

## DIY e-learning – does it work?

**A case study recently published in IT Training outlined how global gases giant BOC Group has been using e-learning for about eight years, mainly to give sales staff the technical product knowledge they need to understand their customers' requirements.**

- Fast to develop
- 'Customer-made'
- Beware of the flat-packed ghost

Each course was tailor-made and included plenty of 'bells and whistles' such as video and graphical animations. But, as BOC found out, courses that look great can take a long time to produce. They therefore decided to try out self-authored e-learning and chose BILD\*, from Brightwave, as the authoring tool.

### Fast to develop

Derrick Hilton, BOC global knowledge manager, explained some of the benefits of DIY e-learning after using BILD\* for a large project that involved launching a new product in several countries, "Everything was self-authored and written in Word to begin with and then sent out to be translated." This meant that it was the first time that BOC could simultaneously launch in French, Spanish and English, and the whole project – involving 150 pages of technical information – took just four to five weeks to complete.

Another benefit from going down the DIY route was that it's easy to centrally make any minor changes or additions to the content as the product or messages evolve. "Because I can do a lot internally, it becomes cost-effective enough for lots of different areas," said Derrick.

### 'Customer-made'

Giving companies the abilities to create e-learning themselves is also part of a much larger trend, the 'customer-made' trend. This is the phenomenon of corporations creating goods, services and experiences in close co-operation with customers, tapping into their intellectual capital and in exchange giving them a direct say in what actually gets produced. Take a look at [www.ipodlounge.com](http://www.ipodlounge.com), [www.google.com/googleblog](http://www.google.com/googleblog), [www.sourceforge.net](http://www.sourceforge.net), and [www.mini2.com](http://www.mini2.com) for some good examples.

With DIY e-learning, being 'customer-made' is exactly the point. An authoring tool puts the power in the hands of the trainer, giving them a direct say in the final product.

### **Beware of the flat-packed ghost**

It's important to conclude however that even if the DIY approach works for some companies, it's not the best route for all. Unless you have a clear idea of how you're going to manage the authoring system and how it can bring value to your training programmes it could easily become the flat-packed ghost in your wardrobe that was cheap to buy but too difficult to put together and therefore never used.

(\* formerly WavePool)

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