

Kia ora

Welcome to the Spring issue of Insight. With the arrival of warmer weather and lighter evenings there's also a resurgence of enthusiasm to 'get things done' – both at home and at work. Whether that means starting a new training project or doing some reflection and forward planning, the energy available at this time of year seems endless.

As usual there's lots of good reading in this issue – great for moments when you need a break!

Our focus is in the e-space with articles on e-learning authoring tools, developing an e-learning strategy for your organisation and an update on mobile learning. And if you don't know much about social media then our article on page 7 will help get you up to speed.

One constant challenge for business is maintaining productivity, employee engagement and motivation. Our article 'What has learning got to do with it' looks at this issue.

We've also included the next article in our project management series.

As always if there are aspects of training that you would like to see in Insight just email me, tina@symbiont.co.nz and we'll do our best to rustle up the information.

Ngā mihi

Tina

Tina Wilks
Managing Director

Developing an e-learning strategy

TINA WILKS MANAGING DIRECTOR

Ok. So you've heard good things about e-learning and you think that your organisation needs to move to the e-space.

Logically the next step seems to be to allocate some budget and start to offer some of your training via e-learning. But wait – what are you really trying to achieve?

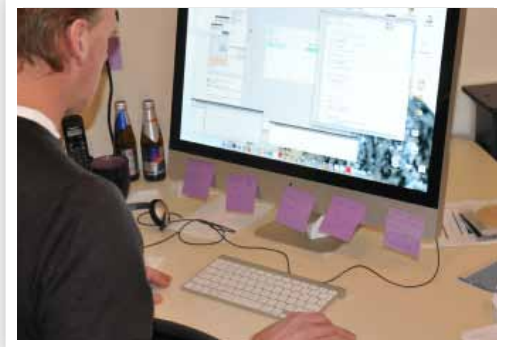
E-learning is a powerful business tool and can provide benefits such as:

- improved access to training
- more flexibility for staff
- cost savings
- greater consistency with training and improved quality control
- higher productivity and profitability.

However, without a robust e-learning strategy there is likely to be a lack of coordination and focus, and you may end up with an expensive mess.

Creating the strategy

As with any other business strategy the one you create for e-learning needs to start with a clear vision of the goals of the organisation and how these will translate through to the training needs of staff. The strategy will also need to address the



E-learning is a powerful business tool.

creation of an appropriate technology infrastructure, detail the implementation process and describe the change management process you will follow.

A significant part of the move to e-learning will be the introduction of new technology. For those involved in the project this can be very exciting but can lead to technology choices being made on personal preference rather than fact. You will need to ensure that the technology you use remains a tool used by the training not the other way around. Using the most up to date technology does not necessarily equate to effective e-learning.

As with any organisational change there are some common pitfalls that, if known about in advance, can be avoided. These include:

- lack of communication to all staff, and failure to gain their support
- not gaining buy-in from all executive/managerial staff
- failing to develop a checklist for the selection of a Learning Management System (LMS)
- failing to create an e-learning project champion

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Rapid e-learning

Tools – get productive quickly

CAROLYN HAWE EDUCATIONAL DESIGNER







E-learning projects can require a team of specialists including educational designers, editors, and graphic and multimedia designers.

However, the availability of new e-learning software has reduced the expertise required to develop simple courses. This can reduce the development time and get courses implemented quickly.

The e-learning authoring tools vary in complexity and performance. I

have reviewed six of them from an educational designer's perspective.

Although all of these tools can produce an e-learning course, you still need to focus on the learner experience rather than the technologies. The old adage 'rubbish in rubbish out' still holds true.

