

**Australia and Online Learning – Lessons on Strategic Implementation and Effective  
Learning**

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## **Introduction**

*“In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future.”*

*– Eric Hoffer, 1989*

Knowledge is the currency of the new economy. Consequently, growing and shaping intellectual capital is a business imperative. Technology provides a highway for learners, connecting them and helping them learn faster, cheaper, flexibly, personally. It allows information to flow to learners from the inside, outside, bottom-up, top-down, and the side. Human resource management is the steward of intellectual capital, charged with creating and growing it, translating it into structural capital and ensuring that knowledge gets to those needing it. In this way, HR is the manager of the ‘human’ imprint in the organisation.

On-line learning is arguably, the most exciting and powerful recent issue in the field of human resource development and vocational education in Australia. It enables learning in the workplace that is not only just-in-time but can also be considered ‘just-for-you’. This chapter explores the emergence of online learning in Australia to determine the successful and unsuccessful strategies and approaches to learning. It commences by introducing the context of the Australian vocational education and training (VET) environment, discusses effective online instructional design and analyses the strategies applied by organisations to implement online learning and the development of content. The chapter is contextualised by a detailed case study exploring the successful strategy used by the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group to implement online learning into their organisation.

## **Training in Australia : the Tyranny of Distance.**

There is no better phrase to describe the force shaping vocational education and training (VET) in Australia than 'the tyranny of distance'. Over the past two hundred years, education and training in Australia has been strongly characterised by learning remotely, whether that be through children undertaking their high school education via two-way radio on the schools of the air, or Masters degrees via paper-based distance education programmes.

Over the past five years, online learning has promised to do much to overcome this tyranny of distance, with many potential organisational benefits such as improved cost effectiveness, equitable access to training and cultural change (Schall, 1997). Additionally, online learning is touted to be able to improve the quality of training experience for those in remote locations. Further, when on-line learning systems are integrated within, or in conjunction with an intranet and human resources information system, they offer the possibility of an enabling infrastructure for effective corporate knowledge management and compliance with the growing number of requirements placed on Australian businesses.

### **Australia Vocational Training System**

A key influencer of online learning in Australia is the vocational training system. While not unique, Australia is one of the few countries that has a federal competency based training framework throughout the country. This system standardises accredited vocational training through three control mechanisms (cf. Smith & Hayton, 1999). These controls are 1) competency standards, 2) mandated assessment requirements and 3) the Australian Qualifications Framework, which awards six levels of vocational (pre-

university) qualifications. For training to be able to give a qualification it must achieve the assessment requirement for a prescribed number of competencies. To make the system manageable the standards and assessment criteria are divided into Training Packages, one for each major industry sector.

The national vocational system is driven by the Australian National Training (ANTA) Authority ([www.anta.gov.au](http://www.anta.gov.au)). Funding is largely managed on state level, and a training and assessment board managing the Training Package on behalf of each industry sector.

The Federal system, however, has failed to establish a leadership position in championing online learning across Australian industry. While significant funding and goodwill has been placed into initiatives, funding and support has largely been placed into educational institutions with little wide-scale success across the industry sectors. Arguably, this is due to ANTA and the state bodies responding to the education and corporate training sectors who themselves have no, or very limited, experience or strategy around making online an effective educational tool. As such, funding has not been strategically placed to foster the birth of online training on a nationwide scale.

### **Online learning : Promises versus delivery, a matter of strategy.**

Research by TMP (Williams, 2001) into the up take of online learning in Australian corporations revealed that training managers expected, on average, that e-learning would represent 39% of all training conducted in the workplace. While this research may accurately reflect the optimistic and adoptive Australian culture, the current reality is that very few organisations have had group-wide success with online learning and there are many failure stories. As such, considering the overwhelming national

interest and the underwhelming experience to date, it is timely to reflect on the strategies employed by organisations to see what has underpinned success and failure.

In preparing this chapter, significant benchmarking was conducted of organisations around Australia. A total of eight financial institutions, three aviation organisations, six educational institutions and six information technology organisations were benchmarked. These organisations were chosen due to their leading position in either online or multimedia training delivery.

This benchmarking highlighted that an ad-hoc approach to implementing an on-line learning system, with no planned strategic focus (for example, a training department developing a system without executive support or budget cover), is highly unlikely to be successful. Additionally, the benchmarking emphasised that the strategy must be based on delivering the organisation's business needs (cf. Grundy, 1998) and not driven by either a single curriculum or the technology that underpins the delivery and instructional design. These are common mistakes made by many organisations (Schaff, 1997) with the outcome reported in several of the benchmarked organisations being a technology solution that fails to attract significant enrolments or loses momentum over time, courseware that is not appropriately designed or maintained or a system that is incompatible with future organisational information technology platforms.

