement with Loquendo, but any TTS is OK) and very powerful scenario capabilities. The limit is the designer's imagination. Full SCORM. – 43

Captivate, Adobe: To avoid a movie automatically transitioning from slide to slide, you can insert a click box on any or all slides of the simulation, and select the "Pause until the user clicks the check box" in the Options tab. Just place the click box back in a corner where it won't be

We use SnagIt to capture frames from the video. This way, we don't have to go back to the actual application or have it running on the PC or Mac we use to develop the simulation.

Doug Marlowe,
President, CVSI
Instructional Design/Sr.
Teachnical Trainer,
Authentium, Inc.

V. 20 Tips for Simulation Tools *continued*

accidentally selected. This way the movie will not go forward until the user chooses to click a forward arrow, if you are using a skin. – 56

For simulations, here's a great tip.

1. Write your step-by-step first. Include installation, activation, updating, removal using your Operating System's removal / uninstall tool, Help files, About, online support, and etc.
2. Run through the application with all the possible clicks and inputs.
3. Redo, this time recording the screen or window. (We use Camtasia.)
4. We use SnagIt to capture frames from the video. This way, we don't have to go back to the actual application, or have it running on the PC or Mac we use to develop the simulation.
5. Now, rather than use hotspots in Camtasia or Captivate for guided simulations, we use Swish. We feel that Swish is easier to use, and quicker to develop in than Flash. Our stage is 950 x 600 for 1024 x 768 screen resolution.
6. Using Swish allowed us to build branching and self-exploration into our simulations. A simulation should be just that, an annotated and encouraging simulation of the real software.
7. For reusability, we build common software operations into Sprites, independent animations / simulations.

Tips for making instructions clear:

1. Use “Click the button labeled Start” rather than Click Start.
2. Use a consistent symbol, frame, or highlight to denote a clickable region.
3. Use roll-over annotations and “Click here for help” liberally throughout your simulation.
4. Give the simulation to your parents, grandparents, sisters, and brothers. Watch them use it, but keep your mouth shut. If you have the time and equipment, you might want to bring in some strangers and video their screens and faces as they try out your simulation for usability.
5. Fine tune, fine tune, fine tune. Make sure there are no dead ends. – 34

I use Captivate for multiple stages of course development, classroom facilitated or e-Learning facilitated. It's a great authoring tool, but I've also used it to cull expertise from my Subject Matter Experts. By simply placing that individual in the driver's seat, and recording his or her screen actions and audio comments via Captivate's robust features, my hands are freed up to take copious notes. I can comfortably center my full attention on the session, because I know it’s being recorded for playback later. When an e-Learning course is ready for stakeholder feedback, I use Captivate's print publish option to create a user-friendly, printable handout of the entire course to collect comments. The stakeholders appreciate having a professional looking, electronic version of a Word document to comment on, and I appreciate getting my feedback in a legible file. It really streamlines the whole feedback process for me. – 60

V. 20 Tips for Simulation Tools *continued*

When using a simulation tool like Captivate, I develop a standards document (aka Style Guide) of all of my capture and post-editing settings, to ensure consistency in my simulations. This ensures that multiple developers can work collaboratively on a project, and there is no risk of noticeable differences in output. As a contractor, it also ensures that when you hand your simulation based e-Learning project over to your client, it can be easily maintained. – 68

Keep current. Don't just settle for a tool because that's what was always used. A simulation tool with a $400 license today has likely superseded a tool that cost $15,000 per license five years ago. Read, research, test, and always keep current. – 22

Let the learner make mistakes by keeping the simulation as true to a representation of the original product as possible. The exploration of the simulation will increase the learner's knowledge and comfort, much more than a multitude of help texts, glowing boxes, and hints that don't exist in real life directing them to a "right" answer. – 22

Captivate, Adobe and Camtasia, TechSmith: Before you download a trial version of the software, make sure you (and your team / customers) first complete a thorough needs analysis. What simulation elements do you want to add to your e-Learning courses? What features must the software offer so that you can build those elements quickly and effectively? After you download the trial version, have your list next to you and thoroughly test the software program before you purchase it. – 51

If you want to author Captivate training for use on the SumTotal LMS, the published training will, by default, contain two players or control panels: the Captivate Player and the SumTotal Content player, the controls of which (Previous, Next, etc) won't work with the Captivate Player. You'll want to get rid of the SumTotal Content Player so as not to confuse your users with useless, redundant controls. You can find the code and instructions for doing so in a PDF file called "Working with the API for SCORM Extensions in SumTotal" on the SumTotal customer service site. If you are a SumTotal customer, you should have access to this site. – 64