E-learning tool	Ease of use/cost	Testing
Adobe Captivate 	Based on Adobe's suite of products. Not very intuitive, needs an understanding of other Adobe products. Cost – high.	I found it quite difficult to navigate my way around. I did manage to create a course but found it difficult to make changes. It was not easy to develop feedback for some question types.
Articulate 	Very easy to use. Allows good feedback and unlimited design options. Includes Presenter, Quizmaker, Engage, Video Encoder. Cost – medium.	I really liked Quizmaker as it allowed me a wide choice of question and survey types and easy feedback. I managed to create a bank of questions in minutes! They were easy to insert into Presenter.
Udutu 	Fairly easy to use, but not as intuitive as Articulate. Not so easy to manipulate background and images. The quiz activities have some limitations. Cost – free	I was able to create a simple course but some steps were not as intuitive as I had hoped. When familiar with the program the final product is good.
Wondershare 	Very easy to use. Similar in look to Articulate. Flexible enough to incorporate most educational design concepts. Able to import quizzes from Excel files (not available in Articulate). Can add voice narration using the text-to-voice tool. Cost – low	Like Articulate I was able to produce a simple course in a matter of minutes. The quiz functions were logical and gave freedom to incorporate feedback in a number of ways.
Lectora Inspire 	Not easy to use. Found the basic course structure difficult to manage. Survey and question types were not intuitive and included more structural content that got in the way of designing the activity. Cost – medium	Seems to have potential to do more than some other programmes but needs time to understand and use well. I liked the choice of a question using Likert scale.
Rapid Intake 	Easy to use but with limited design options. Allows multiple authors to work on the material together. Can create one programme for web and smartphones. Cost – medium	I liked the way the program stepped me through the development stages and easily imported images and sounds. However I found editing the program not very straightforward. Activities functional but not very attractive.

Simple tools

Availability of new e-learning software has reduced the expertise required to develop simple courses.

Contact us today to find out how you can take advantage of rapid e-learning development for your organisation.

Email: info@symbiont.co.nz

Phone: 04 905 6715

Enhancing productivity

What has learning got to do with it?

SELINA PERRIE EDUCATIONAL DESIGNER

A challenge for businesses today is maintaining productivity as well as keeping the workforce engaged and motivated.

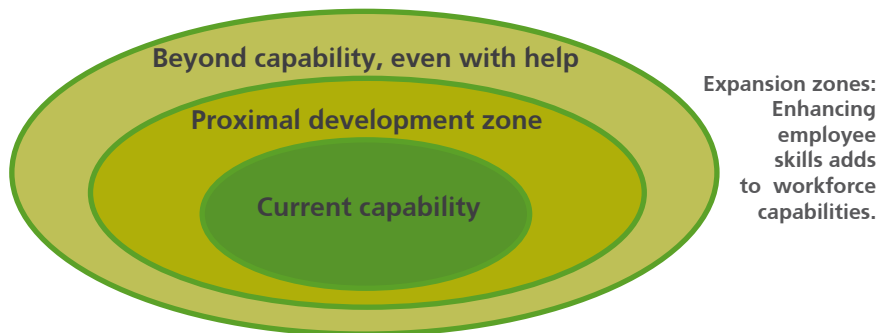
One way in which that challenge may be met is to provide training that builds skill, confidence and motivation.

Described as a, 'relatively lasting change in behaviour that is the result of an experience', learning brings together cognitive, emotional and environmental influences, and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one's knowledge, skills and values.

To get the best performance out of an employee it's important to understand how they may learn. This can be based on a set of theories or learning styles, which seek to understand how the learning process works.

Constructivism is a common theory that is applied to the workplace setting. Its approach to learning promotes the:

- learner being actively involved in the learning process (similar to the pedagogic approach of 'active learning')
- design of activities that assist employees form new knowledge out of their learning experiences.



For employees to learn proactively and effectively there has to be suitable understanding that their knowledge will be applied practically and that it will assist them to progress in their goals.

During training it is beneficial to keep employees challenged with activities that sit just beyond their current level and, most importantly, that refer to their skills and knowledge. When employees experience the successful completion of challenging tasks that are out of their 'proximal development zone', they gain confidence and motivation to progress to more complicated challenges, becoming further productive in their roles.

To further enhance productivity after training and to ensure the employee stays engaged and challenged during the learning activity, it is important that the level and type of learning reflects the level of the environment that they need to be able to function in on completion.

Lasting change

Effective learning very much depends on the 'learning experience' which can lead to long term changes in the behaviour of an employee as a direct result of the experience.

Who benefits?

Enhancing the employee's skill base through continual and effective 'facilitated' learning, such as self-paced online courses, supports an employee to become an effective thinker which provides them with higher levels of motivation, confidence and productivity.

Employees that are engaged in their work have a higher level of job satisfaction. It makes sense to provide training and education that motivates people making them more productive and innovative, thus improving the company's bottom line.

