

Technology

■ Tapping Mobile Phones As Tools for Learning

Business schools have delivered content by laptop and PDA; but few, if any, have designed a distance learning program to be delivered completely by mobile phone. Even so, business educators may want to take note of a pilot program currently in progress at Stanford University in California. In April, Stanford's International Outreach Program (IOP), a part of its Freeman Spogli Institute of International Studies, launched the Dunia Moja Project to test the use of mobile phones to deliver educational content.

The Dunia Moja Project—"dunia moja" means "one world" in Swahili—focuses on the environmental sciences. It is being conducted in partnership with three universities: Makerere University in Uganda, Mweka College of African Wildlife Management in Tanzania, and the University of the Western Cape in South Africa.

Distance learning has a long history, done first by mail and then over the Internet. But those models do not take into account the fact that Africa lags behind the rest of the world in traditional, computer-based Internet access, says Reinhold Steinbeck, the IOP's director. On the other hand, many citizens in Africa and other developing regions have better access to cell phones than to computers. That led the IOP to propose sending course materials via cell phones.

"Mobile phones have great potential to support educational interactions, especially now that they allow not only text messaging, but also media-rich conversations," says Steinbeck. Ericsson and Sony

Ericsson collaborated with Stanford to provide mobile smart phones equipped with video cameras, audio recorders, and Internet capability, as well as technical support for the pilot version of the course.

Students at all four participating universities can use the phones to access the course Web site, send text messages, and post media to mobile blogs. In addition, students receive a memory card loaded with pre-recorded lectures—which include video and PowerPoint slides—created by all four universities.

Content was created carefully, says Steinbeck, to account for the smaller screen size of the mobile phone. "We really had to think about how we were going to distribute pre-recorded content over the network," he says. "We knew a 60-minute lecture wouldn't be feasible in this medium. Instead, we used shorter segments, or 'courselets.'"

In one project, for example, students in different countries listened to pre-recorded lectures about soil

erosion, and then shared their findings on soil erosion in their own regions. Such projects, says Steinbeck, "sparked some higher level discussions about global climate change." The IOP chose to focus the Dunia Moja Project on the environmental sciences for two reasons. First, the topic is well-suited to a globally distributed project. Second, Stanford University recently launched a universitywide, interdisciplinary initiative targeting the environment and sustainable practices.

The mobile phone's potential to reach globally distributed groups of students—especially those in remote areas—has implications for all academic disciplines, including business, says Steinbeck. "Eventually, most mobile phones will support downloadable podcasts and even simulations," he says. "Mobile phones will allow a school to engage with learners, wherever they are."

For information about the Dunia Moja Project, visit www.duniamoja.stanford.edu.



EACH OF EDGE'S SESSIONS HIGHLIGHTS MAJOR TRENDS
THAT ARE BEING DRIVEN BY GLOBALIZATION AND QUICK TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE.

A Course on the 'Edge' Of Business Trends

In the spring, the Merage School of Business at the University of California, Irvine, enrolled 65 students in "edge," a new course that explores how technology and globalization are transforming business. The objective of edge, say its designers, is to prepare students to succeed as technology drives new forms of entrepreneurship, international competition, overlapping markets, social networking, and collaboration.

Chaired by Vijay Gurbaxani, senior associate dean, the school's Curriculum Innovation Committee developed the preliminary concept of the course. Its content was designed by David Obstfeld, assistant professor for strategy, and technology guru John Seely Brown, now a visiting scholar at the University of Southern California.

Each of edge's sessions highlights major trends that are being driven by globalization and quick technological change. In the spring course, many sessions highlighted expert speakers who discussed topics such as Web-based social networks, virtual worlds, new forms of marketing communication, and new forms of leadership. The session on virtual worlds, for example, featured Cory Ondrejka, a creator of the popular online virtual world SecondLife. Obstfeld, Brown, and Gurbaxani presented students with the larger frameworks affecting these issues, such as globalization and the use of IT for strategic advantage.

For their final projects, students have four options. They can: identify business opportunities for a Web 2.0 startup; conduct a marketing campaign using video and other rich



media; provide strategic analysis for a Web-based social network startup backed by secured venture capital; or consult for a local apparel firm to determine when and how it could best outsource its manufacturing operations to Hong Kong.

To bring the spirit of the course online, the Merage School also unveiled a new Web site for edge at edge.merage.uci.edu. The site acts as a venue for faculty and students to share information. Students can hold online exchanges on class topics, create online surveys, post links to articles and videos, and write personal blogs.

"Different student groups are responsible for managing an online digital class conversation for that week's topic. The remaining students are required to post a weekly comment," says Obstfeld. Students' posts are accompanied by their photos. In ten years of teaching, says Obstfeld, "I've never experienced anything resembling this form of engagement."

Although all course assignments

are accessed through Web-based links, edge does incorporate two old-fashioned textbooks: *The Long Tail* by Chris Anderson and *The Only Sustainable Edge* by Brown and John Hagel.

The course will be held again in spring 2008. Obstfeld, Brown, and Gurbaxani plan to place more emphasis on helping students develop a baseline set of skills, including establishing a wiki-based project, posting video to YouTube, and social networking. They also plan to hold at least one class in a Second Life virtual environment.