Bringing e-Learning to a new dimension: I use a product called CodeBaby® that allows you to have a 3-D you, giving instructions both visually and audibly. It gives the learner a connection to the instructor and the learning. It is a fantastic new way to engage the learner. – 69

When designing complex branching cases in Captivate, use a word processor with tables to script the entire case start to finish. Use each line in the table to represent a single choice. Then reference each choice to the linking page or the next branch. Doing this before you develop in Captivate will prevent errors in your linking. – 70

Camtasia Studio, TechSmith: You can create interactive software tutorials or simulations, as opposed to demonstrations, with Camtasia Studio. The key is to use the Transparent Hot Spot tool, which is one of the many Callouts available. As you are editing the movie, insert a Transparent Hot Spot around an area where you want the user to click. When the movie plays,

When using a simulation tool like Captivate, I develop a standards document (a.k.a. Style Guide) of all of my capture and post-editing settings, to ensure consistency in my simulations. This ensures that multiple developers can work collaboratively on a project.

Matthew Masci, Global Help Manager, Aconex

I originally used Camtasia to do screen capture motion capture. Now I use Instant Demo because I find it puts out a smaller SWF with greater image clarity.

Tony Daguanno, e-Learning Designer/ Developer, Gradepoint

V. 20 Tips for Simulation Tools *continued*

it will pause according to where you placed the hot-spot caption on the timeline. Be sure you give instructions to the user of where you want them to click, either with voice narration or other text captions. – 108

I originally used Camtasia to do screen capture motion capture. Now I use Instant Demo because I find it puts out a smaller SWF with greater image clarity. – 110

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ADOBE® FLASH® LITE™

ADOBE® FRAMEMAKER®

ADOBE® PHOTOSHOP® CS3 EXTENDED

ADOBE® ROBOHELP®

I recommend picking just a couple of authoring tools, and sticking with those when at all possible. Each authoring tool comes with a different look and feel that can confuse or irritate students. If you must use different authoring tools within a course, always use the same type of tool for the same type of material.

Sue Subocz, Interim Director, Innovative Teaching Center, College of Southern Maryland

VI. 21 Tips for Combining and Deploying Authoring Tools

Overall strategies for combining and deploying authoring tools

Based on feedback from students and faculty, I recommend picking just a couple of authoring tools, and sticking with those when at all possible. Each authoring tool comes with a different look and feel that can confuse or irritate students. If you must use different authoring tools within a course, always use the same type of tool for the same type of material. I always use Adobe Captivate when I want to show a demonstration. For general lecture materials, I build the lessons using an Articulate template. Although this gives the students two different looks, they at least know what type of material to expect when they get the different screens. – 104

Match delivery strategy to content, and vice versa. It is vital that you incorporate, as much as possible, how your audience will use what they learn in class into your course design. Otherwise, you risk simply teaching your audience how to recall information when in the context of taking your course. It is difficult to transfer simple information, or understanding, into a context that requires application or evaluation. I like to use Bloom's Revised Taxonomy to align “how" my audience will learn with "what" they will learn. – 94

The approach we are taking is to integrate our custom-developed online offerings with the same navigational look and feel as our Intranet Web site, with some slight modifications to the way the left navigation works as a standalone. Given that 98% of what my team creates is internal application training, we are finding many benefits to this approach, namely: 1) learners don't have to learn a new navigational interface, 2) it complies with our Cisco branding guidelines, 3) it leverages the accessibility standards we have set up for our Web sites, and 4) we can incorporate performance support directly into applications with the same navigational look and feel.

So far this is the easiest and fastest way to develop content. We can display videos with closed captioning, plus the interface supports keyboard keystrokes and shortcut keys when either the JAWS screen reader is turned on or off. We can insert SWF files from various authoring tools like Captivate, Flash, Raptivity, Viewlet Builder, Final Cut, etc. into the content area, so we can be either static or dynamic with the content. Currently we use Flash Based Components to wrap content with, or produce text / graphics / audio pieces, and then build the course with Dreamweaver. Although both of these pieces of software can be complicated to use, we've simplified it so a non-programmer can put all the pieces together quickly. Eventually we will use one of the common authoring tools so we can just click “publish“ and everything will be done behind the scenes.