Developing an e-learning strategy

FROM FRONT PAGE

- poor communication with staff during the project
- failing to have e-learning design expertise in the development team
- poor analysis of existing resources for suitability for use on line.

So by now moving to e-learning may sound like it should be put in the 'too hard basket'! But it doesn't have to be if you follow these key steps:

1. Create the e-learning vision for your organisation, including

how e-learning will deliver the organisational goals

2. Appoint an e-learning project champion
3. Bring executive and managerial staff up to speed
4. Develop an e-learning training model
5. Identify people within the organisation who could up-skill to become e-learning experts (or look to contract this expertise in)
6. Identify the technology required

7. Keep all staff informed and have a change management strategy.

Remember that moving to e-learning is not just another training project, but an evolution that impacts on the entire organisation.

If you would like to know more about how you can move your organisation to e-learning with as few headaches as possible contact us today.

Email: info@symbiont.co.nz

Phone: **04 905 6715**

m-learning

Mobile devices offer exciting educational possibilities

COLIN MILLER MULTIMEDIA DESIGNER

At its most basic form, m-learning (mobile learning) is any form of learning that can take place wherever the learner is. Currently this definition is more closely related to delivery of educational content on mobile devices that could range from an mp3 player to a Kindle book or multimedia on a smart-phone.

However, with the relentless march of technology these devices offer much more than just the convenience of taking your learning anywhere.

It is important not to look upon these devices simply as e-learning on smaller screens, but to take advantage of the additional possibilities these devices make available.

The power and features of these is constantly expanding and below are listed some of the capabilities and possibilities offered by this new wave of mobile devices.

- **Mobility:** These devices are, by nature, mobile and as such can be used to break down boundaries of traditional learning. Rather than bringing elements of the 'real world' into the classroom, the students can take their devices and learning out into that world.
- **New opportunities for interaction:** The primary interface for these devices is the multi-touch screen. This is more than just a replacement for your mouse allowing many-fingered, gestural control over an application. For educational

Mobile devices capable of being used for mLearning include iPads and smart-phones.



Learning anywhere

The true power of these devices as learning tools is shown when these separate capabilities are combined to produce truly engaging, collaborative and context-aware learning experiences that break through traditional boundaries

uses this opens up many more possibilities for object association and simulation.

- **Tilt and shake:** These devices contain a multitude of sensors including three-axis gyroscopes and accelerometers. These are used to a very basic extent to re-orient a screen when the user rotates the device, however the possibilities are endless. Imagine a physics class out in the 'real world' measuring the G-forces of a

fairground ride. User interfaces can be built around these sensors allowing the learner to literally 'shake, rattle and roll' through an application or simulation.

- **Cameras:** Forward and rear-facing cameras are now standard, allowing both recording and real-time communication and sharing of the user's current point of view.
- **Location aware:** These devices, using a variety of means – such as GPS – know their location. This allows contextual information, relevant to their location to be presented. Combining this with the cameras and tilt sensors allows this information to be overlaid over a real view of the scene. This information can also be used to tag photos or other information that may be gathered out in the field, or for later analysis of the student's movements through a particular task.
- **Always connected:** These devices are not only connected to the Internet but to each other. These are social devices



and the potential power of this in developing collaborative learning experiences cannot be underestimated.

The true power of these devices as learning tools is shown when these separate capabilities are combined to produce truly engaging, collaborative and context-aware learning experiences that break through traditional boundaries, both physical and conceptual.

The possibilities seem endless, from individual exploration and sharing to collaborative tasks that take the class out of the class room and infuse their world with the kind of information and detail unimaginable until recently.

These devices not only allow learning anywhere but also allow a deeper understanding of the world around the learner.

Want to know more about the possibilities of mLearning? Contact us today

Email: info@symbiont.co.nz

Phone: 04 905 6715

Project management

Avoiding the handbrakes

TIO TAIKI PROJECT MANAGER

So, you're about to engage a development company to develop sustainable industry practice training resources for your staff? That's great!

It's important to remember that although your project is being managed by someone else, you also play a critical role in its success or failure.

Changing the project goals and deliverables mid-project, not maintaining regular and open communication with the project manager and not trusting the opinions and expertise of the company you have hired are some examples of how clients can pull the 'handbrake' on their projects, sometimes unintentionally, but often with serious impacts on project momentum and progress.

