Learning Technologies Conference 2009

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Report on Proceedings

Rapporteurs:

- Karyn Romeis, Learning Anorak Ltd
- Jon Turner, Quistor
- Duncan Gotobed, Capita L&D
Introduction
The Learning Technologies Conference 2009 was our tenth. It had a record number of delegates and a great buzz as Learning and Development practitioners from around the UK and beyond gathered to share their ideas and experiences. To capture the delivery part of the conference, a rapporteur attended every session. The result is this report, which both serves as a record in its own right and a jumping off point for the videos of the sessions.

The three rapporteurs deserve our thanks for this great volunteer effort, and for capturing the essence of a meeting at a time when one decade of our profession is ending, and a potentially very different one beginning.

Donald H Taylor, Conference Chairman

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Keynotes:

Opening keynote: Learning and development: intellectual capital you can bank on  
Speaker: Tony Buzan, author, educationalist, creator of Mindmapping *

Key messages: nurture your brain, help people to invest in theirs and be ready to take the opportunities it will bring

Tony stressed that we are living in a paradigm shifting age that requires the development of multiple intelligences. He pointed to research on creativity that suggests that people’s creative ability reduces as we progress through the educational system. While these results have been replicated globally, they do not indicate a natural state of play as we use less than one percent of our creative potential. He argued that L&D needed to develop their organisation’s intellectual capital through helping people to invest in their brains and to develop the skills of creativity. This can only be done by ensuring people work in a supportive environment and have the opportunity to learn and to make connections. (DG)

Keynote: Learning and Technology: success and strategy in a digital world  
Speaker: George Siemens, University of Manitoba

Key messages: L&D professionals must understand that they are involved in information shaping; we must broaden and clarify our vision; the ROI criteria have changed.

George spoke for forty densely packed, PowerPoint-free minutes without hesitation, deviation or repetition, but with a fair amount of wry humour! He traced the evolution of the management of information, in particular in the field of PR, and drew parallels and lessons for the field of L&D. Echoing Tony Buzan, he talked of how L&D was moving towards the management of the management of learning, towards a society of weak links and quick connections. The quantitative change in the volume and speed of information available brings its own qualitative change: more, as George says, is different. Questions at the end included this: does this change mean that L&D is moving from a production to a custodial role? (KR)

Closing keynote: Learning for tomorrow: what a difference a decade makes  
Speakers: Donald Clark, Ufi; Jay Cross, Internet Time Group and Charles Jennings, Duntroon

Key messages: The global economy is in survival mode, to survive we need to look back at social networking as well as forwards; We have the tech, now how do we use it? The culture must switch from training to performance

Jay opened with his inimitable enthusiasm about the past ten years of development. He suggested that we consider throwing away our 3/5/10 year strategies for eLearning. How do we know if informal learning is good enough? If its good enough for Obama its good enough for you. Jay also mentioned how he plans to bring together non-L&D specialists at www.learningirregulars.com.

Charles introduced the German concept of ‘Fachidiot’ – or one trick pony. Having a single solution to a training need is no longer an option. Charles asked: Has anything in training actually changed in the last 10 years? Learning is about behavioural change, not passing assessments.
Donald. Learning and technologies clash. Impassioned chat about new technologies getting smaller, cheaper, wireless and better. The same should be the case for eLearning. We as L&D professionals can learn a lot from the technological developments over the past 10 years. Catch phrase: ‘How great is that?’

Don asked the panel to provide one great example of inspirational eLearning:

- Donald – Caspian Learning – 3D gaming/learning software
- Charles – Sun learning exchange – Corporate YouTube
- Jay – Cisco – collective responsibility for projects (JT)
Track 1: Learning Technology
Reviewed by Jon Turner, Quistor

Session 1: Learning technologies: the road ahead
Key messages: Technology & access are now ubiquitous; Informal learning should not be contained/tracked/managed

Speakers: Seb Schmoller, ALT and Jay Cross, The Internet Time Group

Seb introduced his talk by explaining the falling cost of processing power and the ubiquity of technology. ‘Phones are becoming like PCs only with more stuff on them.’ Almost 50% of the world’s population have a mobile phone. A head of steam is developing behind open course content however Seb did temper this with the fact that open source is not necessarily the panacea for learning. He ended on a sobering note that learning technologies have been with us for a fraction of the existence of human beings and the internet changes nothing fundamental about how our mind work.