If anyone is interested, I am more than happy to explain this approach, and show some samples of how this works. It keeps the instructional designers focused on developing content, and away from any course- or content-level navigational issues. It's an SHTML/XML/CSS-based approach that allows for server-based visual changes, so we stay in lock-step with the Intranet's

Whenever I use any type of PowerPoint converter, like Articulate Presenter, or a software simulation tool like Adobe Captivate, I always record my narration first using Audacity (or any audio editor available). That way, I can use the mixing capability of the audio editor ... and manage my audio files in a much better way, and I can decide to export my learning object in multiple formats ...

Mathieu Plourde,
Instructional Designer,
University of Delaware

VI. 21 Tips for Combining and Deploying Authoring Tools *continued*

look and feel, plus being able to offer a downloadable version of the content. This approach could easily be applied to a company's external Website, and provide the same user experience across Netscape, Firefox, or Internet Explorer, without any content-shifting based on your SHTML code. So far, multiple learning organizations across our company have shown great interest in using this approach, because it helps us become vendor agnostic, thus allowing us to focus our energy on finding vendors who are strong in instructional design vs. those strong in Flash or Web design. – 75

Know your audience. Different audiences have widely different restrictions on the technical capabilities of their computers. Some corporate users are still on Windows 2000. Many people in companies cannot install, or upgrade, any software. Most home users can install whatever they like. This leads to restrictions on the delivery mechanisms you can use for both Web and CD based e-Learning. For secure corporate users, such as banking employees, stick to the lowest common denominators: assume Internet Explorer 5.5, Windows Media Player 6.4, Flash 5, no Quicktime, no Real Player, no Shockwave player, Adobe Acrobat Reader 3, and no ability to install or upgrade. This can make things a challenge, but you can still create great e-Learning. Just do simple things like use WMP with AVIs/ASXs in MS-MPEG4 for video, rather than Flash video. Above all, make sure that you know the audience, test early, test often, and test again. – 28

Do not look for an "all in one" solution. Use tools for their strengths. Create a "tool box" of applications that can be used in different combinations depending on your need and content creator. Example: Have a graphics tool, animation tool, screen recording tool, and a 3-D tool. Do not try to do everything in one application – 5

Just like at Sam's Club or Costco, package it, and then buy in bulk. Look at all your tools as a package – and see what your primary vendor can "throw in" for buying several of their products. Often it may be an add-on that you are needlessly spending money on with another company – or worse, paying that vendor for separately! Combine the strength of your organization's buying power across all divisions to negotiate and buy all licenses in bulk. – 22

When combining different authoring tools (and perhaps technologies) it's useful to structure attributes by importance – e.g. "universal attributes" which appear across most media elements, or "optional" or "required" elements. This will identify the common elements, and allow the project team to refine content-specific approaches if needed. – 99

At CourseAvenue, we appreciate the value that many different software applications contribute to the overall e-Learning experience. Why not use the "best of breed" for each of the many aspects of courseware development? Adobe's Flash allows advanced developers to create some amazing interactions for Learners. Captivate includes advanced audio editing features useful in today's multi-media courses. Many authors begin the course development process using

Be sure to include the time and budget for training team members on the applications you select. It isn't enough to assume one member will train others, or that members are self-motivated and will schedule time for classes outside work hours.

Jill Easterday, Consultant

VI. 21 Tips for Combining and Deploying Authoring Tools *continued*

Microsoft's ever-popular tools such as Word, or repurposing information contained in PowerPoint. We encourage you to leverage the tools and expertise already within your organization by selecting an authoring tool, or better yet an authoring platform, that allows you to easily integrate different file types and multi-media objects into your e-Learning courseware. – 103

Specific combinations

Combinations driven by PowerPoint

We like to provide instructional designers with productivity tools that are familiar to them, and that are easy to learn and adopt. That's why we have included in our development methodology custom-made MS Word and MS PowerPoint templates that help them work faster while maintaining quality. Because instructional designers are confident creating and editing information in Word and PowerPoint objects, they can concentrate on designing without disruptions from the authoring environment. They don't have to know how those Word and PowerPoint templates feed later into the Flash or Toolbook components. – 55

Whenever I use any type of PowerPoint converter, like Articulate Presenter, or a software simulation tool like Adobe Captivate, I always record my narration first using Audacity (or any audio editor available). That way, I can use the mixing capability of the audio editor (to add a jingle or some sound effects) and manage my audio files in a much better way, and I can decide to export my learning object in multiple formats (Flash-Based, MP3, PDF handout, mobile-device compliant video, etc.) by simply reimporting them in another rapid development tool. – 66

Combinations driven by Captivate

Combining Captivate and Articulate: Looking for an idea to spice up your Articulate presentation? Instead of solely using the PowerPoint-to-Conversion functionality offered by Articulate Presenter, you can add what looks like "live video" footage to your presentation, by combining Articulate with Captivate. It's fairly easy, and adds a compelling, professional feel to your training / presentation. To do so, go ahead and create your PowerPoint presentation within Articulate Presenter, then do the following:

- Open Captivate, and use the tool to capture screen and mouse movements.
- Export the Captivate simulation to Flash.
- Create a new slide within your Articulate presentation.
- Click Articulate Insert Flash Movie (locate your Captivate Flash file from above).

