

## Beyond the LMS

### Designing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning System

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#### THE SITUATION

As we develop learning solutions for our customers, we encounter an ever-increasing resistance to LMS-based eLearning. Learners are tired of sitting through 160 slides of content. Managers are tired of people taking eLearning and not having skills to do their job. Business owners are beginning to relegate eLearning to simple compliance (“so we can say we did it”) courses.

They have valid complaints. The vast majority of eLearning is not designed to drive performance improvement. The reason for this is simple: **Most eLearning replicates the worst practices of education electronically:** lecture and multiple choice tests.

And **shame on us as learning professionals**, because we know how to do better. We’ve developed the designs and practices in face-to-face training, in coaching programs, in mentoring initiatives. We’ve just forgotten everything we know when we take it online.

And **shame on SCORM-based LMS’s** who have focused on deploying and tracking that which is most easily deployed – content and objective tests – rather than that which is most instructionally sound.

The result is that more and more people are looking beyond the LMS for ways to get back to basics – having people learn from people – the way we’ve done it for 20,000 years or so.

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#### OUR POINT OF VIEW

We believe that there are several characteristics that 21<sup>st</sup> century learning systems must adopt as they move from their historic roots as fancy content management systems to systems that support both sound instructional design and the ability of people to informally learn from one another.

##### **Put the learner at the center, not the LMS**

We have focused less on learning \*management\* than learning \*delivery.\* The user experience should be key, with the ability to configure the platform to suit the requirements for that experience. Should the user encounter a catalog of courses? A community of people with content available when needed? A site listing job functions with step by step performance support for each? Every situation is different and we believe the platform should be able to be configured so that the learner experience matches their needs and requirements.

##### **Support instruction, not just presentation of content**

Learning isn't content, else universities could be replaced by libraries. Yet LMS's and even Bb are basically content management systems with other features added on. Conversation is a fundamental business process. People like to learn from people - we've been doing it that way for 20,000 years. We know how to teach effectively. The problem is that our tools have not allowed us to map \*best\* practices rather than \*worst\* practices online. So for us a fundamental design characteristic is to be able to map best instructional practices by providing a toolkit that allows courses to be comprised of ILT sessions, eLearning packages, web meetings, discussion forums, individual assignments, assessments, manager certified action plans, coaching sessions, etc. etc.

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## Measure the important - not just the easy.

We believe that a fundamental design flaw of many traditional LMS's is that they confuse content with learning. They measure only that which is easy to be measured - SCORM completions. We believe that a design imperative is that if you're going to support a full range of instructional processes, you need be able to track not only SCORM, but track participation in online discussions, attendance at webinars, completion of action plans, etc. etc.

## Support the other 80% of learning

We believe that the same platform, the same interface, the same administration, and the same user experience should be used for informal learning and for structured instruction. Rather than bolt on a wiki for informal learning, we think that it's a better practice to have a rich discussion engine that can support wikis, blogs and forums - and have that be the same engine used for formal and informal learning. We also believe that support for informal learning goes well beyond that - that there are affordances in the best social networking and online community tools (like rich facilitation features and community health reports) that facilitate the success of online learning.

## Support ongoing learning on the job

This is where my focus may depart most significantly from your requirements, but the other critical focus we see for a 21st century learning system is performance support. Today's workers face complex challenges - from new plant launches to managing employees in a litigious environment to staying abreast of new technologies. We believe that the wave of the future will be performance support systems that reduce complex tasks to logical steps, providing at each point access to learning assets, job aids, live experts, and best practices that will keep folks on top of their game.

## THE Q2 APPROACH

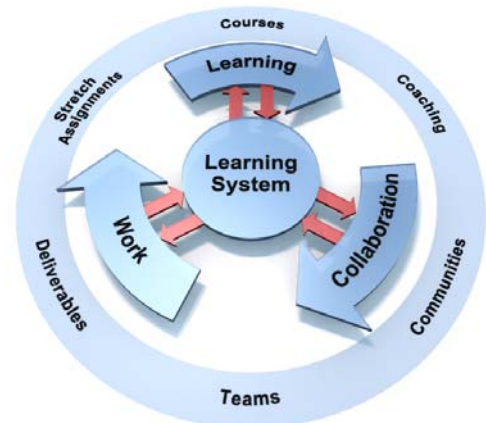
The xPERT eCampus quickly gets learners up to speed and keeps them on top of their game by integrating structured training, informal learning, and performance support.

Customizable portals with a rich widget library increase adoption by personalizing the user experience, while informal learning is supported by a social media toolkit that includes blogs, wikis, web meetings, social bookmarking, tagging, and other popular Web 2.0 tools.

Learning maps increase speed to proficiency by teaching the way people learn. Instructors can sequence and track a wide range of activities including eLearning, assessments, assignments, webinars, coaching, group discussions and manager-driven plans, while providing instructors the ability to track all types of activities and manage thousands of learners in small groups.

Knowledge bases enhance and extend skills on the job while eliminating learning decay by organizing tasks into step by step processes, and providing focused content, learning assets, best practices, and access to experts at each step.

Templates enable administrators to convert one-off projects into replicable programs by easily saving and re-deploying portals, learning programs, and community sites.



Great technology is only an enabler. To have an effect, it must support sound design and flawless execution. For this reason, Q2Learning offers a full suite of services to help you be as successful with your first initiative as your twenty-first.



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Q2Learning provides solutions for high value learning initiatives to corporations using our social learning platform, the xPERT eCampus. Our team has years of experience building some of the world's most effective performance-based learning programs, communities of practice, and knowledge management systems using our award winning eCampus platform and innovative Speed to Proficiency approach.

If you would like to experience an eCampus in action or, for more information on how our solutions might be able to support your training initiatives, contact Q2Learning at (877) 751-2200 or [sales@q2learning.com](mailto:sales@q2learning.com).