



How to Scale Your Training Organization to Meet Growing Demand for eLearning

Growing Demands for eLearning Require Flexible Adaptation

As more and more organizations are building e-learning internally, training departments and e-learning development teams often find it difficult to meet the growing demand for good e-learning courses, both inside and outside of the organization. Project teams often find themselves stretched and sometimes even without the resources needed to successfully meet required deadlines and budgets.

There are stages of change through which the training organization often moves before finding lasting solutions that grow predictably and steadily with the demand. This white paper discusses how a combination of methodologies, tools, and technologies empowers the training organization to effectively scale by eventually enabling e-learning development throughout the organization.

Phase 1: The Sole Developer or Small Team

eLearning as a solution often enters an organization through someone who sees the advantages that “always-on” e-learning courses can bring and champions the effort from the bottom-up. It also enters sometimes with someone who is tasked with the responsibility from the top-down. Either way, the first phase usually involves a lot of learning, experimenting, and internal selling.

Finally, after the applause that follows the successful rollout of the first pilot course dies down and the parts of the organization affected by the pilot see the benefits of e-learning, requests come in for some additional e-learning courses. The success breeds demand, which in turn puts pressure on the initiator to figure out how to handle those requests.

To illustrate, let's suppose Sue Brown is a training supervisor in a division of a large truck manufacturing company. Sue is mostly in charge of coordinating instructor-led training for employees, but because of recent budget cuts decides it is time to explore the idea of self-paced interactive courses and assessments as a substitution for the live training.

She poses the ideas to her manager who is enthusiastic about the idea, but warns Sue that changing the way the company has always done things may be difficult. Employees at their company are used to live interaction, not learning on computers. She also tells her she can't be given any extra time to produce the course—she'll have to make time on her own for it or squeeze it in between other projects she is working on.

As a way to break-in the organization, they get approval from upper management to pilot test e-learning as a proof-of-concept for one employee training course, but they are given no extra funds to build the e-learning. Sue realizes she needs to build the e-learning herself.

Sue doesn't know where to begin, so she reads some blogs, researches some websites, attends a conference or two. She quickly discovers that there is a lot to learn. She learns about SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) and that their learning management system (LMS) requires courses to be in the SCORM format. As a trainer she knows that interaction with the students is important in the learning process. She finally settles on an e-learning tool from Rapid Intake that seems like it will help her do what she needs. She is excited about including images, audio, video, PowerPoint slides, quizzes, tests, learning games and other interactive activities.

Sue identifies a subject matter expert (SME) who can help guide her through the material. She meets with the SME at the beginning, several times in between, and at the end of the project. By the time the project is done, Sue feels like she has almost become a SME herself.

After a couple of extra evenings and weekends she has produced her first course, packaged for her SCORM LMS. She launches the pilot course and to her delight discovers that the effort was a success. The learners loved the interactivity and availability of the course.

Soon their team gets requests and assignments from higher up to produce more training within the division and even requests to produce training in other divisions. Sue is happy with the success, but wonders how they are going to handle all of the requests.

NOTE: If this phase seems like you, e-learning authoring tools today are much easier than they have been in the past, so building e-learning internally is a very viable option, even for the non-technical. Check out www.rapidintake.com for two award-winning authoring tools to help you get started.

Phase 2: Efforts to Expand the Core Team

Most individuals and teams, faced with initial growing demand, attempt to grow their team of e-learning developers to accommodate that demand. Logic suggests that once they've had success a certain way, to grow to meet demand means simply doing more of what made the success possible in the first place.

Sue and her manager decide they will make all of their trainers "e-learning developers". With the help of Rapid Intake rapid authoring tools (purchased with funds they will save by not holding the instructor-led training), and free training from Rapid Intake, they all learn how to use the tools in short order, and they are quickly building more of the same kind of e-learning that was shown to be successful in the first place.



One challenge in this phase is making sure everyone has the tools they need to do the job. Most e-learning software is licensed by user, so each person building courses needs a license. Rapid Intake's unlimited user model can help facilitate this transition financially and technically.

Because Sue's Rapid Intake solution includes unlimited user licensing, Sue and her manager can get as many people involved as needed. Sue and her team use Rapid Intake's collaborative online course authoring solution to work effectively with team members in remote locations. SMEs are able to log in from any location and provide feedback through the integrated course feedback collection and management system.