That's it. You'll be amazed at how much more interactive you can make a simple Articulate presentation. – 7

WebAssist

Market-leading developer of Adobe® software extensions relies on Adobe Captivate™ 3 and Adobe Acrobat® Connect™ Professional software to create engaging eLearning experiences

WebAssist

www.webassist.com

Industry

Technology

Challenges

- Create interactive product demonstrations
- Provide easy-to-follow, customizable tutorials for company's latest product rollout

Solution

- eLearning

  WebAssist is using Adobe Captivate and Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional to produce engaging training and product demonstrations that give web developers a better understanding of how to build feature-rich e-commerce sites.

Results

- Increased revenue from software extensions by 44%
- Reduced the time previously required to revise old video content by 85%
- Enhanced customers' engagement with company products through interactive materials
- Extended reach of customer support by offering web-based training available any time

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Captivate 3
- Adobe Creative Suite® 3 Web Premium. Components used include:
  - Adobe Flash® CS3
  - Adobe Fireworks® CS3
  - Adobe Dreamweaver CS3
  - Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional

Optimizing online presence

In today's time-challenged marketplace, web professionals need to build and deploy attractive, content-rich pages that can be updated quickly and easily. Since 1999, WebAssist has been making web development easier and faster for designers, developers, and e-commerce professionals with its market-leading software extensions that plug into Adobe software.

Based in Encinitas, California, WebAssist helps individuals and businesses improve productivity, increase potential, and extend commercial opportunities with tools to build better websites. More than 250,000 developers and business owners worldwide use WebAssist products to create websites for e-commerce, enterprise, government, and education. WebAssist's flagship product, eCart—an Adobe Dreamweaver® software extension—offers web designers a cleaner, simpler way to create end-to-end online store solutions.

WebAssist provides online training and product demonstrations in support of more than 20 solutions. When the WebAssist developers needed to create a series of product demonstrations, they turned to Adobe Captivate and Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional software to build and deliver intuitive eLearning tools. By leveraging simulations created in Adobe Captivate, WebAssist customers can "test drive" the company's software and get up to speed quickly.

Adobe Captivate flattens the learning curve

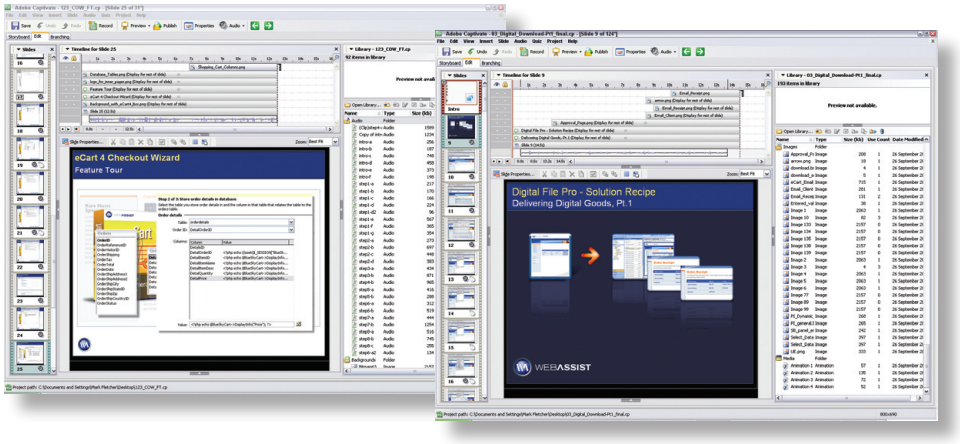
Joseph Lowery, vice president of marketing at WebAssist, explains that Adobe Captivate is the best tool on the market for rapidly developing interactive tutorials, training, and product demonstrations. eLearning materials developed in Adobe Captivate empower users at all skill levels to quickly increase their proficiency in a wide range of business processes, such as communicating procedures, meeting compliance standards, training co-workers, or marketing products.

