



# Speed is king

## Rapid creation and deployment of enterprise eLearning solutions

In the current accelerated corporate environment, rapid deployment of instruction and information translates into seized market opportunities and bottom-line returns. Hesitation or slow deployment of learning leads to missed opportunities and forfeiture of market share to competitors.

Unfortunately, many organizations have not developed the internal acumen necessary to rapidly develop and deploy eLearning content. To be successful, organizations must have certain elements in place. This white paper explains the techniques and procedures needed to ensure the quick delivery of the right instruction in the right time frame. These techniques and procedures include the following:

- Planning for the rapid development and deployment of eLearning content
- Establishing techniques for rapidly creating eLearning programs
- Deploying eLearning programs and information to the right people at the right time

To accelerate the development of your internal rapid eLearning processes, this white paper also describes how to successfully create and implement rapid eLearning content courses and programs.

### The need for speed

In every industry, rapid deployment of enterprise-wide learning is making an impact.

- Siemens Medical Solutions of Siemens AG, with headquarters in Malvern, Pennsylvania, and Erlangen, Germany, is one of the world's largest suppliers to the healthcare industry. Siemens needed to support communication and collaboration between development teams in Germany and China. The goal was to reduce costs and improve team efficiency. With Adobe® Presenter, formerly known as Macromedia® Breeze®, the development teams were able to transmit pictures and sounds in both directions by using the existing data lines—economically and without problems. They shared CAD drawings as well as Microsoft PowerPoint presentations and utilized Adobe Presenter at every workstation that had a web browser and Internet access. As a result, the company is estimated to have saved more than \$85,000.
- 3DLABS, Inc., a leading innovator in the field of graphics accelerators, uses a rapid eLearning solution to quickly educate prospects on the wide range of innovative graphics accelerators they have available. 3DLABS has reduced the time required to roll out training presentations from four weeks to one week. The company recently delivered training to more than 7,000 prospects and industry leaders in less than two days.
- The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA) is an organization of hospitals and health systems dedicated to providing leadership on issues affecting the delivery, quality, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness of healthcare. AzHHA strives to provide cost-effective training to its members and saved more than \$800 per person in travel costs by using rapid eLearning software. The organization recovered its initial investment in the rapid eLearning software within a year.

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- Cable & Wireless, one of the world's leading international communications companies providing voice, data, and IP services to business and residential customers, wanted to provide quick, accurate information to its employees in a short period of time. Using Adobe Presenter, Cable & Wireless provided that training and saved between six weeks and four months in development time.
- Safety-Kleen Systems, Inc., is the leading parts cleaner, industrial waste management, and oil recycling and re-refining company in North America, with approximately 5,000 employees in 200 service and recycling centers across the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. The company's Professional Training Group was able to reduce training development costs by \$600,000 while generating a fivefold increase in eLearning course production. Additionally, it now takes only minutes to complete projects that previously took an entire day.
- The National University of Singapore, a comprehensive university offering a broad-based curriculum underscored by multidisciplinary courses and cross-faculty enrichment, needed a delivery platform to reach its 23,000 undergraduate and 9,000 graduate students spread across 11 facilities. The university's rapid eLearning solution gives students access to necessary information, and studies have shown that 59% of the students interact with the Adobe Presenter presentation two to five times.

If an organization can rapidly detect training needs and subsequently develop and deploy the necessary instructional material, it can quickly:

- Outmaneuver competitors
- Reduce waste and inefficiency
- Assimilate new employees into the organization
- Satisfy customers
- Sell more product
- React to market forces

### **Planning**

Effective eLearning begins with effective planning. The planning process consists of several considerations:

- Avoiding technology glitches
- Assembling the correct tools
- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Creating checklists

Rapidly developing and deploying eLearning content does not mean development without forethought. The most effective rapid development efforts begin with planning. When preparing for a car race: pit crews do not walk in on race day and figure out what needs to be done as the car pulls into the pit stop. Before the race ever begins, the crew rehearses, assembles the correct tools, and clearly defines individual roles and responsibilities. Your rapid eLearning development team needs to do the same.