Now, instead of building one course at a time with one person, they are working as a team on several projects. Some are involved on some projects and some on another. Each team is working with subject matter experts on each project, similar to how Sue worked with the SME on the first project.

They are able to duplicate Sue's initial success on multiple projects. Word spreads throughout the organization and Sue's manager is asked to help other division training teams become more e-learning capable. She asks Sue to head this up. Sue spends a lot of her time helping those in her team and other training

teams learn the tools and project planning required to successfully deliver e-learning courses.

In most organizations, as with Sue, this first success at scaling in turn fuels more demand which encourages further expansion. This works for a while, but with each expansion and more adoption throughout the organization, more demand keeps pouring in. It soon becomes apparent they cannot continue to scale this way.

Soon Sue's training team cannot keep up with all of the demands for e-learning. They realize they don't have the resources themselves, so they ask for approval to hire additional instructional designers and e-learning developers. Because their successes have helped improve performance and cut some costs, they are given approval to hire a few more people.

With this additional staff trained, they now seem to be able to keep up with demand and even begin proactively advertising their capabilities inside the organization. This encourages more demand and ensuing (no pun intended) success, which in turn creates even more demand. Sue's manager keeps going back to upper management for approval for more staff.

Eventually, even with so much demand, the cost of staffing the training and e-learning development teams is getting to be so high, that upper management starts to complain and begins to push back saying their team will just have to do more with less.

Sue and her manager pass this along to the rest of the team, asking them to put in more hours, find new efficiencies and so on. This works for a few months, but demand continues to rise and it soon becomes apparent that they cannot meet all of the organizations needs with their current model.

Phase 3: Scaling by Coaching, Facilitating, and Empowering SMEs

When experienced e-learning development teams are faced with increasing demand and simultaneous budget cuts, out of the pressure of necessity, many often come to the same question and conclusion:

"Why are we still building e-learning by trying to learn what the SMEs know and putting it together, when if they had the tools, they could do it themselves? We waste a lot of time in the process trying to become partial clones of the SMEs in order to build the training effectively. It seems the solution is to give the tools to the SMEs and have them build the training themselves."

Sue and her manager start putting the tools in the hands of some of the SMEs in the effort to meet demand. They recognize that there are going to be challenges because most SMEs do not have instructional design expertise and sometimes just don't communicate well.

Sue pilots the plan with some SMEs by having them attend Rapid Intake's free e-learning development training. In just a couple of hours, the SMEs feel confident they can build e-learning. Sue wants to make sure they create effective e-learning, so she uses the Rapid Intake SMEsync™ course templates to pre-populate effective course designs for several different types of training.

The SMEs start building courses. Although they are often in remote locations, the SMEs are using the collaborative capabilities of Rapid Intake Unison. Sue logs in real-time and reviews at every step how the SMEs are organizing and fleshing out their content. She makes recommendations on types of template-based interactions that can be added, even restructuring some of the content herself.

Sue uses the built-in course review and feedback management system to both review and comment on the SMEs work as well as receive final feedback from other extended project team members such as the legal and marketing departments that need to provide input on the courses.

In this role, Sue is acting as a coach or facilitator rather than primary e-learning developer. She empowers and guides the SME to a successful conclusion using real-time collaborative technology as well as pre-built course templates to help ensure consistency and instructional soundness.

Phase 4: The Fully Evolved, Finely-Tuned Hybrid Team

One of the challenges in empowering SMEs will be to get buy-off from the SME and the SME's organization that they should be doing the development themselves. One way to get this buy-off is like anything else: start at the top. When your upper management puts the pressure on you to scale, go to them with a SME-based proposal and explain the inefficiencies of e-learning development where someone else besides the SME is building the training.

Teams that evolve to empower SMEs learn that while it is an effective way to scale, not all needs can be met this way. Either a SME just isn't available or they realize with certain SMEs it will take more time to help them build courses than to build it themselves. They naturally begin handling both tasks: being a resource for SME-based

e-learning development and being a resource for primary e-learning development where it makes sense.

Sue is eventually promoted to Director of eLearning Development and oversees coaching and facilitation throughout the entire organization. She leads the effort to bring together standards and guidelines and acts as a primary consultant and leader to every e-learning team and helps ensure each team evolves successfully.

Alternatives to Scaling Internally: Outsourcing and Offshoring

Some organizations choose definitively not to scale internally, but rather use outside resources to scale.