"What I love about Adobe Captivate most is the fact that you can mold training to your way of thinking rather than having the application determine the route," says Lowery. The WebAssist development team used Adobe Captivate to create the tutorial for its eCart solution, enabling users to page through its online store tutorial. Users can easily navigate to any section—from creating a catalog to checking out—and drill down for specific information.

When he first encountered Adobe Captivate, Mark Fletcher, WebAssist's training manager (whose background is eLearning and instructional design), was astounded. "When I came across the level of flexibility provided by Adobe Captivate, I was amazed at how easy it is to visualize content and make edits to audio, text, and graphic components," he says.

Previously, WebAssist developers used a linear video-editing technology to create tutorials. As a matter of course, each time the company launched a new version, the team needed to revise the associated tutorials. Since it was essentially impossible to rapidly revise content using the old video methods, the team basically had to create a new tutorial from scratch.

Adobe Captivate and Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional software is used to build and deliver intuitive, eLearning tools including product simulations and tutorials for WebAssist solutions including eCart. The artwork for WebAssist's online materials is created using Adobe Fireworks CS3 software, a graphics editor that works transparently with Adobe Dreamweaver, Flash, and Illustrator software. Image files saved in Fireworks are easily exported to Adobe Captivate.



"WebAssist has realized a 44% increase in extension revenue during the first 12-month period after leveraging Adobe Captivate solutions on our site."

Michael Lekse
Vice president of sales
WebAssist

"Adobe Captivate is a tremendous time-saver in comparison to using video methodology," says Fletcher. "We estimate that the team saves about 85% of the time that was previously spent making revisions to video presentations. I can deploy material to the team for edit and review much more quickly, and we can easily make changes at the 11th hour."

The rapid production environment in Adobe Captivate allows Fletcher and his team to create just-in-time workflows, giving them the flexibility they need to meet tight deadlines and bring products to market faster. In measuring the Adobe Captivate learning curve, Fletcher estimates that users are up to speed within two hours.

Rapid development increases net results

According to Michael Lekse, vice president of sales, "WebAssist has realized a 44% increase in extension revenue during the first 12-month period after leveraging Adobe Captivate solutions on our site." Additionally, Adobe Captivate has enriched WebAssist's ability to deliver quality service and support as part of its web development toolkits and mentoring services.

"Adobe Captivate software has given WebAssist a cost-effective way to increase our community support and educate prospective clients. Our worldwide customer base needs solutions, support, and training during all international business hours. Adobe Captivate gives us the ability to communicate with visitors and customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via self-paced, interactive tutorials and feature tours—without having to increase our departmental headcounts or outsource services," says Lekse. "Our Solution Recipes, which explain how to create sophisticated web applications step-by-step, have significantly reduced the number of support calls."

Lekse adds that the ability to rapidly prototype eLearning modules, auto-populate graphic revisions universally, and localize content inside Adobe Captivate are tremendous production time-savers. He also notes, "A really important benefit of using Adobe Captivate is that it enables us to retrieve valuable data to create and analyze reports."

Effective, seamless tool integration

WebAssist relies on a wealth of Adobe solutions to enrich the eLearning experience. For example, much of the artwork for WebAssist's online materials is created using Adobe Fireworks CS3 software, a graphics editor that works transparently with Adobe Dreamweaver, Flash, and Illustrator® software. Image files that are saved in Fireworks can be easily exported to Adobe Captivate. "The ability to launch and edit in Adobe tools like Fireworks CS3 from inside Adobe Captivate significantly streamlines our production process," says Fletcher. In the future, WebAssist plans to use its Acrobat Connect Professional server to log user statistics so they can readily see what pages are being accessed most frequently.

The challenge of providing users with trial versions of its products creates a unique blend of marketing and training opportunities for WebAssist. "Using Adobe Captivate to create presentations, we can show people how to use our software using audio, interactivity, and imagery—without requiring them to download anything," says Fletcher.

For More Information
www.adobe.com/products/captivate/

Adobe

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Know your audience. Different audiences have widely different restrictions on the technical capabilities of their computers. Some corporate users are still on Windows 2000. Many people in companies cannot install, or upgrade, any software. Most home users can install whatever they like.

