

Mohive - Collaborative E-learning Tool (Feb 07)

Mark Harrison looks at how Mohive shapes up as an e-learning development tool.

The competition's hot in the market place for server-based authoring tools and right up there is this offering from Norway. Mohive has a growing number of enthusiastic user organisations include one Scandanavian insurance company that has produced around 100 e-learning programmes within the last couple of years. That's a lot of content to be developed inhouse, so we thought it was well worth checking out Mohive development tools to see how they do it.

With a little bit of direction from the Mohive team, we started to work with their e-learning publishing system. This is what we thought of it....

Know what a server-based development tool does?

If you do, just skip this and move on to the ratings. If not here's a quick summary:

Using server-based authoring tools is broadly no different from non server-based ones such as Articulate. The difference is that everything you produce is stored online. The latest version of the content: every image, every audio file and every piece of text is stored in one place so you can re-use every element of any programme. This is great for managing a lot of content, or content that changes a lot. You can simply change a content object and republish your courses accordingly – very handy for small updates.

First impressions:

I don't know about you but my first contact with a new authoring tool always tends to follow the same path: initial frustration and confusion leading to growing competence and acceptance of its one or two quirks. I was very pleased to find this was not the case with Mohive.

The functionality is simple and clear. I especially like the use of terms like 'Get' (when you want to upload an image). It will not intimidate even the most technologically-challenged amongst us. Using Flash in the presentation of all the tool menus also really helps create an attractive user environment.

It's easy to apply different art directions (perfect if your brand seems to change everyday) and the feedback mechanisms on content are very straightforward - essential if you want to encourage SMEs to review things properly.

The workflow and collaborative tools are excellent. A project manager can instantly reverse out an up-to-date script with embedded SME feedback whenever they want - great for getting your content signed off.

So, it's got a lot going for it. But let's see what rating it got and why.

Kineo Rating: Recommended

If a server-based approach is important for you, then we think Mohive should be on your shortlist, if you can find the money (as it is a server-based system it is at the higher end of the development tools).

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Ease of use	Excellent	Really easy to use
Instructional design flexibility	Good	Does most things you would want an authoring tool to offer
Ability to incorporate existing content	Good	Would be even better if it kept the embedded animations in Powerpoint if you import the content (but few tools do this to be honest)
Ability to handle variety of topics	Good	Handles most topics except systems training
Ability to incorporate graphics and media	Excellent	Handles Flash files, video and audio.
Ability to publish SCORM/AICC compliant courses	Excellent	Also integrates directly with some key LMSs
Technical support available	Good	Knowledgeable support team

Read on for a full review of the product.

Mohive: The Full Road Test

Ease of use: Excellent

There seems to be a rule in the software industry that says if something is an 'enterprise' tool it is hard to use (e.g. SAP). Mohive have broken this by producing a development environment with simple buttons and instructions all following a natural flow.

A server-based tool has to be simple to deliver the collaboration aspects (from occasional contributors like SMEs). Mohive seems to have achieved it. It is quite simple to author from scratch and incredibly easy for reviewers to add comments and project managers to track the feedback process.

Instructional design flexibility: Good

It could do with a few branching features (like linking from any screen to another screen) which is useful for decision-making style simulations but it does most of the things that your average interactive designer would like to do.

There are lots of types of presentation screens and all of the elements are then moveable to create any screen layout you want.

All of the design content can then be presented within any kind of art direction you choose, with menu options being automatically generated from the chapters you have created. Ideal when you go through your 50th branding change!

Ability to incorporate existing content: Good

It is very easy to import PowerPoint slides, and import audio and flash files including video. You can cut and paste text in the normal way. Like most server-based tools we have worked with, the only frustration is that, because it uses its own screen styles, it does not keep all those natty

animated builds that you previously created within Powerpoint.

It does though offer a very simple and effective import process - allowing you to locate quite easily all the images in the Powerpoint you have just uploaded.

Ability to handle variety of topics: Good

If you use e-learning for systems training you'd better keep your copy of Captivate (or any of the myriad of screen capture tools out there). Mohive does not offer this functionality but it does do everything else you will need.

Ability to incorporate graphics/media: Excellent

This is just really simple. I really like the straightforward instructions.

Ability to publish SCORM/AICC compliant courses: Excellent

Mohive generates content that will run in all the main LMS tools.

Conclusion:

If you have a lot of content to be managed and need collaborative development such as say multiple authors or SMEs at multiple locations then you should certainly have Mohive on your shortlist. Its workflow management will make many e-learning project managers think it's Christmas.

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