Jay opened the talk by asking the delegates to login to the backnoise.com website and contribute to the session via their laptops. Flow.informl.com was shown as an information aggregator – an excellent tool for informal learning. Other aggregator tools shown were: Friend feed, Tumbler, Mimio, Veodia and Scribd. The point he was making is that there are literally thousands of new social media tools around, it is difficult to keep up and near impossible to find time to access and use these tools. Intelligent aggregators of these tools help to personalise, speed up and centralise. Questions were raised about barriers to the use of new technologies and who takes responsibility for the learning with ‘informal learning’, the answer from Jay was in essence build it and they will come.

Session 2: 3D learning and virtual worlds
Key messages: Just because we can it doesn’t mean we should; Collaboration in 3D virtual worlds is useful for contextual scenario based learning

Speakers: Steve Prentice, Gartner and Ron Edwards, Ambient Performance

Steve explained that it is essential to identify your objectives before the ‘cool’ technology. Second Life is not very enterprise friendly (firewall, client size issues etc.) however there are corporate virtual worlds but all require time to get used to the environment. Skills learnt in gaming environments are transferrable to your working life – decision making, problem solving, social interaction etc. If context & location is important then 3D virtual worlds will help. The future for learning, according to Steve will be browser based virtual collaboration.

Ron demoed the Forterra 3D world environment online using a PowerPoint presentation example delivered in front of a group of avatars followed by ‘teleporting’ to a virtual shop for a scenario. It showed that online collaboration can be an effective method of training for widely dispersed audiences, particularly for scenario based learning where learners can view the scenario and provide feedback/answer questions from the instructor.

Questions from the floor were posed directly to the avatars, bypassing Ron.

Session 3: Social media and learning
Key message: Social media for learning is all about sharing knowledge with others, not training. See www.c4lpt.co.uk for a guide to social media; Employees are voting with their feet in favour of access to social media tools
Speakers: Jane Hart, C4LPT and Andy Tedd, Consultant

Jane is a social media expert. She started with stating that social media tools tend not to have a coherent strategy behind them. She suggested using the social media & learning group site to continue a discussion initiated at LT. iGoogle was singled out as an effective aggregator for many social media tools. Social media tools help to create ‘Personal Learning Environments’ (PLEs) for informal learning.

Jane described how she is working with the University of East London to develop a social media system to provide both a formal and informal environment for their learners using the open source Elgg.

Andy opened his session with some surprising statistics on the amount of social networking generated by Obama and went on to discuss how to raise corporate usage of social media environments by addressing the generations; Y are now the consumers, X are the implementers and the baby booming generation are the decision makers for social media. Highest trusted source is ‘a person like yourself’, not a CEO who writes a blog!

Session 4: The future of learning and content management

Key message: Do we as L&D professionals need/want/have to manage learning? Reuse, reduce, in-source and collaborate for effective content design

Speakers: David Wilson, Elearnity and Lt Cdr Paul Pine, Royal Navy

David used the ‘Meet Charlotte’ video to demonstrate that information is far more easily accessible from outside the office (fire)walls. Some business drivers/key processes for the traditional LMS are still applicable to Learning 2.0, particularly contextualised search, some are new such as mobility, learner networks, personalisation, peer review. The key shift with 2.0 is from push to pull learning. David’s concern is the lack of interoperability between LMS 2.0 tools and enterprise 2.0 tools. There needs to be an informal learning structure that informs the formal learning strategy.