### **Avoid technology glitches**

Technology glitches slow down rapid eLearning efforts before they ever get started. Perform a technology rehearsal by checking the technical aspects of your eLearning solution before it is needed. Be sure you know the following:

- Browser versions on desktops or laptops
- Versions of plug-ins
- Status of speakers on workstations
- Firewall and other security restrictions

- Bandwidth limitations
- Learning management system compatibility
- Other information technology (IT) restrictions

Remember that none of these items is static. Put a monitoring process in place so your rapid deployment efforts aren't compromised by a technology upgrade. Stay in constant contact with your IT department so you know when changes occur or are scheduled to occur. If you are not careful, an upgrade can wreak havoc on your efforts to quickly deliver eLearning instruction. In addition to technology-related rehearsals, work with the people delivering the instruction. If you use subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide insight or voice-overs, make sure they rehearse. Ensure developers or trainers are comfortable with the tools they will use and with the process for designing instruction for online delivery within a short time period. Take time before the need is urgent, and run your instructors and SMEs through some drills. Have them do the following:

- Obtain a good headphone and microphone set (USB microphones tend to work best)
- Perform a headphone and microphone check
- Check for background noise in the area they are going to record
- Check the workstation for software compatibility issues and required plug-ins
- Practice delivery speed and voice intonation for audio
- Become familiar with the eLearning development software and how it works
- Practice developing a lesson in a short period of time

Practice makes trainers and SMEs more comfortable and promotes the best performance when the pressure is on.

Finally, learners need a rehearsal. Even though you check all the desktop software, browsers, and speakers, you never know how individuals may configure their workstations or laptops. Send out some eLearning lessons and gather feedback to make sure the eLearning solution works technically and instructionally for all the learners. Rehearsal with the technology, trainers, and learners ensures that eLearning content can be delivered and viewed quickly when needed.

#### **Assemble the correct tools**

Nobody can rapidly deploy eLearning content and courses with complicated, hard-to-use software programs. To rapidly deploy training and information across your organization, you need tools that are simple and easy to use—not only for learners but also for developers, trainers, and SMEs. Effective tools for quick development and deployment eLearning content:

- Leverage office automation software skills and products (such as PowerPoint)
- Use ubiquitous plug-ins (such as Adobe Flash® Player and Adobe Reader® software)
- Include an audio option
- Use prebuilt templates for questions
- Allow both synchronous and asynchronous delivery
- Are easy to use and edit
- Allow for the sharing of applications among multiple learners
- Include a text chat feature
- Allow for multiple presenters
- Are easily scalable

Figure 1 shows a prebuilt template in Adobe Presenter. The developer simply follows the directions onscreen and creates the multiple-choice question, distracters, and feedback for correct and incorrect answers.