David Swaddle,
Director,
Healthy Media Limited

VI. 21 Tips for Combining and Deploying Authoring Tools *continued*

Adobe Captivate: I have been combining both Adobe Captivate and Tech Smith's Camtasia in Articulate Presenter. I then upload the package to SumTotal Systems Total LMS 7.2. One advantage to using Articulate as a framework, is that it avoids some of the problems the LMS seems to have with Captivate. One tip is that in using a custom pre-loader with Captivate 3, the click boxes cease to work. Neither of Captivate's pre-loaders, the default one, and the branded one, cause the same problem. – 12

Adobe Captivate: Because Captivate has the ability to export into the SWF format, it is an excellent way of creating software demonstrations. You can then combine those demonstrations with other e-Learning design tools such as SumTotal Systems ToolBook or Articulate Presenter. – 101

Combinations driven by Lectora

Lectora by Trivantis and Engage by Articulate Global: To include more than one Engage interaction in your Lectora project you need to do a little renaming of files and manual copying of folders. Once you have published your interaction it will be in a file called "engage.swf" and there will also be an "engage_content" folder. Rename both files to something more meaningful, say "timeline.swf" and "timeline_content." These names must be unique for your Lectora project. In your Lectora project, add the Flash file (timeline.swf in this example) as you would normally do. This will copy the SWF file into the images folder, but there is no way to automatically add the "_content" folder, which you must copy by hand. When you publish the Lectora project to HTML, you will have to manually copy the "_content" folders into the destination images folder, as Lectora will not publish these for you. It is a bit of a pain, and slightly manual, but well worthwhile for using items such as the Glossary and Timelines that are more difficult to do in Lectora. – 28

Lectora, Trivantis: Don't try to force a single tool to specialize in every area of e-Learning authoring. Instead, use a package such as Lectora as the magic glue between different specialized tools. I often create packages that combine custom bits for Flash, MP3 files, video, all sorts of interactions, screen cams, and PowerPoint slides. I've never found a single tool that does a really good job of creating all of the media that I need, so I use a bunch of tools such as Captivate, Articulate, Flash, and Premiere to produce the assets, and then combine them for publishing to HTML or EXE files inside Lectora. – 28

Looking for an idea to spice up your Articulate presentation? Instead of solely using the PowerPoint-to-Conversion functionality offered by Articulate Presenter, you can add what looks like "live video" footage to your presentation, by combining Articulate with Captivate.

Andy Riley, e-Learning Technology Guy, Wachovia Securities

VI. 21 Tips for Combining and Deploying Authoring Tools *continued*

Other combinations: Articulate, FrameMaker, RoboHelp, SCORM, mind mapping as drivers

Flash, Articulate Presenter Pro, PowerPoint, and Fireworks work together nicely. I use Articulate because it handles audio well, and communicates with my LMS. Animations can be PowerPoint or Flash generated, and Fireworks provides graphic options. I can create a question in Flash, and insert it as a single slide, which allows better feedback, graphic, and instructional design options than Articulate alone. It also allows me to reuse the questions in other SWF-supporting courses. Articulate's storyboard option helps me provide my client with up-to-date hardcopies. – 81

When analyzing, categorizing, or brainstorming: Use a mind map tool that can export the structure to PowerPoint. Then import the PowerPoint to Captivate, and your structure is more or less in place. Tweaks will be needed, but despite that fact it's still a huge timesaver. If your Mind Map tool of preference only exports to bitmaps, then those can be imported directly into Captivate. It will need more tweaking, so it might not always be a good solution, but many times it is. – 78

RoboHelp 7.0, part of the Technical Communications Suite by Adobe: This product is all about the user experience! Easily insert customizable pop-ups, hyperlinks, image maps, breadcrumbs, and rollover messages. I keep discovering new things to love about this product ... screenshots, audio, and video completely bring Help systems to life. Snippets (reusable blocks of HTML) are wonderfully time saving, efficient, and easy to use! – 36

Framemaker 8.0, part of the Technical Communications Suite by Adobe: Easily author and publish elaborate technical documents with automatic numbering, cross-references, tables of contents, indexes, books, and more by combining word processing and XML-based structured authoring with template-based publishing. Unicode multi-language support enables content for global audiences, with dictionary and hyphenation support for most languages. Integrate 3-D models, Flash animations, tables, graphics, images, and simulations. Import content from Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, QuarkXPress, and Adobe PageMaker, and manage it in XML. Use XSLT during editing, and conform to industry standards such as DITA and DocBook. Easily convert existing documents to structured content through conversion tables. – 36

Our approach to combining and deploying authoring tools takes advantage of Rapid e-Learning development, with SCORM 2004 reusability to present application training. Shared content objects (SCOs) are about 30-minute lessons. Each lesson uses some combination of Articulate Studio (Presenter, Engage, QuizMaker), with Captivate demonstrations and simulations. Articulate Presenter is the platform, and we insert 720x540 Captivate Flash movies into

When analyzing, categorizing, or brainstorming: Use a mind map tool that can export the structure to PowerPoint. Then import the PowerPoint to Captivate, and your structure is more or less in place.