Paul described how the brand new destroyer required a brand new approach to training. Previously, multiple training centres developed eLearning in silos. 50+ courses were required. A LCMS was used to enable collaborative development and content reuse. Paul mused that if you are firing a weapon, the Navy don’t want them to have been trained via Wikipedia and therefore need a more formal and quality assured training environment.
Session 5: Learning 2.0 in the real world

Key message: Learning 2.0 is the read/write/learn revolution; Change or die; Is there a future for face-to-face conferences like LT in the light of 2.0?

Speakers: Barry Sampson, Web Based Thinking, Kate Day, Cisco Systems and John Castledine, Pfizer Global R&D

Barry kicked off with what he wished he’d known 10 years ago (how to type). eLearning content is an anomaly in learning as it does not allow collaboration. Facebook and other 2.0 tools are being used whether endorsed or not.

Kate described the need to move from being learning professionals into being communication experts. The internet is less about the network of computers, more about the network of people. Multi-generational workforce challenges require relevant training strategies.

John pointed out that LT delegates are the early adopters and provide knowledge on Learning 2.0 tools. Less than 10% of people will make life changes when faced with life threatening situations so how can we expect them to make work changes willingly? Pfizer has adopted their Wiki as the primary on-line comms tool.

Another Pfizer initiative ‘It’s my life’ helped employees to learn to learn.
**Track 2: Learning in Practice**  
Reviewed by Karyn Romeis, Learning Anorak

**Session 1: Choosing the right tools for the job**  
**Key message:** Make sure you’re well informed!

**Speakers:** Gordon Bull, Learning Forte and Mark Berthelemy, Capita L&D

Gordon reminded us that selecting a technology is not one decision, but a series of decisions. He urged us to make these in concert with other departments, first identifying the real issue in the context of the business itself, before starting down the road to identify the solution (which may not include learning intervention at all).

Mark gave us five key questions to ask before implementing an open source option:

1. Will it do the job?
2. Will it fit?
3. What will it cost to implement?
4. Where will we get support?
5. Does it have a sustainable business model?

He followed this up with a few useful pros and cons to the open source model as opposed to proprietary software.

**Session 2: Next generation L&D in the workplace**  
**Key message:** Choose the right delivery medium for the situation  

**Speakers:** Sue Farrow, Xerox Ltd and Bernadette Ude, Finning Group UK

Sue described a five-stage, blended learning intervention rolled out at Xerox to support a change process. It was a mandatory, top-down solution aimed at decreasing ‘nudge learning’ from neighbours.

Bernadette described the implementation of an electronic performance support system at Finning. This was aimed at taking just-in-time support and learning to the learner, empowering and enabling them at point of need.

**Session 3: Designing e-learning with the learner in mind**  
**Key message:** Make it easier for the learner to recall information

**Speaker:** Itiel Dror, University of Southampton

Itiel delivered both talks in this session, stressing the importance of memory to learning.

In the first session, he described a research experiment which sought to identify factors (of both the learner and the design of the elearning) which promoted and hindered recall of material.

His second session demonstrated some examples of interactive video and provided some useful tips on creating similar materials.

**Session 4: Embracing new technology to reach widespread learners**  
**Key message:** Harness the tools and technologies that are already in general use

**Speakers:** Maj. Roy Evans, British Army and Kirstie Donnelly and Deborah Prynne, learndirect
Roy has the enviable job of ‘playing with things’ to explore their potential as learning tools. He described the use of the iPod and Nintendo DS to deliver low level language and numeracy learning to soldiers ‘in theatre’. The success of the initiative is evidenced by the user demand for further materials.

Kirstie and Deborah described how learndirect (like the conference itself, celebrating its 10 anniversary this year) had opted to mirror what users were already doing online by opting for a Facebook-esque interface, embedding a range of fit-for-purpose assets, including where appropriate, pdf documents.