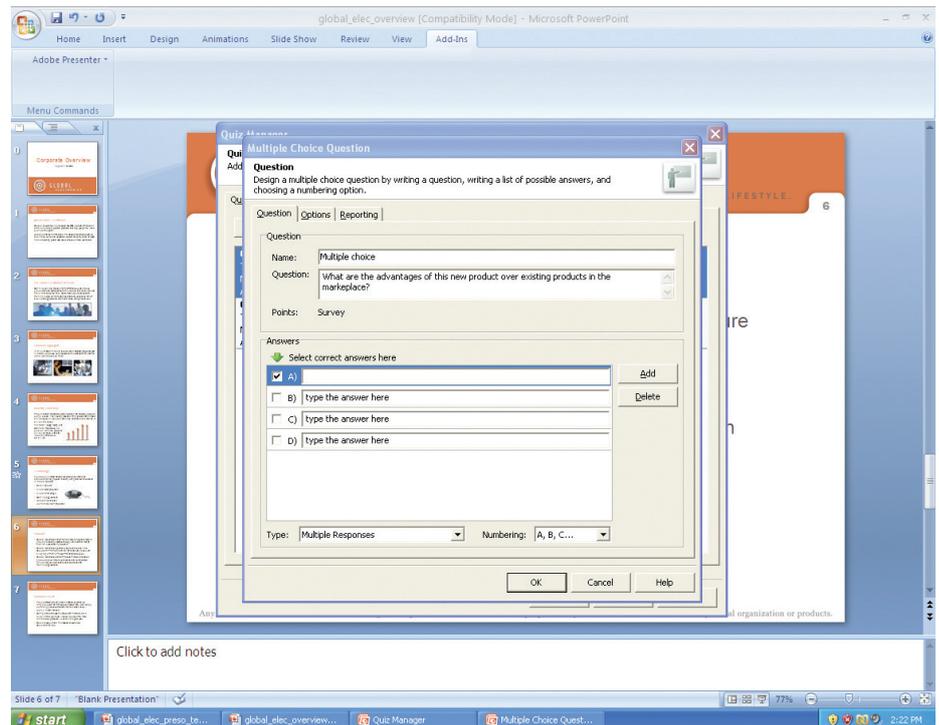


Figure 1: Built-in templates in Adobe Presenter.

### Define roles and responsibilities

When you need to create and deploy eLearning content rapidly, you don't have time to decide who does what. Before the need for eLearning content becomes critical, determine who performs the following tasks:

- Managing the development and delivery process
- Assigning the SME or trainer
- Working with the SME or trainer
- Contacting the IT department
- Proofreading the instruction for content, grammar, and spelling
- Signing off on the content
- Communicating the urgency of the material to the intended audience (president, vice president, CEO, sales manager, or compliance or safety officer)
- Determining the shelf life of the content
- Uploading the final version of the lesson

### **Create checklists**

An excellent way to facilitate the planning of rapid eLearning development and deployment is to create checklists. Checklists outline the planning steps and keep organizations from continually reinventing the wheel. Use the information in this paper as a foundation for developing checklists. Here are the checklists you'll need:

- Technology
- Instructor/Developer
- SME
- Quality assurance

### **Creating the content**

After the planning process is complete, the next step is to create the content.

To create successful rapid eLearning content, you need to organize, create, and edit the content. The next sections offer the following tips to streamline the development process and cut—or even days—off the time it takes to create and deliver eLearning lessons:

- Become a librarian: Create an asset library
- Develop templates for each lesson type
- Be a reality show editor
- Chunk the instruction
- Edit preexisting content for reuse

#### **Become a librarian: Create an asset library**

One of the first requirements for developing rapid eLearning content is to have assets readily available. Assets are the multimedia elements that are included in online lessons to enhance clarity and aesthetics. Your organization should create a library of assets that can be quickly inserted into a lesson. Here are some of the assets your organization may need:

- Clip art graphics
- Still digital photographs
- Small video clips
- Audio clips
- Clips of software functionality (you can use Adobe Captivate™ software to create these clips)
- Other previously recorded lessons (use the pieces of earlier lessons that are applicable to the new lesson)
- Photographs of the trainers or SMEs to add to the lesson
- Prebuilt generic animations (you can use Adobe Flash or Adobe Fireworks® software to create these animations)

The developer can then access these assets as needed when creating the lesson. You also need to make sure you have a solid, well-defined asset management program in place so that the assets can be easily retrieved. You might want to consider placing the assets in some type of content management system. This will enable you to search the assets in the following ways:

- By file type (WAV, SWF, TIFF, and so on)
- By theme (medical, safety, manufacturing, and so forth)
- By creator
- By file size
- By date of creation

Rapid search and retrieval of assets is important for rapid development. The speed of development doesn't mean the eLearning lesson can't contain robust media elements. A large, categorized library of assets enables your team to add media-rich instructional elements quickly and easily.

### Develop templates for each lesson type

There is nothing worse than staring at a blank computer screen trying to develop content with a looming deadline. To avoid this frustration, develop prebuilt lesson templates for different types of lessons you need for your organization. By using templates, developers can focus on content because they don't have to worry about format. Templates provide developers with step-by-step instructions for what to create. You may want to prebuild templates for common lesson delivery types such as these:

- New product launches
- Safety bulletins
- Competitor information
- Equipment training
- Policies and procedures training

You may also want to create templates for teaching different types of information. These templates ensure instructional integrity. If you base your templates on sound instructional design principles, they will greatly increase the effectiveness of a rapidly created lesson. Develop templates to teach terminology, concepts, rules, procedures, principles, and problem solving (see Figure 2).