Ole Kristensen,
e-Learning Consultant,
Grundfos Managment

VI. 21 Tips for Combining and Deploying Authoring Tools *continued*

Articulate. We score, but not track, quizzes and simulations in instructional lessons. The final exam includes Articulate Presenter SCOs that include a QuizMaker test, and Captivate-only simulation SCOs that we both score and track.

We specifically designed the Captivate demonstration movies to be reused in an Adobe RoboHelp on-line help system. In fact, some courses start as on-line help demonstrations, and over time we consolidate them into an e-Learning course. For this reason, the Captivate movies don't contain audio. Since we use SCORM 2004 features in the Learn.com Learn Center LMS, we can re-use some lessons in courses intended for different audiences. We can also add new lessons into existing courses. This reusability strategy requires a design approach where we use Articulate Presenter exclusively to introduce application functions, use Captivate movies to demonstrate application functions, and use Engage to provide click-and-reveal screen overviews. – 83

Miscellaneous tips

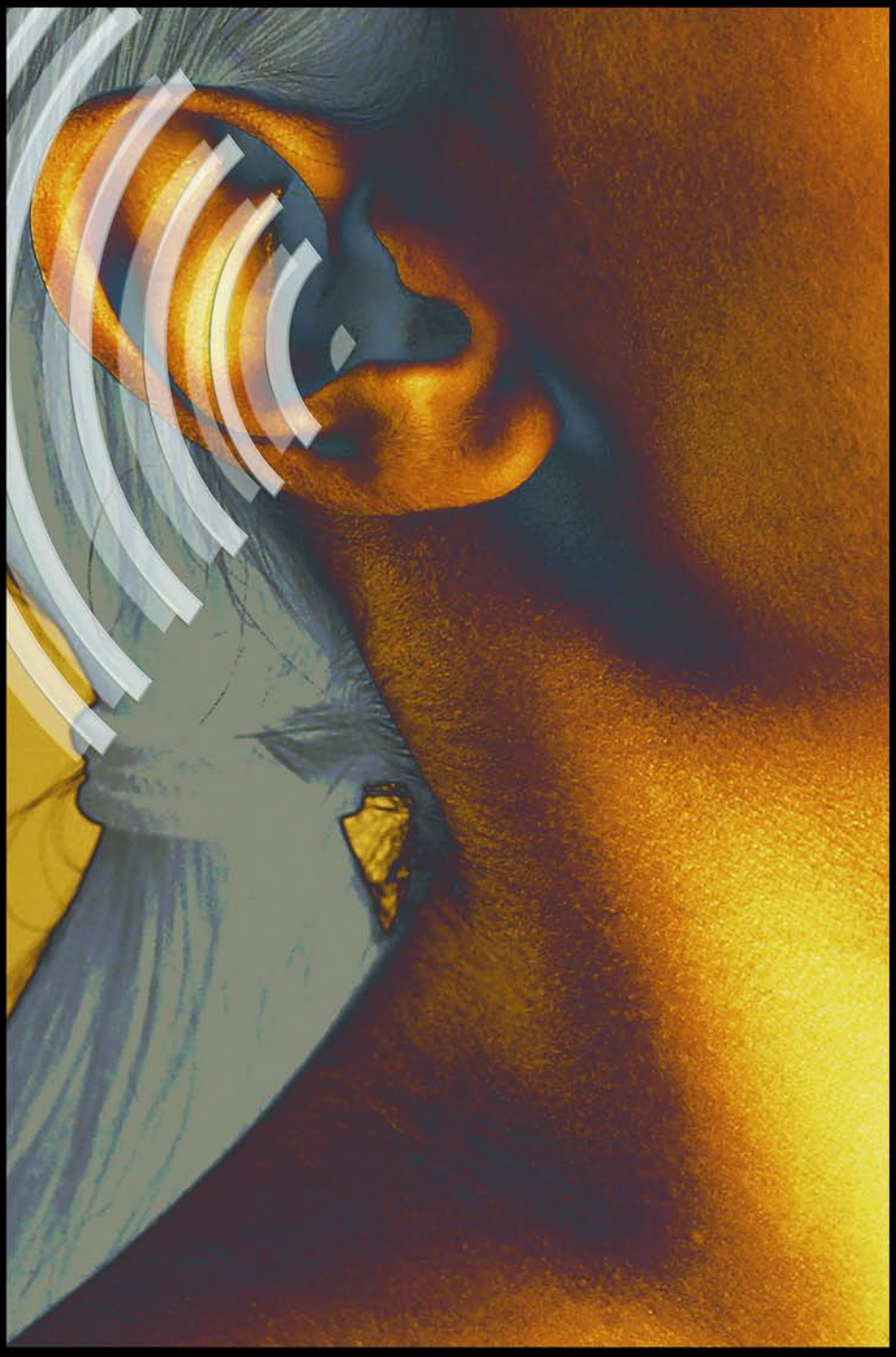
I learned that entertainment value is almost half of your e-Learning experience. A little song and dance will keep the learner engaged and open to receiving information. – 67

