

eLearning Embedded Into Traditional Training Programs: New Experiences and Possibilities Provided by SoftDeCC's TCmanager

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Flexible implementation of new training strategies

Unlike isolated eLearning platforms TCmanager provides the **complete administration** functionality applied in a traditional training centre to seamlessly support eLearning in an integrated manner: the **full customer handling** from course booking to certificates printing is supported and **evaluations on training and business success** are available in complete analogy to classroom training. TCmanager therefore allows to flexibly implement a company's training strategy – including blended learning - and select the appropriate way of delivery according to the training subject and student's preferences and time constraints.

TCmanager supports ERP and CRM tasks and integration

For eLearning it supports cooperation of the learning students and provides online tests for the self motivation and -control with anonymous evaluations for statistical reports on the learning success. As - in contrast to industry specific extensions to ERP- and CRM-systems - the administrative processes of a training centre from booking to billing are maintained, there is **no tradeoff between flexibility, quality and reliability and integration**. Detailed resource planning and customer relationship tasks are covered by TCmanager. **New web displays for training resources** (room- , trainer-, equipment schedules) are now available under authenticated access in order to take workload away from the administrators. Nevertheless TCmanager provides efficient interfaces to higher level systems in order to receive inputs and transfer results when appropriate.

ROI by simplified operation and shared resources

Migrations to TCmanager therefore may be driven from various directions, all taking advantage of its client/server architecture, highly efficient database access, integrated eLearning, test generation and evaluation platform.

Fast ROI is then obtained from consolidated data (no duplicate bookings, no missing invoices), streamlined processes (all products, services and materials are administered coherently on the same system), and resource sharing (allocation of trainers, rooms and equipment is automatically checked and allows to share resources not just between courses but also between business lines like tutor activity, customer support or rooms and equipment rental). Typical migration scenarios are:

- **networks of training centres** may want to integrate and **consolidate their distributed customer and course data** in order to let training centres in different locations cooperate on the same database and **share resources**.
- **publishers in the learning industry** may wish to import their large customer **address database** in order to exploit it with TCmanager's CRM functionalities like **mass mailing** with mailmerge letters or Email, cooperative **telephone marketing** and **precise contact management** from various clients and extend their CBT offering to WBTs and managed eLearning with full evaluation, feedback and test facilities.
- **corporate training departments** can take full advantage of TCmanager's flexible but nevertheless coherent time scheduling and resource planning functionality to design, implement and evaluate their training strategy. Delivery can be via classroom training, CBTs or WBTs upon demand. Students then execute the highest level of **blended learning** by switching from classroom training to eLearning and back whenever appropriate. Tests can be generated, published and evaluated to obtain a timely status of the training progress.

Multilanguage architecture and delivery

Operated at ca. 60 training centre sites world wide - both company owned and "open", TCmanager offers multi language networked access to the same server from multiple clients using a variety of different local languages. No modification of the client configuration is necessary when the language of the user interface is selected at runtime: for eLearning this enables simultaneous cooperative training in multi language environments.

TCmanager's architecture inherently includes support for customer specific languages: labels and menu contents are loaded from the server into the user interface upon demand. Customers can take immediate advantage of updates to the platform product and complete local specifics later when needed. This way SoftDeCC efficiently supports TCmanager not just in the multi language European environment but also world wide with installation sites in e.g. Russia and Brazil.

Integrated eLearning is SCORM™ compatible

The eLearning platform is seamlessly integrated to allow for controlled delivery of learning content: booking via Internet, user support by tutoring, fora and chat groups, monitoring success by customer specific online tests. As Learning Management System (LMS) the platform implements SCORM™ Runtime 1.2: SoftDeCC is an accepted ADL Partner. Learning modules from NETg can be integrated into eLearning courses and smoothly executed on the platform. Nevertheless the platform doesn't require any additional client software beyond a common web browser.

Example: Worldwide Certification Process Operational Within 6 Months Based On TCmanager

In contrast to certification programs for operating systems or network equipment similar internal processes for service personnel in technology corporations often address **a well restricted group of specialists**, but run under **severe time pressure**: a certain number of professionals must be trained and certified in every economically important region; as the detailed tasks of the professionals will be scheduled later on the regional level, the exact names of the professionals are irrelevant to the central organization.

Certification programs spanning many companies all focussing on a certain technology tend to result with a certificate proving the acquired knowledge level to third parties. In contrast company *internal* certification programs always run with focus on a well defined set of tasks to be delivered all on the **background of the daily business** and the professional's duties. That is why the content of the training must be **precisely tailored to the upcoming tasks** in order to prevent loss of work time.

One additional aspect of world wide training is the specialization and localization problem: the goal is to let professionals **reach the same knowledge level irrespective of their different educational basis** and professional experience.

An example is a world wide certification process which could be implemented – and made highly efficient by eLearning - for a corporate customer: distributing the eLearning platform into the regions could drive the acceptance and learning success to a level reachable by conventional classroom training only at considerable higher cost.

Problem

The corporation wants to periodically qualify its world wide partners for special new tasks and base that qualification on a certification process. The certificate shall be finally awarded after passing - in an independent test centre - an elaborate theoretical exam followed by practical exam in a corporate lab. The preselection of certificands must be based on world wide unique standards not to be confused by regional preferences and requirements.

Solution

The preselection was conducted on TCmanager's eLearning platform: a set of online tests was created for that purpose and available on the platform, so every professional feeling qualified could execute it. The final registration for the personal certification then required the proof of a successful online test.

The solution s benefits

Homogeneous standard

The certification is performed with homogeneous standards – not with many different examiners in different regions.

Cost efficient

The expensive theoretical exam is restricted to qualified partners only.

No time constraints

No tutors required: therefore every candidate can do the test at a suitable time.

Preselection is transparent for the participants

The test questions and direct review of success help every certificand to early understand, if the certification corresponds to her/his level of education and professional career. If the level of education turns out to be incomplete, additional training from the corporation's program is recommended.

Proof of success

Both the acceptance of the offered certification and the actual success are continuously and centrally visible: additional questions can be added to the certification tests if required.

Project result

The process was successfully implemented and is currently operational in it's 2nd year. Candidates to the elaborate theoretical and practical exams are preselected and comparably qualified.



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1968-1978	Experimental Physics at Munich Technical University
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