Here are other examples we've experienced working with clients and some suggested approaches to avoid similar situations for your projects:

Knowing what you want

Starting a project without, or with unclear clear objectives, deliverables and expectations leads to cost and time inefficiencies, conflict and frustration.

It's important to provide clear final requirements and expectations to the development company. A good development company will ensure these have been agreed and documented before starting your project.

Putting on the 'squeeze'

Typically we want most things sooner rather than later, however, putting unnecessary pressure for a quicker completion of your project can in many situations lead to inferior product quality, additional costs and unnecessary rework further down the track.

It's important to agree on a timeline



Unnecessary braking causes disruptions.

at the initial planning stages. If this needs to change (and it happens more often than you may think), it's important to make the development company aware of this as soon as possible. In our last newsletter we discussed 'project constraints' and the impacts to consider of changing the timeline.

Timely feedback and decisions

Sometimes clients are unable to make timely decisions or provide complete feedback on their own projects, yet expect a wonderful completion.

There maybe legitimate reasons for this, in which case they need to be explained to the development company. However, where possible, try to mitigate any barriers in your organisation that will impede you on providing timely decisions and feedback for your project. If there are 'hoops' to jump through, make sure the development company is aware as soon as possible so they can factor this into the planning and scheduling of your project.

The fewer 'handbrake' turns there are within a project, the less bumpy the journey will be to successful completion.



New postal address

Symbiont's postal address has changed to: **P O Box 786, Paraparaumu 5254**

Predictions

Vital skills for future workers

The University of Phoenix has attempted to forecast the key drivers of change in the workplace over the next decade and how these will impact on skill requirements.

Working with the Institute for the Future, of Palo Alto, California, the Arizona university's research institute produced Future Work Skills 2020, which it says has implications for individuals, educational institutions, business and governments.

While the research has a United States focus, the findings are relevant internationally.

Individuals will increasingly be required to continually reassess the skills they need, and develop and adapt as required.

Educational institutions will need to emphasise developing skills such as critical thinking, insight and analysis; integrate new media literacy into education programmes; give prominence to soft skills, such as the ability to collaborate, work in groups and read social cues; broadening their reach beyond teens and young adults; and integrating interdisciplinary training.

Businesses must adapt workforce planning and development to meet skill needs; identify critical skills, selecting and developing talent; and collaborate with tertiary educational institutions for lifelong learning and skill requirements.

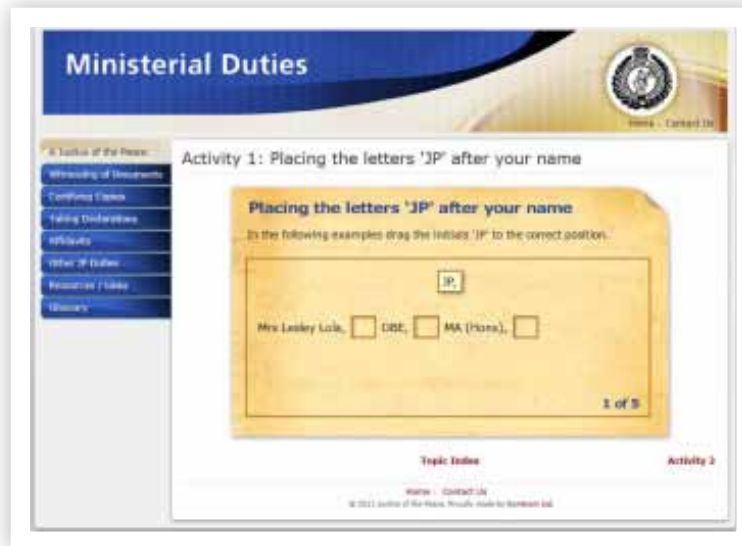
Government policymakers will need to take a leadership role and make education a priority. To be prepared for businesses to be competitive, policymakers will need to consider people's full range of skills and the importance of lifelong learning and constant skill renewal.

Increasing global lifespans will change the nature of careers and learning, while the rise of smart machines and systems – workplace robotics will nudge humans out of repetitive tasks.