"As a course, edge reflects the belief that the world is on the verge of a dynamic transformation of business and society. Business schools need to do more to anticipate where such change is taking us," Obstfeld says. "This new economy is unfolding very fast and in unpredictable ways. We're trying to cultivate the intense curiosity that allows individuals to figure out and respond to this new environment."

Wharton and Gartner Prep CIOs to Lead

The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia has partnered with research company Gartner Inc. to launch an executive education program that specifically addresses the challenges facing chief information officers.

Gartner, whose U.S. operations are headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut, has conducted its CIO Academy since 2003. However, this is the first time Gartner has partnered with a business school to offer a program to help CIOs develop their business skills. The new program, "CIO as Full Business Partner," will

NEWSBYTES

■ ECO-FRIENDLY DATA CENTER

Bryant University of Smithfield, Rhode Island, has completed a \$1 million initiative to install an energy-efficient data center. One of the first data centers to be completed under IBM's new Project Big Green, Bryant's center houses 40 IBM servers in 500 square feet. It replaces Bryant's old system of 75 servers, which were housed at four separate sites in 1,100 square feet. Using a system of targeted fans and cooling units, the center uses less energy during non-peak times. Even though Bryant's enrollment and number of facilities has grown, the new center has reduced Bryant's energy use for data storage by 35 percent, saving the school up to \$20,000 a year in energy costs.

■ NEW ONLINE CAREER CENTER FOR CHINA

The University of Maryland's Smith School of Business in College Park has partnered with CareerBeam, a virtual career services company, to offer online professional development services to students in the school's China Executive MBA program. The site will offer counseling, personal assessment, resume writing, and career planning tools, as well as job postings inside and outside China. The site also will offer information on more than 17 million companies worldwide. Career management is still "a relatively new concept in China," says Colleen Sabatino, CEO of CareerBeam. "As economic development spurs changes in China, ideas regarding career management must evolve to keep pace."

■ U.S., JAPAN BEST FOR TECH

A study conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit recently ranked 64 nations on their technological competitiveness, including 25 weighted factors such as



computer ownership, broadband access, college enrollment, IT employment, protection of intellec-



tual property, research spending, and cybersecurity. The U.S. and Japan came in first

and second, respectively. India came in at 46th; China, 49th. The last three on the list were Iran, Nigeria, and Azerbaijan.

■ TECH TRAINING IN QATAR

Carnegie Mellon University's Qatar campus and Qatar Science & Technology Park (QTSP) recently unveiled a new Executive Entrepreneurship Certificate Program designed to boost opportunities for tech entrepreneurs in Doha, Qatar. The program, which begins in September, will teach aspiring managers and executives how to use entrepreneurial skills to build technology-based businesses in Middle Eastern business environments, whether by innovating within their existing companies or starting new enterprises. The nine-month, part-time program is run by Carnegie Mellon's Tepper School of Business and its Donald H. Jones Center for Entrepreneurship in Pittsburgh.

be held at the Wharton School from October 28 to November 2.

"The core content of the Gartner CIO Academy has focused on IT issues, such as governance, communication, and decision making," says Dawn Gudelis, director of the CIO Academy in the Gartner Executive Program. "Wharton's program will focus on how CIOs will use technology to address core business issues and contribute to a company's competitive advantage."

In its annual survey of CIOs, Gartner found that the CIO's role is changing dramatically. For example, 50 percent of CIOs now have duties outside of technology, including helping to design business strategy. That's up 20 percent from 2003. In addition, the survey indicates that 74 percent of CIOs are reporting directly to the CEO, CFO, or COO, up from 69 percent in 2003.

"For years, CIOs have been told that they wouldn't have a job unless they transformed from 'chief technology mechanics' to business executives," says Thomas P. Gerrity, a professor of management at Wharton. "But many focus on cost containment at the expense of making important contributions to the CEO's vision."

The new program at Wharton will take a multidisciplinary approach to help CIOs understand the strategy and language of CEOs, CFOs, and COOs, as well as their peers in finance, marketing, sales, and operations. By the end of the

DATABIT

In its survey of 161 marketing executives in Europe and the U.S., IT consultant company SDL International found that fewer than 25 percent of U.S. companies translate their Web sites into multiple languages to better reach users worldwide.



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session, participants will develop a 100-day action plan to help them implement on the job what they learn in the program.

“CIOs are in the same position as their C-level peers to drive competitive advantage,” says Gerrity. “Their ability to frame projects in business and strategic terms is the key factor in securing a position as full partner with the rest of the senior management team.”

Print Media in Trouble?

Most faculty are well aware that incoming business students rely heavily on the Internet for their entertainment and information. Their observations are confirmed by a recent report from Edison Media Research, a firm in Somerville, New Jersey. “Internet and Multimedia 2007” quantifies just how quickly the Internet is overtaking print as the public’s medium of choice.

When 1,855 consumers aged 12 and older were asked to choose the “most essential” medium in their lives, 33 percent chose the Internet, placing its popularity just below television (36 percent), but above radio (17 percent) and newspapers (10 percent). The Internet has gained definite ground since Edison’s 2002 report, when consumers’ preference for television and the Internet stood at 39 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

“It is not a stretch to say that the Internet has become just as important as television as a source of information and entertainment in the lives of Americans,” said Larry Rosin, President, Edison Media Research. He added that the Internet would likely be consumers’ No. 1 medium of choice in five years. 

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