

White Paper on Rapid eLearning by Kern Communications

Today rapid eLearning is the buzzword in the eLearning industry. Rapid eLearning is emerging as the fastest-growing category of online training. It is web-based training created in far-lesser time than traditional eLearning. Rapid eLearning is beneficial on two key counts:

1. It meets the current demand to rapidly create learning resources to address business events, competitive developments, product trainings, or other business needs.
2. It helps minimize the time and resource contribution from the client.

Here's a **case study** about Kern's foray into rapid eLearning. The client is a leading training organization in UK. The client has been conducting classroom training for several decades and now wanted to create an online training programme for the same audience. The client wanted Kern to create a WBT on "Tendering for UK/EU Public Sector Contracts" for small and medium enterprises.

The client's requirements were:

1. A complete training module on 'Tendering for Public Sector Contracts' to be created in 1.5 months (6 weeks) and rolled out to the market by end-March.
2. The course duration to range from 8-12 hours.
3. The course had to be SCORM-compliant
4. One hour of online course should have 45 minutes of learning time and 15 minutes of practice
5. Each session should not exceed 20 minutes
6. The course should cater to audience in the age group of 35-65 years
7. Approximately 50% of the audience had no experience with online training

Comparing Requirements vis-à-vis Traditional eLearning

Kern conducted an in-house analysis about the requirements and resources available for the task on-hand vis-à-vis traditional eLearning.

The comparison is given below:

| | Current Project Requirements | Traditional eLearning |
|------------------|---|--|
| Purpose | Urgent business needs; had to be rolled out in a short timeframe | Difficult to rollout in such a tight timeframe |
| Timeline | Minimal resources (2 for scripting and 3 for development) | Requires approximately 3 person months to create an hour of eLearning. (The current project would require 16-20 people to rollout the product in the specified timeframe.) |
| Costs | 20% of the traditional eLearning budget | Would involve US\$7000-US\$10000 per learning hour |
| SME Availability | Client was committed to providing content and help to help meet deadlines | SME availability over longer duration becomes a problem |

Typical Challenges in Rapid eLearning

Creating rapid eLearning is not an easy task. The typical challenges are listed below:

- Ensuring a look and feel that is consistent with traditional eLearning
- Using good and effective instructional design principles in a short time frame
- Integrating with LMS
- Creating detailed and consistent media elements in a short time frame
- Integrating the programming and HTML
- Providing advanced features such as links, tests, and glossary
- Meeting schedules without compromising on quality or learning effectiveness

The challenges faced by Kern while implementing rapid eLearning were:

- Tools: Kern had no rapid eLearning tool
- Resource: Kern could spare only 5 members for the project
- Deadline: Kern had committed to deliver within a deadline of 6 weeks
- Quality: Kern had to adhere to quality standards despite the stringent deadline
- Budget: Kern had proposed a budget that was 20% of the cost of a traditional course

In short, Kern had the challenge of rolling out an output that would match or surpass the output of a traditional eLearning course at a fraction of the traditional eLearning budget and with minimal resources.

Implementing Rapid eLearning

Kern adopted different strategies to meet these challenges. Let us look at the actions taken by Kern:

1. Focus on design: Kern first defined the scope, guidelines and workflow for the course. The scope covered the extent and depth of content coverage. The guidelines included the strategies, look and feel, and the level of interactivity. Kern finalized the use of page-level presentation strategies such as tabbed pages, drag and drop, rollover text, click text, checklists, and so on. The standards document specified the rules for the use of fonts, audio, positioning of graphics, course length and slide and frame formats. The workflow outlined the tendering process in the form of a flowchart. The design document and the workflow were signed-off by the client at the beginning of the project. The design team created and finalized the design interface of the course.
2. Content categorization: To meet the course duration and provide adequate content to the audience, content was categorized and segregated into two parts, main content and additional content. Main content was covered in detail in the course. Additional content was placed in the Reference section of the course. It was included as optional reading at appropriate places. This helped maintain the course duration at 8 hours without resulting in content overload.
3. Tool used: Kern decided to use PowerPoint to create storyboards. The storyboards were scripted using PowerPoint called wire frames. They had detailed visualization and instructions for the graphics and construction team. The storyboards sent to the client for content validation looked like the real

screens of the course. Visualized scripts ensured that there was no additional time spent by instructional designers with the graphics and construction team to clarify graphics and presentation-related doubts.

4. Parallel processing: The team at Kern worked in parallel. There was no time wasted by either graphics or construction in waiting for inputs from the ID team. Let us see how this happened:
 - a. ID team of 2 people worked on the table of content and content categorization; 2 people from the construction team created the shell; graphics person created common icons and graphic elements for the course.
 - b. ID team starts scripting using existing templates. The smallest module, module 1 is rolled out in 2 days. The module is passed on to the graphics and construction team. The module is also sent for client feedback. Based on module 1 feedback, other modules are modified and created.
 - c. Client feedback is incorporated by one person of the ID team while others continue scripting the other modules. The graphics team creates the icons. Development team is simultaneously working on the shell and integration of module 1.
 - d. This synchronized process resulted in the constructed modules being rolled out quickly after the completion of scripting, resulting in successful completion of the project.

Critical Success Factors

Let us summarize the critical success factors for rapid eLearning based on Kern's experiences:

1. Ensure all content transfer happens in stage I. We had access to all relevant materials upfront and they were shared with us at the beginning of the course.
2. Define course guidelines and workflow upfront and share it with all concerned.
3. Ensure ready availability of SME. Our client was very prompt and clear about the requirements. There was no ambiguity in expectations and the scope of content was also signed-off by the client early in the project. Since the client was also the Subject Matter Expert, it helped close content issues faster.
4. Use simple tool such as PowerPoint and user-friendly templates to script the course.
5. The key is team work and project management. Define the team, expectations and schedules from the beginning. Ensure that the team works closely in coordination with the schedules, and timelines are tracked on a daily basis.
6. Have constant communication with the client on a daily basis about the progress and requirements.

How Did Kern Benefit from Creating this Course?

Kern benefited from this experience in the following ways:

1. Evolution of project roles and processes: The process of creating this program helped Kern define the roles and processes for rapid eLearning. This being a replicable process, Kern can pass on the benefits to other clients.

2. Internal processes: Rapid eLearning has helped Kern define trainer needs and prioritize projects.
3. Learning: Kern can focus our expertise and consulting on newer programs and build new skills and competencies.

How Did Client Benefit from Rapid eLearning?

Our client obtained the following benefits:

1. Creation of the course at 20% of the cost of development of traditional eLearning course
2. Course created in 45 calendar days as compared to an average duration of 90 calendar days for a similar course
3. Highly interactive course that included media elements and interactivities such as scenario-based practice exercises, application-level check your understanding questions, audio, glossary, tips, tricks and good-to-know information nuggets.
4. The quality of the course not only matched but exceeded the quality of a traditional eLearning course
5. The course meets the SCORM and AICC compliance standards

Client Speak

This is what our client had to say about the course:

Client's partner: *One word 'Stunning'*

Client: *Outstanding work and am extremely pleased by what your team has accomplished in such a short time. Very many thanks for your outstanding efforts.*

Implementing Rapid eLearning in your organization

To know more about implementing a rapid eLearning solution in your organization, write to Rashmi at Rashmi@kern-comm.com or call at +91 98 21136300