Be sure to include the time and budget for training team members on the applications you select. It isn't enough to assume one member will train others, or that members are self-motivated and will schedule time for classes outside work hours. Develop an education plan for (and with) each member to assure top performance. – 52

Most current software involved in performance and enhancement of e-Learning is user friendly these days. The promising hype of platform integration, and the ability to quickly adapt, with what we all can learn from what a specified authoring tool can provide. The trend nowadays, is how to maintain reusability and repurposing of learning objects, when considering deployment of an authoring tool. Adobe, for example, is one of most beneficial tools people use daily. Even in everyday life, no one can stay behind Adobe, why? Another example is LMSs. Different organizations (military, companies, or educational) are instantly enhancing their LMS to match and interoperate with the methodology chosen. When saying methodology, I mean what instructional system design is chosen, and what learning theory the organization prefers to use to enhance their learning. It's a fact, human beings are built of different learning skills, and with different knowledge acquisition abilities. When people gather in one place and need to communicate for an objective (take any organization mission), how to enable those people to adequately trigger objectives and communicate better is an issue and challenge of authoring tools. – 116

Lectora® by Trivantis

The buzz in engaging elearning development software



Discover why 59% of Fortune 100 companies use Lectora.
Download your free full version of Lectora at
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VII. Thanks to Our Tipsters

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3 Amy Heckendorf, Instructional Designer, JADE Learning

4 Amy Spence, Sr. Instructional Designer, Dick's Sporting Goods

5 Andy DeCuir, eLearning Support Analyst

6 Andre vd Merwe, Chief Servant Officer, Eiffel

7 Andy Riley, E-Learning Technology Guy, Wachovia Securities

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25 Daniel Vaughn, Training Specialist, Capital Group

26 Danny Ortegon, Training Manager, Walgreens – OptionCare

27 Dave Ferrier, Instructional Designer, Comcast University

28 David Swaddle, Director, Healthy Media Limited

29 Deborah Davidson, IT Educator, Butterfield Bank (Cayman) Ltd.

30 Denny Dedmore, Senior Technical Support Engineer, ToolBook Technical Support

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45 Inge de Waard, Coordinator eLearning, Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp

46 Jaime Oyarzo Espinosa, Instructional Designer, Lund University

47 Jan Watrous-McCabe, E-Learning Consultant, Allina Hospitals & Clinics

48 Janet Wright, eLearning Specialist, Regence

49 Janis Gaines, Curriculum Developer, Easy eCourses

50 Jeff Krebs, Senior Educational Consultant, GE Healthcare

51 Jenise Cook, Owner, www.RidgeViewMedia.com

VII. The Tipsters *continued*

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54 Ju Park, Instructional Design Specialist, Indiana University Northwest

55 Juan Otero, Instructional Designer / e-Learning Specialist, Tecadi

56 Judy Long, Instructional Designer

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60 Linda Nelson, eLearning Specialist, Iron Mountain

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63 Maggie Martinez, CEO, The Training Place, Inc.

64 Mark Guerin, Manager, Technology Training, Brown Brothers Harriman

65 Mary Jo Koplos, Owner, Come Write Inn, Ltd.

66 Mathieu Plourde, Instructional Designer, University of Delaware

67 Matt Hamparian, Training Specialist, Nationwide

68 Matthew Masci, Global Help Manager, Aconex

69 Melissa Scott, ISS Training Officer, Logan City Council

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VII. The Tipsters *continued*

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108 Tom Deinzer, Educational Technical Consultant, GE Healthcare

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118 Wayne Anderson, Instructional Consultant, Avanade

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120 Kristin Ford, President, PC Training Source

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122 Vanessa Fletcher, Student, University of Hawaii, Hilo