

Five Learning Trends for 2009

From DIY to virtual worlds • BY BRANDON HALL



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DID YOU KNOW?

More than 15 million accounts were registered on Second Life as of September 2008.

Source: Wikipedia

This year will no doubt be disruptive for budgets and staffing terms. As in the last downturn, we can expect many organizations to increase their use of e-learning to reduce classroom and travel costs.

Expanding use of e-learning requires awareness of new trends to choose the best alternatives for learning. To identify trends for 2009, we reviewed our research and spoke with learning industry executives about what they see happening in 2009. Following are the top five trends:

- 1. Mobile learning:** Mobile learning has advanced in significant ways and now is on the edge of widespread use in the corporate environment. Microsoft has been using its Academy Mobile product internally to reduce costs associated with traditional content development and delivery. Phil Morel, director of sales enablement at Microsoft, said the company's podcast series — a monthly on-demand, on-the-go audio briefing — features interviews with product experts and top salespeople to help the sales staff effectively sell Microsoft products to enterprise customers.
- 2. Do-it-yourself (DIY) learning:** Learning in the workplace increasingly will provide more options to create learning. Allison Anderson, manager of learning innovations and technology at Intel Corp., explained that her company works in globe-spanning virtual teams at an ever-increasing speed that leaves little time for formal learning. "Because of this immediacy, learners must have access to dynamic content from the best experts, whether they are in the next cube or half a world away. To get to the best content and the right expert, employees must be contributors, as well as consumers, of learning content. The training group no longer can be the only funnel for knowledge or dictate the way each individual employee learns." The technologies that foster DIY learning at Intel include employee blogs, Intelpedia (an internal Wiki), social networks and collaborative tagging and sharing.
- 3. Flexible learning environments:** Driven by Web 2.0 tools such as social networks and the expectations of Millennial workers, we will continue to see more LMSs transitioning from 1.0 to 2.0 platforms. Karie Willyerd, CLO of Sun Microsystems, said the flip side of a workforce that arrives already tech
- savvy is its expectation that the corporate world will meet them on their turf with widget-driven interfaces to access and manage their learning. "In their online travels, they've experienced both the cool and the kludge, and they know the difference. It is not just about content but how it is designed and consumed." Sun Microsystems' new environment for Web 2.0 learning removes the LMS as the central player and provides more collaborative, modern mash-up features that combine search, formal and informal learning assets, training plans, comments, tagging and ratings.
- 4. Virtual worlds:** This year, we'll see more feasibility testing on the use of virtual worlds for workplace learning. Chuck Hamilton, learning and new media program manager of the IBM 3D Internet Team, said virtual landscapes form a new type of learning infrastructure. "We need to embrace some of the new virtual social environments now forming," he said. IBM's Green Data Center in Second Life demonstrates how technology can reduce the energy consumption of a corporate data center. A Nursing Education Simulation in Second Life allows nursing students to measure blood pressure and vital signs, administer drugs and make other interventions on a virtual patient. This is a much more affordable way to train without the cost and risks associated with real-life situations.
- 5. Games and simulations:** Games have moved beyond "edutainment" into complex topics that require higher-order thinking. Learning designers are realizing the potential for games to provide a realistic, interactive experience that draws people in, as well as to address the gaming culture associated with younger workers. Accenture, a management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company created a computer-based business simulation game designed to give senior managers the opportunity to experience managing in a competitive market. Participants form management teams of five to six people, each of which compete against each other during the two-and-a-half day simulation game. Each team is responsible for a company's goals and financial performance over a number of years. **CLO**

* Janet Clary provided valuable research for this column.