Outsourcing - It Costs a Lot But You Can Get Good Results

If you choose to have your courses developed entirely by a third party, make sure you choose a vendor that uses the same technology you do so that you can update and maintain the course once it is delivered.

If possible, choose a technology like Rapid Intake Unison that allows you to see live online work in progress so you can monitor and give feedback as needed through a managed environment.

Offshoring – Choose Technology

One large pharmaceutical company that is a Rapid Intake customer has hundreds of e-learning developers inside their organization, but they also have hundreds in India. By using Rapid Intake Unison's collaborative capabilities they can more easily build and review courses together, maintaining a higher level of team integration with their offshore resources.

One Rapid Intake customer that sends some e-learning development work offshore reported that because of the built-in course review capabilities inside Unison, "it works so great because they are about 14 hours ahead of us, so they build content while we sleep then we review content while they sleep...so there's no downtime!"

The collaborative online environment with built-in review capabilities are an obvious advantage in these situations over a desktop solution.

Rapid Intake Unison eLearning Software is Designed to Grow with Your Organization

Unison™

Built on the Rapid Intake collaborative e-learning development platform, Unison™ is an award-winning web-based solution that lets designers and subject matter experts (SMEs) collaboratively capture, storyboard, develop, review, test, and publish Flash-based courses—without having to know Flash. Novice users and content owners simply fill out form-based templates to create interactive Flash-based courses, while advanced users and communities create reusable custom templates by accessing the Flash source code (.fla). Project-based subscriptions start at \$948 per year, enabling entire teams to work together at less cost. All output is SCORM compliant, rich-media compatible, and works on most PC and Mac browsers.



Visit www.rapidintake.com for a free trial and more information.

Who Uses Rapid Intake Unison

Rapid Intake Unison is used by organizations large and small, from individual consultants to Fortune 500 companies and educational institutions. A few notable customers include T-Mobile, Merck, Safeway, Costco, Sun Microsystems, Petsmart, General Physics, Dennys, Adventist Healthcare, Federated Insurance, and Baker Hughes.

The Rapid Intake Rapid Interactive Development Platform

The Rapid Intake Collaborative eLearning Development Platform enables designers and subject matter experts (SMEs) to collaboratively create Flash-based interactive

courses that include quizzes, tests, games, and simulations at a fraction of the cost of traditional rapid eLearning authoring tools. Novice users and content owners simply fill out form-based templates to create interactive Flash-based course content, while advanced users and communities create reusable custom templates by accessing the Flash source code (.fla). The platform can also integrate content from any other authoring tool that outputs to Flash.

About Rapid Intake

Rapid Intake is the leader in collaborative e-learning development and review. The Rapid Intake Platform helps organizations learn faster by opening the rapid e-learning development and review process to everyone.

Unlike traditional rapid e-learning authoring tools, Rapid Intake's powerful, flexible platform helps instructional designers and content owners collaboratively create Flash-based interactive courses built on proven learning patterns, regardless of their skill levels. eLearning Guild members recently ranked Rapid Intake the most powerful, flexible solution and one of the most serviceable companies.

Hundreds of companies rely on Rapid Intake's top-ranked technology to create more interactive and effective courses in less time.

Visit www.rapidintake.com today to set up a FREE account and start experiencing the Rapid Intake advantage today. If you have questions about Rapid Intake technology solutions, please:

- Send us an email at sales@rapidintake.com
- Visit our website and start an instant chat session (www.rapidintake.com)
- Call us Toll Free at (866) 231-5254 (international callers please call +1 801 766 8454).

About the Author

Garin Hess is the CEO of Rapid Intake, the leader in collaborative e-learning development and review. The Rapid Intake Platform helps organizations learn faster by opening the rapid e-learning development and review process to everyone. Hundreds of companies create, test, and deploy more interactive courses in less time with Rapid Intake technology. Garin founded Rapid Intake in 2000. He has been managing, designing and developing interactive e-learning solutions for over nine years. Before starting Rapid Intake he worked as an instructional designer and Training Manager for two software companies. He has worked as instructional designer, developer, technical lead, and project manager on projects that have produced solutions for a variety of organizations, including large-scale implementations. He is the co-author of

four e-learning development titles that teach others how to create e-learning courses. He has also been an Adjunct Professor in the Instructional Technology program at Brigham Young University (Hawaii).

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