For more information explore:

<http://www.phoenix.edu/research-institute/publications/2011/04/future-work-skills-2020.html>

Client profile



A sample page from the Justices of the Peace online learning course.

Future Justices of the Peace

ANDY MACIVER EDITOR

Producing an online resource to introduce JPs to their ministerial duties is part of a series of programmes Symbiont Ltd is undertaking for the Royal Association of Justices of the Peace.

Recent amendments to the Justices of the Peace Act made training mandatory for New Zealand's 7500 JPs. Between 200 and 250 new JPs are appointed each year.

Working with JP subject matter expert Sarah Loftus, Symbiont educational designer Carolyn Howe designed an online course that complemented the Association's Ministerial Duties Manual.

The e-learning course included scenarios and applications JPs would be expected to encounter as well as knowledge checks.

Once the design was complete,

Symbiont's multimedia designer Colin Miller developed the interactivities.

The e-learning course will be deployed via the JP's website, behind a secure login. People taking the course will be able to test their knowledge of the appropriate use of the title JP, oaths and responsibilities, witnessing of documents, certifying copies of documents, taking declarations and affidavits as well as other JP duties. Also included are useful online links to resources and forms, and a glossary of terms.

Upon completion and delivery of the online course, Symbiont produced a print-based equivalent of the e-learning material to provide options for those JPs without computer or Internet access.

Symbiont is in the process of developing other training programmes for the association.

A long history in law

New Zealand's first Justice of the Peace was appointed in 1814 when New South Wales Governor Lachlan Macquarie made missionary Thomas Kendall a Justice "in the Bay of Islands in New Zealand and throughout the islands of New Zealand".

After it became a British colony in 1840, the royal charter required the Legislative Council to include three senior Justices of the Peace.

The position had its origins in England

in ancient times, but the term Justices was given in a statute of 1361, where they were assigned to keep the peace "restrain the Offenders, Rioters and all other Barators".

The functions of modern JPs – lay people assisted by court officials – are now more limited but the Justices' oath includes the words: "I will do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of New Zealand, without fear or favour, affection or ill will".

Social learning

The power of new media

CAROLYN HAWE EDUCATIONAL DESIGNER

New social media offer a range of tools for learning.

Social learning is participating with others to make sense of information. It is not a new concept as social interaction has always played a key part in learning. However, the new social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and You Tube are so easy to use that there is widespread participation. This massive power of interaction has the potential to change people and organisations.

What tools are used for social interaction?

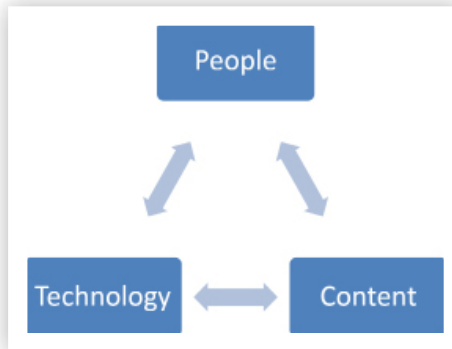
Microblogging or microsharing is where short messages (less than 140 characters) are posted. The short responses are more easily squeezed into people's lives but can enrich them greatly. Learners can seek information and potentially get immediate feedback from a worldwide audience. Twitter and Yammer are examples.

Social opportunities can be built into your learning management system (LMS) through forums and chat rooms. Blogs and webinars are being used more commonly to share information and wikis can provide opportunities for group work. Other video and photograph sharing tools include You Tube, Vimeo, and Photobucket. Bubbl.us and Pbworks provide places for collaboration.

How can social learning benefit businesses?

In the competitive and changeable world that businesses operate in, the only way to stay ahead is to be adaptive and innovative. Many businesses have adopted new social learning technologies to enhance their business performance.

Online interaction between employees within a business can break down silos and flatten the management structure. Staff interaction using these tools has the potential to draw out information stored only in employees' heads to share and create new content.



Benefit

Online interaction between employees within a business can break down silos and flatten the management structure.

For example, Google is a company that needs to stay ahead of the competition and they want to retain their brightest and smartest engineers, so they developed a platform for their engineers to share ideas and deposit items into a repository. This means that their sharing and collaboration enabled 'engineers to train engineers'.

Deloitte, a company whose employees

are geographically scattered created an online 'street' where staff can linger and share. They can access each other's skills, experience, links and even personal information. This enables social interactions in the same way as a discussion over a water cooler may take place in a workplace.