**Session 5: Rapid development in the real world**

**Key message:** Rapid does not mean poor

**Speakers:** Nick Shackleton-Jones, BBC T&D; Gareth Wellings, Deloitte and Anthony ‘Skip’ Basiel, Middlesex University

Nick and Gareth shared case study experience from their respective organisations. Skip then highlighted some of the paradigm shifts needed for the effective implementation of rapid learning within an organisation. A few people were startled by his use of the term ‘ultra rapid’ when they had yet to come to grips with ‘rapid’. This session is probably best captured by some of the questions raised and discussed from the floor:

- How rapid is rapid?
- How big is a rapid development team?
- Is it possible to outsource just certain elements of a rapid development project, and if so, which?
- How do you deal with maintenance?

Discussions such as these should be continued on within the Ning community.
Track 3: Learning Strategy
Reviewed by Duncan Gotobed, Capita L&D

Session 1: Building learning strategy and culture
Key message: the world is changing, L&D needs to build a strategic value for the organisation by solving managers’ problems and engaging learners

Speakers: Charles Jennings, Duntroon and Sharon Claffey Kaliouby, Enterprise Island

Charles reinforced the idea that organisations are moving into a new age and as a consequence Learning and Development needs to focus on building strategic value by enabling growth acceleration, transformation and increased productivity. He suggested this can be done through:

- Aligning with business needs by being business driven
- Building the capability of L&D professionals to deliver the promise
- Using the right technology to achieve the desired results

Sharon highlighted that developing a learning culture is a long journey that begins with small steps. She suggested that the best way to get Senior Management buy-in and endorsement is through aligning with the strategic needs of the business. Sharon also explained the importance of engaging with people, helping them to solve their problems, listening to what they want, delivering on your promises and ensuring that the learning people have undertaken is valued.

Discussion areas included

- Age differentiation
- Tech savvy L&D professionals
- Aligning with directionless organisations

Session 2: Talent and competency based learning
Key message: talent management pays, HR needs to be strategic and evaluation matters

Speakers: Alan Hewitt, IBM and Lara Taylorson and Alison Maher, TFL

Alan defined talent management as having the right people, with the right skills and motivation, the right information, in the right roles and at the right cost so that they deliver value in a sustainable way. He explained HR has an important strategic role to play in talent management by sourcing, deploying and leading/managing people effectively. This can be achieved by evaluating where the capability gaps lie in the organisation, what the pivotal roles are and how well the organisation retains people.

Lara and Alison talked about ‘Project Pyramid’, which was concerned with building programme and project management capability in TFL. It covered three main areas:

- Developing a competency framework that was benchmarked externally
- Designing and procuring an online tool that helped people to identify what they needed to focus on and pointed them in the direction where they could address the skills gap
- Building a learning and development portfolio that addressed people’s needs

Key success factors of the programme included involving the programme management community in each stage of the training cycle as well as working with other TFL L&D offerings.
Discussion areas:

- Assessment tools
- Senior level buy-in
- Competencies

Session 3: Aligning learning to strategic objectives
Speakers: Nigel Harrison, Chartered Business Psychologist and Jim Fingland, City of Edinburgh Council

Nigel described the importance of having a structured diagnostic conversation with the client. The problem-solving process involves getting the client to talk about the problem so you can find out what is currently happening, what they would like to happen and the cost of doing nothing. This then allows you to focus on the solution and what needs to happen in terms of knowledge, skills, motivation and environment.

Jim highlighted the benefits of using a single competency framework, focused on key behaviours. He described how the Council identified a partner to develop an LMS based on the competency framework and created a set of resources for managers and professionals to access. Jim also emphasised the importance of focusing on metrics to evaluate the impact of Learning and Development on the organisation.

Discussion areas:

- Using a single set of competencies

Session 4: Growing the L&D function
Key message: build in additional time for the unexpected, build an effective team and keep it together and use technology smartly.

Speakers: Gail Sadler, Hilton Hotel Corporation and Mike Cawood, BP International

Gail described the lessons she learnt from implementing a successful, international e-learning project. These included building additional time into the project plan as SMEs were not always accessible and vendors took longer than expected to get the content back. She also highlighted the benefits of maintaining the team for the duration of the project and sharing key deliverable with stakeholders so that everyone sees the big picture.