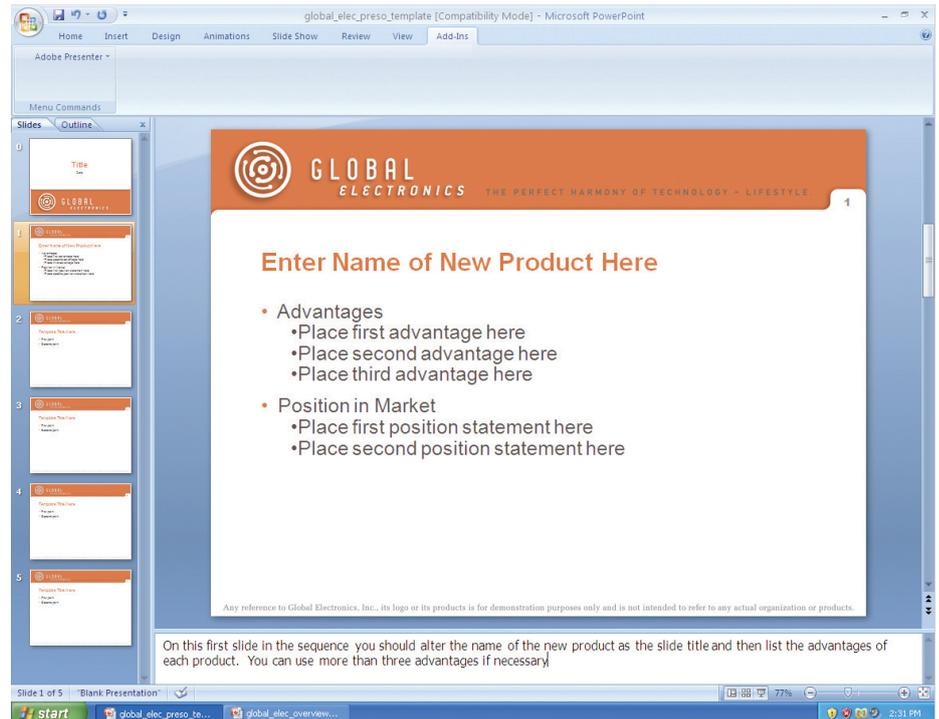


Figure 2. Prebuilt template for a product launch that can be completed by an SME or trainer.

If the instruction you're presenting will be synchronous, real-time information provided by an SME or trainer, then you should prebuild the following items:

- Scripts
- An outline to present a policy, protocol, or procedure
- An outline for demonstrating new software features

- Generic questions to ask learners
- Talking points for addressing competitor actions

In addition to providing templates, you may also want to provide sample lessons that can be reviewed before the content and instruction are developed. Typically designers, trainers, and the SME can glean a great deal of information from reviewing similar online lessons.

### Be a reality show editor

In a reality TV show, hundreds of hours of footage are reduced to a one- or two-hour episode. Editors carefully review the footage and determine what to air and what to leave on the cutting-room floor. Reality show creators shoot more video than they could ever use and then edit like crazy to create an engaging show. Do the same with rapid eLearning content. If you don't have time to provide the SME with a detailed script, create a few slides with one question per slide. Then have the SME answer the question through the audio portion of Adobe Presenter, matching it to the slide. After the SME finishes, edit the parts that are hard to follow or don't make sense and use the sound bites or portions of the answer that are clear (see Figure 3). You can easily accomplish this through the audio editing function.

The process should work like this:

1. Create slides that contain one question each.
2. Give the SME a headset with a microphone.
3. Ask the SME to simply answer the question on each page.
4. After the SME finishes and has saved the information, edit it.
5. Provide the edited piece to the SME to review.
6. Release the answers to the questions through Adobe Presenter.

