

D2L WBT Implementation Project Summary Report

Background

As presented in the D2L Prototype Project Plan, Blackboard's Basic Learning System that CCLA used had many undesirable deficiencies. It was determined that moving from Blackboard is a sooner or later decision to be made. One of the prominent drivers for investigating D2L was the desire for systems integration capability. Our licensed Blackboard product was not an enterprise system and could not be integrated with our registration system. It is not feasible for CCLA to purchase the \$50,000 enterprise version that could.

D2L became our first logical candidate to investigate as a promising solution. D2L is an enterprise system with assessable APIs, and IMS/SCORM standards compliant, having the potential to meet our project goals for systems integration, better course management tools, and improved statistical reporting.

What started as a comparison between Blackboard and D2L became much more complicated. We started to realize that neither one of these Course Management Systems (CMS) was really the ultimate environment for CCLA's e-learning offerings. They are designed for the traditional distance learning setting. Our WBT offerings fit more into a corporate professional development (self-paced) model. As a result, during this project the teams took a preliminary look at other possibilities. It was soon realized that this was out of the scope of this project. Another project needs to take up this matter of more investigation and prototyping other solutions.

Project Activity

The Prototype Phase

An investigation was undertaken to determine if the Desire to Learn (D2L) course management system could be a solution for the above-mentioned deficiencies. Most of the project activity has been focused on exercising the D2L system in several areas. During the prototype phase we successfully migrated one course from Blackboard to D2L with minimal effort. The resulting course met our needs very well. Several discussions were conducted with D2L and LearnerWeb vendors to establish methods and cost for systems integration. Because of the addition cost (\$6000), we were not able to implement and test the hoped for new functionality of systems integration.

The WBT team and LSC workgroup met several times to discuss this project's goals and research. A D2L Go-No Go Evaluation report was prepared measuring out the pros and cons of the D2L system. Beyond systems integration, course migration, features and functionality, system GUI customization and authoring system, system stability, vendor support system and responsiveness, and learner statistics and reporting functions were examined.

During this project prototype we concluded there were three options. The teams concluded that CCLA should go forward with the implementation of D2L as our new WBT delivery platform. This would serve as CCLA's best position for the immediate future. The teams felt that adopting D2L could be a bridge to a future solution, to either invest into completing the integration capability of D2L, or put resources into researching and prototyping other potential systems.

The Migration Phase

This phase included the following; completion of migrating all existing Blackboard courses to D2L, adding an additional course, applying GUI customization and branding, finalizing the system features to be accessible, conducting internal usability and quality assurance testing, and Service Desk support training.

General Release to Colleges

D2L was released to our college libraries on January 6, 2005. As of this writing, the new WBT system has been available for about a month. There have been 40 enrollments in this time period; half of them have been in the new course "Serials Check-in." D2L is performing well and has proven to be a stable system. CCLA's service desk has had few calls requiring assistance. Some help has been offered in assisting learners with their system account. D2L is well supported by local CCLA personnel and the vendor support infrastructure.

Conclusion

Statistics reporting is a concern for the organization. There will be at least an ongoing monthly report given to the management team that includes new enrollments for each month. It should be noted that even though D2L has improved statistical reporting over Blackboard, it still lacks much customization or automation features for generating reports on detailed learner tracking. D2L does not allow for direct data extraction from the system proprietary database. However, it is possible to contract with the D2L vendor to generate custom reports for us.

User satisfaction and follow-up will be ongoing. At least annual training surveys are conducted to reflect user needs in WBT and the usefulness our CCLA's offerings. LSC Spring site visits and Fall regional user meetings will also gather data for WBT concerns. It should also be noted that D2L has a course and lesson-by-lesson level feedback mechanism built in. All these tools will be used to continually improve WBT.

The D2L prototyping and migration project was a beneficial experience for CCLA in several ways. Besides obtaining a better WBT platform, it promoted and stimulated much discussion and thought about our use of instructional technology with regard to future needs, utilizations, and implementations.