



**Learning  
Leader:**

# CA Consolidates Successfully

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GALLOWAY

The consolidation of LMS's is a major challenge for many organizations, according to Bersin & Associates research. About 30 percent of large enterprises operate more than one LMS. And of these, approximately 33 percent are planning to consolidate within the next year, according to the "2007 Corporate Learning Factbook."

But the consolidation challenge faced by Computer Associates International, Inc. (CA) was much bigger than most. In 2006, CA, one of the world's largest independent software companies, set out to consolidate nine legacy LMS's.

In less than six months, the company completed a detailed vendor evaluation, made its selection, and implemented and launched the new solution. The project involved migrating more than 1 million

learning records, 50,000 existing registrations, 44,000 classes, 17,000 users, 4,000 courses, 3,500 exam items related to 750 exams — and touched 650 learning facilities.

The company's approach to this complex and aggressive initiative serves as a valuable blueprint for other organizations — even those dramatically smaller and simpler in scope. Bersin & Associates recognized CA as a 2007 Learning Leader in technology excellence for its stunning accomplishments and impressive methodology.

## **THE PAIN**

When Brad Samargya joined CA as chief learning officer in April 2006, he inherited a function that had been under-funded and under-valued for years.

"The company had made no real invest-

ments in training for years," says Samargya. "Learning was disjointed and highly inconsistent."

Learning-related problems made up a long laundry list. Obviously, the support and maintenance of so many systems was expensive and time consuming. Integration issues were common and ate up even more resources. Obtaining meaningful learning-related data for the enterprise was impossible. Time to market for new courses was unacceptably long and even longer for enterprise-wide deployment.

CA's new management team recognized that the company's business strategy depended on improved and consistent training across the enterprise, a sound learning architecture, and incorporating the latest learning deliveries and technolo-

gies. The team was also willing to put dollars behind its commitment, but not without a few strings attached. Technology investments had to show a rapid return on investment, and the team expected to see high-impact, quality results within 10 weeks of the new system's launch.

### KICK-STARTING THE PROJECT

Samargya and his team decided to form an LMS task force, composed of representatives from each stakeholder group: IT, HR, operations, finance, legal, marketing, curriculum development, sales, technical support, and education. The team conducted workshops with task force members to identify, agree upon and prioritize business needs, system requirements and project scope.

The task force carefully reviewed the features of the nine legacy systems and identified the features that the company needed to keep and those that needed improvement. Additionally, members also spent much time discussing learning trends and what CA employees would likely need and want in the future.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of forming a task force for initiatives like this," says Michael Yakiemchuk, vice president of learning systems and infrastructure. "Besides expediting information gathering and ensuring that all stakeholders have opportunity for input, the task force spreads out the responsibility for decisions. When things go wrong, finger-pointing is very limited."

Once the team had established a common vision, all members agreed that a new system was needed in order to fulfill the identified requirements:

- >> **Providing an e-commerce solution to customers**, so they could browse a global catalog of courses, register, pay on the spot and, in the case of online learning, click straight through to the selected course.
- >> **Improve consistency and reduce learning costs** by moving to a single system. Efficiencies and cost reductions would be gained with a centralized group of super admin users, who would manage content and administer the system. Development costs would also be reduced since internal and external courses had to comply with a single set of integration requirements.
- >> **Gain flexibility for technology partner integration and upgrades** to

accommodate learning needs of the future, such as podcasting, virtual labs and collaboration.

### SELECTING A VENDOR

The team decided that purchasing a hosted solution was the company's best option, given the aggressive implementation timeline and advanced feature requirements.

The selection process was actually based

CA's new learning management system, which has a user interface in multiple languages for CA's global user base.

In order to ensure rapid learning response time for learners around the globe, CA added the Akamai hosting solution that mirrors all CA content internationally. The primary supporting application for the LMS is SAP, CA's system of record for HR, contract and financial information.



**'The support team has to be in place and ready to react the day you launch.'**

**—CA's Brad Samargya**

on Bersin & Associates 7-step selection methodology, described in its LMS research:

- 1** A business case for the project was developed jointly by CA's education organization and its IT department. The case was used to gain executive buy-in.
- 2** The LMS task force used the identified business needs to develop a list of vendor requirements.
- 3** Extensive market research was conducted on potential vendors.
- 4** Eight vendors were selected and contacted for information.
- 5** After review of available independently collected information along with completed RFI's from the eight vendors, the team then created a short list of five vendors. Each of these vendors received an RFP.
- 6** Each of the five vendors conducted on-site presentations.
- 7** The team then selected two vendors and conducted a 5-year total cost of ownership review with each.

The team also conducted an extensive ROI analysis that examined fixed and variable costs, vendor fees and associated internal costs. It calculated current and projected costs per learner and other key metrics and compared the findings to research findings for organizations of comparable size. This cost information played a key role in the selection process.