Mike described the importance of harnessing technology and people to overcome barriers. He highlighted the benefits of having tech savvy learning professionals who are good communicators, a trusted set of vendors and suppliers and SMEs who are clear on what is expected of them. In terms of technology, Mike emphasised the need to take into account the organization’s IT landscape and to leverage rapid development tools to respond quickly to what the business wants.
Session 5: Learning engagement in the real world

Key message: align with the organization’s needs, use people and policy to support e-learning, treat a launch in the same way as a product launch

Speakers: Laura Overton, Towards Maturity; Jon Aveling, NCALT and Zbigniew Wojciech, Toyota Motor Europe

Laura reinforced a common theme, within the Learning Strategies stream, which was to align e-learning with both business and individual learners needs. She also highlighted the importance of taking into account the work context and actively engaging stakeholders, which was developed by Jon Aveling.

Jon explained how a protected learning policy enabled NCALT e-learners to access e-learning from home and at work. He also highlighted the importance of gaining strategic support from senior management and IT by embedding e-learning in the training strategy and getting the right people to talk to each other. Negative, anecdotal stories of e-learning were actively countered by a learning outreach team,

Zbigniew then explained some of the approaches that were used by Toyota to achieve high e-learning adoption rates. These included treating the e-learning roll out with the same attention to detail as a car launch. Adapting to local conditions, providing feedback to managers on usage and ensuring e-learning was released in a timely fashion.
The Rapporteurs

Karyn Romeis
Self-confessed learning geek, Karyn has been in the field of L&D in a variety of roles for over 20 years. She attributes her success during her years as a classroom based trainer in no small part to her early stage career. She has worked with and for a range of organisations of various sizes, sectors and countries.

She is a keen user of social media and is a vocal member of several online communities of practice, where she is known for speaking her mind.

She is passionate about learner engagement and empowerment, which are among the watchwords of her independent L&D consultancy, Learning Anorak Ltd, established in 2008. Prior to that, she worked as a Learning Consultant/Solutions Designer for Capita L&D. Her blog, Karyn’s erratic learning journey, can be found at http://karynromeis.blogspot.com. She can be contacted at learninganorak@yahoo.co.uk.

Jon Turner
Jonathan Turner is the Managing Director of Quistor UK. He has responsibility for the UK operation of the Quistor group and specialises in performance management, the development of eLearning strategies, and eLearning tools such as Articulate, Captivate & UPK. He regularly speaks at eLearning thought leadership events. Clients he is currently working with include: the NHS, Emerson, Bank of New York Mellon, Buckinghamshire County Council, FTC Kaplan.

Before setting up the UK division of Quistor in 2007 he ran an eLearning consultancy company called Oxford eLearning, leading it from its inception in 2002 into a UK market leader in learning technologies.

Prior to founding Oxford eLearning Jonathan worked as a consultant, managing international teams of developers and instructional designers.

Jonathan initially trained as an architect at Oxford before moving into new media.

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Duncan Gotobed
After a successful career in hospitality, Duncan Gotobed moved into the training arena, first with Hilton and then with Ladbrokes. Since joining Capita Learning and Development he has been involved in the design and delivery of a number of blended learning programmes.

A voracious reader (blogs and books) and keen life long learner, Duncan combines his interest in design, psychology and technology in his new ‘Learner Centred Design’ blog. His curiosity and knack for getting experts to share their tips and tricks, has also led to an international following for his regular podcast. Listen to the podcasts and find out about the new blog at www.topbriefings.com
Online Reaction to the Conference

David Wilson
http://elearnity.blogspot.com/2009/02/learning-technologies-on-rise.html

TrainingZone users' reactions
http://www.trainingzone.co.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=194113&d=680&h=608&f=626&dateformat=%25e-%25h-%25y

Clive Shepherd