

## Strategic Drivers

To answer the question why the organisation has decided to implement this technology it is necessary to explore the internal and external factors which have had an impact on training and development requirements. Within the organisation, training has traditionally been delivered by a team of trainers who work as part of the Learning and Development (L&D) team. Depending on the requirement, training may be delivered to large numbers of employees in regionally located classrooms or by trainers travelling to provide one to one training on site. More recently the need to deliver mandatory compliance training to geographically dispersed employees led to the implementation of Moodle as a Learning Management System (LMS). The use of the Moodle platform to provide asynchronous e-learning modules has facilitated as Dublin (2011) suggests the delivery of structured learning to more people at a lowered cost with the added advantage of being able to readily report and track progress. Lal (2012) proposes that this method of asynchronous delivery appeals to corporate training managers for its ability to reduce the costs associated with travel and face to face training while Mueller (2012) makes the point that it facilitates skills development without the need to take employees away from their work. Managers within the organisation have been quick to recognise these advantages resulting in an increased demand for bespoke online learning for specific business sectors or projects that identify a particular need. Employees too have provided positive feedback similar to that discussed by Mueller (2012) and Lal (2012) commenting on the convenience and flexibility of learning online. An added advantage for them has been the ability to manage their own learning by proceeding at a pace that suits them with the option to skip elements of programmes that they are already familiar with Arth (2011).

When it comes to examining external factors, Barnett (1999) suggests we are living in a time which is characterised by “contestability, challengeability, uncertainty and unpredictability” (p.29). He describes it as an age of “supercomplexity” Barnett (1999 p.29). The growth in global competition coupled with the ubiquitous growth in information and communication technology has led to increased pressure on organisations to build a flexible and skilled workforce in order to remain competitive Vicere (2000), Tannenbaum (2002), Taran (2006) and Linehan (2008). Taran (2006) illustrates the challenge facing organisations as they aim to sustain competitive advantage; he suggests there is a need to move quickly, employees’

jobs are in constant change leading to short learning times with a requirement for immediate proficiency. Harward (2012) argues there is an expectation on learning and development departments to deliver solutions at speed reaching peak intensity. He comments that in the past it may have been acceptable for the design and development of a training solution to take months. This expectation has now reduced to a few weeks and in some cases a few days. Harward (as cited in Jennings, 2012, p 9) suggests that speed will become the new “mantra” of the learning and development professional while Dublin (2011) posits that the goal for learning and development departments will be to deliver more training faster and cheaper.

In taking these internal and external factors into account it was necessary to review existing training approaches. Evans Hodkinson Rainbird and Unwin (2006) suggest that in order to improve workplace learning it is necessary to investigate what is currently provided and the structures within which it takes place. An understanding of how workers learn both individually and collectively is also required. Boud (2001) B&S alludes to the fact that employees have to cope with work and learning without the usual boundaries that exist between them. They move between the role of employee and learner Boud (2001) and cope with completing work related projects simultaneously with class assignments Taran (2006).

In reviewing how training is currently provided, it was decided that a solution was required which would facilitate the generation of training content at a faster pace and enable the organisation focus on the development of more blended learning. The solution identified is the introduction of virtual classroom technology. Arth (2011) describes learning which incorporates this technology as “next generation e-learning” (p. 12). It is anticipated that this technology will as Arth (2011) suggests lead to content and knowledge being accessible anytime and anywhere both synchronously and asynchronously. He contends that this will create learning as a continual process rather than a one off event. It is this culture of continuous learning that Boud and Solomon (1999) Linehan (2008) and Jennings (2011) propose is required in order to improve performance and achieve organisational goals.