

# Technology

## ■ New Era for Corporate E-Learning

At a time when many business schools are implementing e-learning initiatives with enthusiasm, many corporations are struggling to integrate e-learning into their operations. According to “E-Learning: The Findings and the Future,” a new report from U.K.-based business school Ashridge, corporations may be looking increasingly to business schools to help them surmount these obstacles. Ashridge conducted interviews with 16 organizations, including the BBC, Lloyds TSB, the Ministry of Defence, and Xerox Europe, and surveyed corporate subscribers to the Ashridge Virtual Learning Resource Center.

The study found a marked rift be-

tween theory and practice among participating organizations. While 86 percent of respondents believed e-learning to be an effective training tool, 82 percent found it difficult to implement e-learning into their organizations.

The greatest barrier to e-learning was a lack of time for effective implementation, respondents said. Other barriers included insufficient technology, staff resistance, and a negative perception of e-learning’s value. Negative perceptions are often so prevalent, the study found, that some companies call e-learning by another name, such as “I learning.”

“The initial wild enthusiasm for e-learning has given way to a much more cautious approach,” says Andrew Ettinger, director of learning

resources at Ashridge and co-author of the research. “E-learning is not the silver bullet many people were led to believe it was. It can be highly effective, but only when implemented properly as part of an overall learning process.”

In contrast, the few companies that have integrated e-learning initiatives effectively cited several factors crucial to their success. They reported a cultural shift among their employees concerning how education can be delivered. In addition, e-learning opportunities were aligned closely to organizational needs; e-learning was blended with classroom and hands-on training; e-learning was supported by senior management and marketed throughout the organization; and, finally, e-learning opportunities were

### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

## Silicon Chalk Software Enhances Classroom Interactivity

If there’s a buzzword in educational IT these days, it’s “interactivity.” In many cases, the more students interact with the instructor, the material, and their classmates, the better. The latest software from Silicon Chalk, a Vancouver-based software company, aims to bring a boost to this developing area of education. Silicon Chalk was founded by Murray Goldberg, creator of WebCT.

Silicon Chalk Version 3.0 is a tool designed to enhance the use of laptops, desktops, and tablet PCs in the classroom. Instructors and students can use the software to post information for presentations, discussion, notetaking, and feedback to all participants’ computers. The software also facilitates assessment activities such as in-class polling, quizzing, and participation tracking.

In addition, the software keeps a full record of the course for future playback. The recordings blend the voice of the instructor; presentation material from sources such as PowerPoint, Excel, and Web browsing; and student notes. When used with interactive whiteboards, the software records each pen stroke as well. Students can download their own recording of the course at the end of the class and take the recording with them to create their own at-home digital libraries. They also can search large collections of course recordings by keyword and even edit information, explains Dennis Staples, the company’s vice president of sales.

“The ability to use keyword searches is a compelling benefit to students,” says Staples. The recordings also provide support to distance learning students or students who have missed a class.

Rapid advances in wireless networks on college campuses have made widespread use of software such as Silicon Chalk possible. As wireless becomes more ubiquitous, software that promotes greater collaboration in the classroom promises to become a mainstay of college courses, Staples says.

Silicon Chalk is compatible with Windows environments only. Per-user licensing costs depend on the number of users, ranging from \$8 to \$15. With the licensing agreement, schools receive all upgrades at no extra cost.



Silicon Chalk software not only records the vocal participation of instructor and students for future playback, but also their onscreen notetaking, quiz responses, and presentations.

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created through the efforts of a diverse group of experts, including trainers, facilitators, marketers, and Web and graphic designers.

The survey also indicated that companies are turning to business schools more for materials tailored to their own e-learning needs than for full-blown courses. "When most business schools think of e-learning, they think of courses. However, our survey found that many companies want customized materials and tailored portals to information," he says. "They can then link those materials to their own training initiatives, such as 360-degree performance reviews."

