



E-LEARNING FOR THE WORKPLACE: CREATING CANADA'S LIFELONG LEARNERS

ALIAN T **CASE STUDY #3**

SEPTEMBER 2001

Effective practices in developing and supporting Internet-based corporate learning, training and development initiatives.

BACKGROUND

In today's knowledge-based economy, a source of long-term competitive advantage for a company comes from the capability of its employees. Aliant acknowledges the importance of informed and knowledgeable employees, and has implemented measures to empower its employees to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed personally, while also contributing to the company's long-term success.

DRIVERS OF E-LEARNING AT ALIAN T

Aliant believes in professional development. Each of the company's affiliate organizations—Aliant Telecom, xwave, Stratos, AMI Group, Innovatia, and Prexar—has customized their training programs and education assistance plans to ensure that employees have the skills they need.

Provided there is a fit between what is being learned and the needs of the company, Aliant employees know that they will be supported in their personal and professional growth—no matter the style or approach to learning taken. Yet, with a workforce of approximately 10,000 people located around the world, delivering learning programs via the classroom was a timely and costly undertaking. E-learning has changed the way Aliant goes about training its employees.

Over the past number of years, Aliant's human resources department—a team of twelve professionals called "Interactive MediaMagic"—has developed a number of distance learning activities that use online, CD-ROM and video applications.

ALIAN T'S USE OF E-LEARNING

To stay competitive, innovative, and leading edge, Aliant has embraced a culture of continuous learning, and provides strategic and relevant opportunities for training and development to take place. For example, employees working in, or with fibre optics learn as much as they feel necessary using Aliant's Fibre Optics Overview—a CD-ROM and online general training program.

With the need to both train and re-train a dispersed workforce, Aliant has saved millions of dollars in costs by using online delivery options. For example:

- ▶ Aliant's technical training program has reduced the need to purchase expensive communication hardware that would have been previously dedicated to training centres.



Since most of Aliant's equipment uses a computer interface, multimedia programs were designed to simulate the operation and maintenance functions.

- ▶ Aliant's interactive safety program allows managers to pretest employees to see if training is actually required. If it is they take a multimedia based course that provides consistent training across the entire organization.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Linking the range of training programs offered to employees with the company's overall growth strategy.
- It is always a challenge to communicate to the entire company the full range of training initiatives available to employees.
- When deadlines loom, there is simply not enough time to take the required or necessary training.

PRIMARY BENEFITS

In addition to saving money by reducing training costs, online delivery methods have also improved revenue efficiencies. For example, each year Aliant launches new products and services that require training. Traditional training methods such as train-the-trainer sessions, paper information role outs, and classroom lectures and demonstrations took months to complete. E-learning has shortened the time it takes to get employees and customers up-to-speed on the new products, and therefore, the time it takes the products to get out to market. In the eyes of Aliant, multimedia has proven to be a sound investment.

1. E-learning offers employees the option to learn at their own speed.
2. Because e-learning materials can be broken into knowledge objects, information can be quickly and easily repackaged and presented to meet the needs of any learner or learning group in the way that suits them best. A new online course, for example, can be developed in as little as two weeks, whereas a traditional learning course takes months to design and develop.

For Aliant, e-learning has:

- ▶ Reduced classroom time by as much as 75 per cent over traditional leader-led methods.
- ▶ Reduced risk to employees by using simulations in place of hazardous activities.
- ▶ Reduced capital expenditures for equipment by replicating scenarios using multimedia platforms.
- ▶ Reduced travel and accommodation costs.
- ▶ Allowed for consistent and rapid roll out of information across the organization.
- ▶ Allowed for better management of knowledge assets.
- ▶ Provided a means of tracking due diligence.