Chrysler Academy's Processes Enable Successful Transition to SCORM 2004

Background

Chrysler Academy (CA) is Chrysler's retail training organization. It provides training and performance support to over 100,000 employees at 3,600 Chrysler, Jeep, and Dodge dealerships across the United States. CA's LMS and much of their content is currently available in 12 languages and is shared with Chrysler's international training group. CA designs a full range of training and performance support products including web-based training, live and experiential training, blended learning, and synchronous training events. To learn more, visit http://www.learningwiki.com/542

CA has a library of over 250 web courses for sales, service, and parts dealership employees and their managers. Before SCORM, they produced custom content on proprietary systems with rich interactivity, unique interfaces, interactive features, instructional methods, and navigational schemas. New product launches require new courses. Non-product courses may be stable, while others may need frequent or occasional updates, like when the company name changed from DaimlerChrysler to Chrysler. CA had three goals to improve their WBT development:

- Reduce cost
- Improve the learning experience
- Enhance measurement of results

Business Situation

In 2003, Chyrsler Academy and their training partner BBDO Detroit, began evaluating SCORM and decided it could eventually help them achieve their goals. SCORM 1.2 had limitations (no sequencing or global shared objectives), but it provided a foundation for their later transition to SCORM 2004.

To facilitate the move to SCORM 2004 and to accommodate non-SCORM legacy courses, CA created "big SCOs". Each course was packaged as a single SCO. New courses were built using smaller SCOs, but because SCORM 1.2 did not provide sequencing, they too were packaged as a big SCO. CA accepted the compromise: the courses were SCORM compliant, but they didn't adhere to the spirit of SCORM, and CA did not realize the benefits they'd anticipated.

CA and BBDO used the transition to work with their designers and developers to re-think how courses should be designed from the inside out. The design team began looking at courses as an assembly of learning objects and designed them accordingly. Over time, course designers were educated on the underlying principles of SCORM. In the meantime, CA worked with their LMS provider to create administrative tools and a SCORM 2004 run-time environment with sequencing and navigation rules and global shared objectives.

Outcomes

Cost reductions were expected from reuse and repurposing of SCOs. This has happened, but reuse of media assets and sequencing templates along with the implementation of the course shell have resulted in even greater cost reductions. SCORM has also facilitated course maintenance and multi-lingual support.

The learner experience was improved by focusing development on learning objectives rather than framing devices and shifting from large packages to bite-size morsels. Leveraging global shared objectives reduced learner seat time and training redundancy. If a learner views content about Chrysler's satellite radio in a Jeep Liberty course, that SCO is tagged as complete when the leaner accesses a Dodge Ram course with the same satellite radio SCO.

For measurement, CA uses a separate assessment engine to build pre-tests, quizzes, post-tests, and surveys as SCOs. All data collected is in the LMS environment, enabling consistent reporting through a single report engine.

As of spring 2008, CA has fully adopted SCORM 2004 and over 50 courses have been developed. CA also supports over 200 SCORM 1.2 courses. When the SCORM 1.2 courses need to be refreshed, they are converted to SCORM 2004 courses.

CA reduced the upfront cost of developing courses by 8 – 10%. CA attributed the development savings to reusing and repurposing assets, content objects, course shells, and sequencing templates. The standards CA developed provide a consistent navigation experience so the users can focus on the content. SCOs are usually 3-5 minutes in length and cover a specific learning objective, reducing "scope creep." Short, focused learning objects seem to work well in a busy dealership environment. Because the courses are more stable, CA drastically reduced the cost to support and maintain courses by up to 80%. CA is actively reusing content with SCORM 2004 shared global objectives, benefiting both the budget and the learner's experience.

Challenges

CA and BBDO quickly learned about areas not addressed by SCORM: instructional design, look and feel, taxonomy and naming, reporting, granularity, and security. They also found that merely asking a vendor to build a SCORM course was not black and white.

While CA is pleased with their results, this implementation will continue to be a work in progress. Remaining challenges include:

- Building reports around the granular SCORM data, including determining which elements are truly useful.
- Purchasing an LCMS to manage content; CA already has an asset repository.
- Determining which authoring tools to use when.

Best Practices: Processes and Procedures Work

Chrysler Academy's successful implementation is the result of an investment in:

- Writing design and development standards specific to CA.
- Providing guidance on content development to the CA and BBDO teams.
- Developing a generic course shell (for standard navigational controls, menus, SCO display size and placement) whose look and feel could be customized.
- Building a library of "design patterns" including templated sequencing models.
- Understanding the CA delivery system.
- Creating a New Vendor Application Process where new vendors prove their SCORM capabilities by building, testing and debugging a "course" in CA's environment.
- Developing a "Test Center" within the LMS with tools to enable their vendors to build and test courses in that environment.

Contact

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