How does social learning benefit the learner?

These social media tools allow the learner to take control and choose their own community, joining with people who share their concerns or passions. In the workplace they may access vital institutional knowledge or deepen their understanding of why things are done in a certain way. They may also see and hear new ideas or perspectives on their work tasks.

The 'smart worker' described by Jane Hart, founder of the Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies in the United Kingdom, wants immediate access to solutions to their performance problems. Social learning tools can provide easily accessed information or people to consult with from all around the globe.

Getting on board with Sustainable Business



Sustainable business is all about meeting the needs of today, without adversely impacting on the needs of tomorrow. For any organisation, the key messages of sustainability link strongly with good business practices, such as building efficiency, minimising waste and maximising resources.

There are proven benefits from adopting sustainable business practices – for the organisation, staff and customers.

Sustainability is not a fad but a new way to direct your business or organisation.

If you are looking to take action, or just want some more information contact us today at:

sustainability@symbiont.co.nz

or phone 04 905 6715

Conferences

North America's leading eLearning event, DevLearn 2011 conference and expo, will be held in Las Vegas from November 2-4.

The event is designed to explore the latest and greatest technologies for learning and will attract between 1,600 and 1,800 participants this year.

Keynote speakers this year include:

Dr Michio Kaku, of City University of New York, who will describe revolutionary developments in technology, computers and quantum physics.

Tom Koulopoulos, author of Living in the cloud, will explore how we can use the Cloud to transform learning.

Other sessions will include: mobile learning, serious gaming, social learning and visual design.

www.elearningguild.com/DevLearn/content/1941/devlearn-2011-conference-and-expo---home/

ALT-C 2011

Founded in 1993, the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) is a UK-based organisation. Its purpose is defined as ensuring that the use of learning technology is:

- effective and efficient
- informed by research and practice
- grounded in an understanding of the underlying technologies, their capabilities and the situations into which they are placed.

The association is very active in bringing together practitioners, researchers and policymakers to improve practice, promote research and influence policy.

The recent ALT-C Conference was titled 'Thriving in a colder and more challenging climate' and focussed on how the current disruptions to economies could be used to foster innovation.

There are also a number of events run by ALT throughout the year – some are online and so accessible to us in New Zealand. To find out more go to:

<http://www.alt.ac.uk/events>

Symbiont at HRINZ Expo 2011

In early August Symbiont had a trade stand at the Human Resources Institute (HRINZ) Expo in Wellington. The conference and expo were very well attended and our staff on the stand had a busy time. We had numerous enquiries about e-learning and it seems that many more organisations are seriously considering this mode of training delivery.

This expo also saw the launch of our Sustainable Industry Practice training resources. We had a lot of interest in the range of training that we can offer in this space.

Surprisingly there were also a number of people who were unsure exactly what sustainability really is about and why organisations should be interested. Clearly more general awareness raising needs to occur. Behaving sustainably is good for business and our planet so the sooner more people come on board with the idea the better.

Schools doodle for Google



Internet search engine Google's homepage logo has evolved to become an integral part of what the company refers to as the "search experience", with the Google doodle.

The company, whose name became officially accepted by Oxford and Merriam-Webster dictionary editors in 2006 as a transitive verb in the English language, has become noted for decorating its logo to celebrate notable events.

According to the Google website, the first doodle of 1998 showed a stick figure behind the second "o" to indicate company founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin attendance at the Burning Man festival in Nevada.

A year later, a doodle for Bastille Day, led to designer Dennis Hwang becoming Google's chief doodler. Creating doodles is now the responsibility of a team of designers. The team has created more than 300 doodles for Google in the United States, and more than 700 have been designed internationally.

In July, Google New Zealand announced its second Doodle 4 Google in New Zealand, for school pupils in years 1-10 to create a Google doodle of the vision for "My Wish for New Zealand".

Entries had to be submitted by September 23, with online public voting in October, followed by announcement of national age group winners. Chief doodler Dennis Hwang will select the overall national winner in November to be shown on the Google New Zealand homepage.

The design team say they welcome doodle ideas, which can be sent to proposals@google.com.

A display of all the doodles used can be found at www.google.com/logos