Surprisingly, one area where companies want more help from business schools isn't education delivery at all, but marketing and branding their e-learning programs within their organizations to attract employee interest, Ettinger says. "Companies want help from business schools in marketing the prod-

ucts and making their populations aware that their e-learning programs exist," he states. When it comes to e-learning, the partnership between corporations may become less about course delivery and more about customer support in content creation, customization, and internal corporate branding of e-learning programs.

The 90-page report can be purchased for £40. Contact Claire Huggett at [claire.huggett@ashridge.org.uk](mailto:claire.huggett@ashridge.org.uk).

### Tracking the Trends in Online Learning

**eLearners.com, a Web site that connects** prospective students with sources of online education, recently launched its eLearners Index, a research product that tracks the popularity of online degree programs. The index reflects statistical data on the activities of learners to the eLearners.com Web site, including the pages they view, the programs that generate the

most inquiries, and the popularity of academic subjects and degrees.

"With more than 3 million visitors annually, we get a clear picture of the supply of and demand for learning opportunities," says C.J. DeSantis, president of eLearners. "Tracking these types of trends and insights can be extremely useful to educational providers as they determine where to direct their development and marketing dollars."

According to the index, the online degree subjects that students most often query on its site are business administration and MBA programs, followed by psychology, nursing, and engineering. The MBA is slightly more sought-after than business administration, DeSantis says. "But business administration is where we also see the most competition between schools" for online education, he adds.

For more information on purchasing the eLearners Index, visit [www.elearnersindex.com](http://www.elearnersindex.com).

# Technology



## NEWSBYTES

### ■ SURFING THE FRIENDLY SKIES

Broadband Internet access may soon become a mainstay in air travel, now that Boeing is beginning to offer in-flight Internet service. Korean Air will offer its passengers broadband access early next year on flights into and out of South Korea, according to IDG News Service. Also signed up for the service are Japan's All Nippon Airways, Japan Airlines, Lufthansa, and Scandinavian Airline Systems. Passengers will pay US\$9.95 for 30 minutes and 20 cents a minute thereafter. Or they



can choose to pay a flat fee of \$19.95 for service on three- to six-hour flights, \$29.95 for longer flights.

### ■ AWASH IN VIRTUAL PROFIT

Students from the Coles College of Business at Kennesaw State University and the five-school Georgia WebMBA program placed first and second, respectively, in the Founda-

tion Business Simulation International Challenge. The Challenge, co-sponsored by computer-based education company Management Simulations, required students to amass as much virtual profit as possible in a computer-simulated business environment. The KSU team accumulated \$113 million, and the Georgia WebMBA team, \$67.8 million.

### ■ GONE "PHISHING"

Internet scammers have a new ploy—"phishing" attacks. In the attacks, scammers send out e-mails

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that appear to be authentic communications from legitimate companies like eBay or AOL asking for personal data such as Social Security and credit card numbers. When Gartner

#### **DATABIT**

Spam e-mail accounts for **32 percent** of all e-mail sent in North America, up from **17 percent** in 2001, according to estimates from research firm IDC, Framingham, Massachusetts.

Research recently surveyed 5,000 adults, it found that 3 percent of them had divulged personal information to phishers—far more

than the half-percent success rate of most spam e-mail. The firm found that 92 percent of known phishing attacks have occurred in the last 12 months; it estimates that as many as 1.78 million people could be victims. In response, U.S. officials are cracking down on phishers and many companies are launching promotions to stress that they never will ask for personal information via e-mail.

#### **E-LEARNING TAKES FLIGHT**

British Airways has launched a new global learning program for its 48,000 employees. The self-directed online program has been developed through partnerships with software provider Oracle Corp. and corporate education provider NETg, part of The Thomson Corporation. The company's goal is to cut costs while improving learning opportunities for its staff. Oracle iLearning and Thomson NETg Open Learning will help British Airways manage hundreds of online and traditional courses and allow employees to register for courses, participate in classes, access information, and manage course schedules. **Z**



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