### FULL STEAM AHEAD

The task force selected Plateau Systems as

The implementation initiative focused on the following main features: catalog search, learning history, learning plans, reporting, and a robust administration function. The next phase of the launch (2008) calls for separate employee and customer views, including a shopping cart as well as the ability for customers to browse the course catalog without logging in.

In addition, the learner experience was enhanced by integrating the learning management system with key technologies:

- >> **Single sign-on.** CA's SiteMinder was deployed to allow internal users to enjoy the convenience of single sign-on. Once CA employees log into the CA network in the office or via VPN, they can log into the learning management system without logging in separately.
- >> **Collaboration rooms.** The Q2 Learning technology extends the reach of informal learning and continues the exchange of ideas from the classroom to the cube.
- >> **Virtual labs.** CA added the Surgient virtual lab technology to the LMS solution in order to give learners the ability to practice what they have learned in a realistic but safe environment before doing it "for real."
- >> **Virtual classrooms.** Interwise virtual classroom technology is a critically important tool for CA and integrated with the LMS.

**BLAST OFF**

CA worked with Plateau to design a user interface that was simple enough for non-technical users, yet offered the features and experience that the company's sophisticated learners would expect and appreciate.

In order to minimize general training requirements, the company invested considerable time and money in a highly intuitive UI design with extensive online help and supplemental Q&A documents.

The implementation team did create a 1-week training program for administrative audiences. The training included recorded Webcasts, process-based training, and job aids designed for quick, on-the-job reference.

To announce the actual launch, the company sent out an enterprise-wide e-mail and posted a detailed article about the new LMS on CA's intranet. Post-launch, the team continues to send out regular e-mails to all employees about system upgrades and new features.

The learning management system was launched on Oct. 31, 2006. All 17,000 CA employees worldwide were given access to the LMS during that single day. The implementation was accomplished in less than 10 weeks, a record for Plateau.

**TODAY**

In the past year, CA has delivered more than 80,000 e-learning courses. By launching a number of successful e-learning and blended-learning programs, CA has not only benefited from having better educated employees on CA's Enterprise IT Management (EITM) vision and solutions, it has also seen a significant savings in travel expenses.

The LMS is now managed by centralized, 4-person administrative team composed of two content administrators, a system administrator and program manager. In addition, internal and external content development teams are imbedded in business units and provide production-ready content to the administration team.

A separate team of 11 works on system upgrades and integration with new technologies. Project managers are responsible for data migration, testing, partner integration, budgeting, overall project management, cutover planning, program management, communications and localization.

The company's IT department, a strategic partner throughout the LMS planning and

implementation processes, remains so today.

First-year results have been impressive.

"The new LMS has opened the door to different types of learning that we've never been able to consider," says Yakiemchuk. "Plus, we now have an enterprise-wide view of learning, which was impossible to get with disparate systems."

CA also continues to monitor costs closely. In the year following the implementation, both capital and per-learner expenses decreased by 57 percent.

A customer version of the LMS, with full e-commerce functionality, will be launched in 2008.

**KEY FACTORS**

What gave CA the ability to complete this highly complex project in an amazingly short period of time? The team identified three key factors:

- >> **A proven methodology.** "We did all of the expected things," says Yakiemchuk. "We had a plan, a strategy, and all of the recommended tools. We also had executive buy-in and strong stakeholder support, thanks to our task force."
- >> **A background in application technology and a development culture.** "Having an application background gives you a strong sense of what you want — and don't want — in a system," says Samargya. "Our company's success is based in part on our ability to accurately project the development schedules for our products, so it's natural to apply these techniques to internal projects."
- >> **A centralized learning organization.** This model facilitated rapid decision-



making and offered strong connections to senior management team. However, Samargya stresses that strong HR support and an ongoing alliance with IT was also central to success.

The team also offered several pieces of advice, relevant to all organizations and projects:

- >> **Pay attention to learners' desktops.** "A pop-up blocker can make it seem to a user that the LMS is not working," says Yakiemchuk.
  - >> **Ensure adequate support.** "Support is as important as anything we do with the LMS," says Samargya. "The support team has to be in place and ready to react the day you launch. With 20,000 users, little issues can make big noise."
  - >> **Focus on vendor partnerships.** "We spend a lot of time and energy with our vendors discussing commitments and information provided," says Anya Darrow, director of education systems and technology. "We don't take anything for granted. As a result, we have a healthy respect for each other."
  - >> **Carry budget over multiple fiscal years.** The initial launch of the LMS is only half of the job. Significant costs are associated with increasing user adoption, fixing issues, planning for upgrades and adding on new technologies.
- CA's consolidation project proves that complex implementations can be carried out efficiently and cost effectively. They don't have to drag out forever. They don't have to become budget black holes. And they can deliver real and immediate business impact. This is excellent news for thousands of companies contemplating such projects in the near future. 