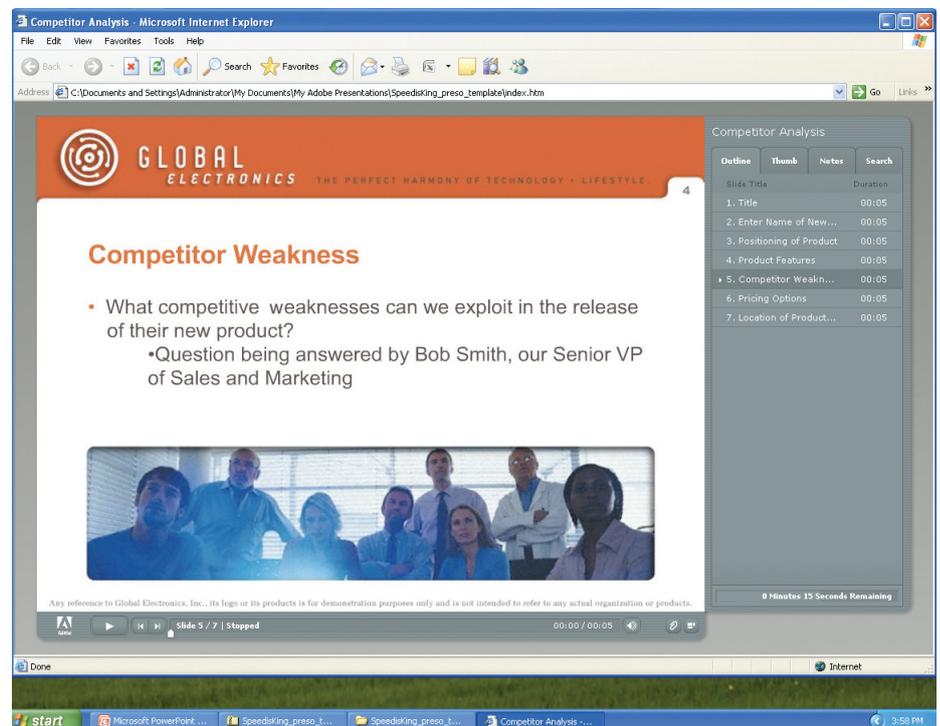


Figure 3. A question-and-answer session with the SME that is later edited and published as an instructional piece.

### Chunk the instruction

An effective method for developing content rapidly is to break the instruction into easily understood chunks. Keep in mind that the instruction you provide must be understood and learned rapidly. It does no good to rapidly deploy ineffective materials. An instructionally sound method of organizing material is to provide chunks of information. Chunking can be done in a variety of ways:

- Top 10 lists
- Questions and answers
- Tips and techniques
- Sequential steps
- Chronological order

Don't forget visual organizers. The visual elements in the following list can quickly connect information and ideas and show relationships and links that are difficult to describe with text alone:

- Pie charts
- Bar charts
- Organizational charts
- Workflow diagrams
- Line charts
- Matrix charts
- Line drawings
- Maps

These visual elements increase learner retention and shorten the time it takes to explain a difficult concept (see Figure 4). A picture is worth a thousand words.

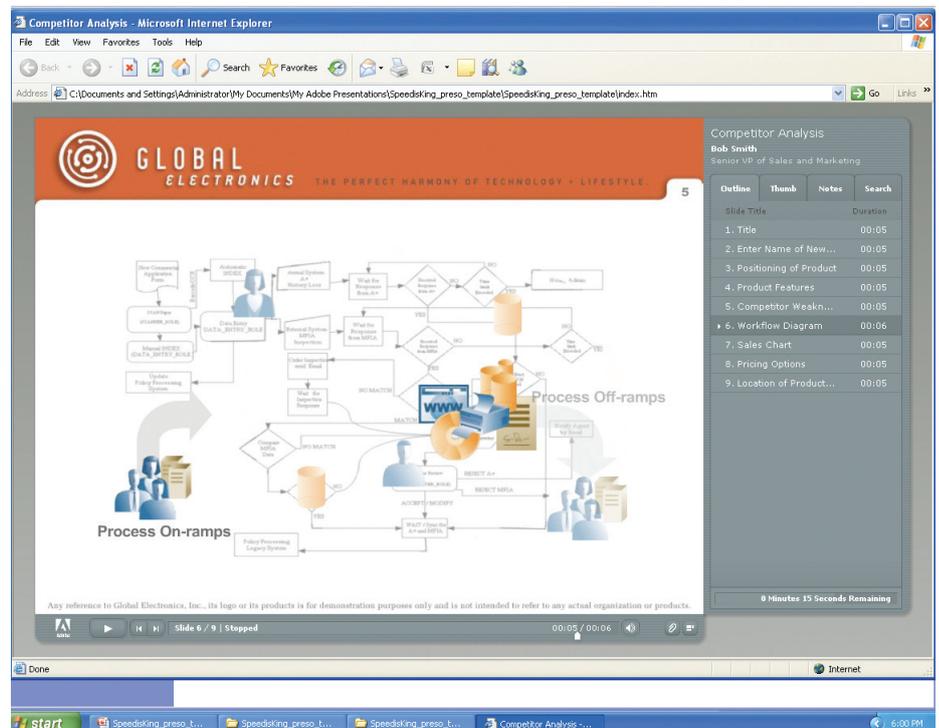


Figure 4. Workflow diagram that illustrates a process.

### **Edit preexisting content for reuse**

Most organizations have already painstakingly created some percentage of their eLearning content. They can leverage these existing eLearning lessons to rapidly develop new eLearning content. Adobe Presenter enables you to take a previously recorded presentation and edit it to meet new learning needs. To create a new lesson from an existing lesson, you can:

- Edit the audio track
- Create new audio
- Delete slides
- Create and add new slides
- Add new links

Keep both the original files used to create the Adobe Presenter session and the live session so you can edit what you need.

### **Deploying the eLearning content**

The final element of rapid eLearning is deployment—that is, the learner’s experience. It doesn’t do any good to have a process in place for developing rapid eLearning content if the learners don’t know the it exists. You need a deployment strategy. To effectively deploy eLearning content that learners can rapidly absorb, follow these tips:

- Gain attention with the lesson title
- Make learning convenient.
- Use links for flexibility.

#### **Gain attention with the lesson title**

Attract learners with a targeted lesson title. Be straightforward and explicit when naming your eLearning lesson. A title such as “How to successfully sell” is not as effective as “Five tips for overcoming pricing objections.” The second title describes how many learning points exist, outlines the specific topic to be addressed, and immediately appeals to a salesperson who is constantly fielding questions or concerns about product pricing. The first title is too broad and likely won’t catch the salesperson’s attention.

Your titles for rapid eLearning lessons should:

- Reference the specific topic the lesson addresses
- Indicate the number of points covered in the lesson
- Appeal to the immediate needs of the learners
- Describe exactly what is covered in the lesson

#### **Make learning convenient**

Learners are busy. They are working at their primary task and have little time for learning, even if the need is urgent. Make lessons as easily accessible as possible. If you simply send an e-mail message telling learners to go to the internal sales website and check out the lesson that was just released, you will have a low hit rate. To make it as easy as possible for the learner to access the lesson, use these approaches:

- Provide a link in the body of the e-mail invitation.
- Describe why taking this course immediately is important to both the learner and the corporation.
- Provide a deadline to complete the training. Many people are motivated when confronted with a date rather than a vague time period such as within two weeks.
- Develop a system for identifying lessons that need to be taken immediately versus lessons that can be taken at the learners’ convenience. This could be a key word in the subject line of the e-mail message or a color-coding system.

### **Use links for flexibility**

When creating eLearning content for a new policy or procedure or for the release of a new job aid or another important document within the organization, embed a hyperlink to that document within the lesson. This enables learners to view the document without having to navigate out of the lesson.

Adobe Presenter allows you to embed the following kinds of hyperlinks:

- Links to web pages
- Links to electronic documents
- E-mail addresses
- Links to other presentations

Including the link means you are not forcing learners to search for the information. It also means that you can wrap some training and instruction around the new document or form that you are releasing. Learners will first learn about the document or form from the eLearning lesson.

### **Summary**

Rapid eLearning addresses a number of critical issues within an organization. If implemented correctly, it can provide a powerful competitive advantage. To develop an effective eLearning solution for your organization, create a plan that includes the following:

- Up-front preparation
- Readily available templates and multimedia assets
- Effective instructional design
- Methods for motivating learners

### **About the author**

Karl M. Kapp, assistant director of the Institute for Interactive Technologies at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, and professor of instructional technology. His area of expertise is in analyzing and assessing the business needs driving an organization toward eLearning. Kapp's most recent book is *Gadgets, Games, and Gizmos for Learning: Tools and Techniques for Transferring Know-How from Boomers to Gamers*. Visit his website at [www.karlkapp.com](http://www.karlkapp.com).