All of the Australian Universities and TAFEs (Technical and Further Education institutions) benchmarked provided insight into organisations that adopted technological or a curriculum driven approach to their online education. Outcomes ranged from complete failure in ever launching a system after investment, and to significant blowouts in cost to limited success in terms of learners attracted and retained. One reason for this,

as stated by Cleary et al (2001 p 34), is that universities have “neither the political will nor the change processes in place to radically transform workplace practices”.

Curiously, all Universities benchmarked approached online learning through faculties developing and delivering a single curriculum online. These programmes generally demonstrate poor consideration of instructional design principles and problems with updating content, which it is intuitively reasonable to attribute to a single or a small number of academics pushing the online agenda on a restricted development budget. Surprisingly, even Universities that have extensive experience in paper-based distance education suffered these strategic pitfalls. As articulated by Cleary, Little and O’Brien (2001) “flexible learning cannot be a bolt on afterthought to traditional structures and work practices.” In the case studies considered this was commonly the case, however, with one university the transition between traditional distance and online was just as difficult.

Unlike the higher education sector, the TAFE institutions benchmarked commonly demonstrated an organisation-wide approach to online delivery. In two cases, however, the expenditure focused on system functionality, producing a technically complex, arguably non-intuitive environment with little focus on the development of quality online curricula.

In all University and TAFE cases benchmarked there was typically initial intensive development, however, in the longer term these initiatives suffered from:

- loss of executive interest and funding;
- problems with network bandwidth (due to focus on latest technology i.e. video conferencing);

- inadequate management structure and representation;
- training generally not meeting any corporate objectives, being instead an online version of current facilitator-led courses; and
- poor version control of training materials, intranet infrastructure and documents.

On the other hand, leading organisations benchmarked, including Qantas, IBM, Oracle and ANZ, all employed implementation strategies that focused on business needs and included a learning philosophy. These were far more successful in establishing effective online learning environments that were both widely utilised and continued to maintain significant support from the organisation's legitimate management system (Stacey, 1996). Some other commonalities among these organisations' approach to online learning implementation included 1) establishing the online learning site as a 'one stop shop' where the system was often used to book facilitator-led and self-paced training as well as receive online content, 2) the use of both online tutor-led and self-paced courses, 3) custom building of online content for specific business needs and 4) a clear strategic and educational understanding of what the organisation intends to deliver online and through traditional facilitator means.

The benchmarking exercise revealed that the key to successfully implementing an on-line learning system is a well planned and executed implementation strategy (Hodgetts, Luthans & Slocum, 1999). As with any human resources strategy, the implementation of e-Learning should assess all possible internal and external influences

(Hay & Härtel, 2000; Martinsons & Chong, 1999; Wilson-Evered & Härtel, 2002; Wilson-Evered, Härtel & Neal, 2001).

Common external influences include the impact of emerging technologies and social and political influences (Lepak & Snell, 1998; Wolfe, 1995). Even more critical, internal influences including organisational culture (Harris & Ogbonna, 1998), risk management, technology (Liff, 1997) and business unit structure and buy-in were carefully considered in the development of the business case, formation of the steering committee and the design of the strategy discussed in this paper.

A further common thread in implementation strategies in Australian universities (A'Herran, 2001; Clearly et al, 2001) was recommending phased implementation of courseware commencing with small pilots then slowly integrating faculties. While this strategy is consistent with the political environment and the frequent funding restrictions within the tertiary sector, a staggered approach would fail to meet the speed and time to market expectations of a private sector corporation and would be met with program fatigue and withdrawn sponsorship (Weiner, 2001).

Of all research analysed in the development of this paper, the most relevant model for online learning systems implementation was proposed by Neil Strong (1997) based on his experience at TAFE South Australia. Strong proposes a model with four discreet phases that should be followed in sequence when implementing an organisational wide on-line learning system. In summary, they are:

1. Trial Phase - research and development of a trial site (virtual college environment) in local training department; testing system to sort out technology; no risk; determine boundaries of pilot.

2. Pilot Phase - the trial of selected (usually small) learning modules; raises profile, access to and expectations of system; very little risk.
3. Tactical Phase - on-line training available outside local training environment; first trainees, possibly commercial applications, increased dependence on IT; formation of specialist support required; executive advised of initiative and approval sought; reasonable risk; medium network bandwidth required.
4. Strategic Phase - where on-line learning is required to deliver the organisation's business needs; established system management; increased dependency and risk, high bandwidth required.

While Strong's (1997) model has much merit, it displays its heritage of being based on experience in the vocational education context. In the context of a commercial organisation, it fails to adequately involve executive sponsorship early in the strategy and is risk adverse to the point of being too slow to effectively meet corporate demands. In terms of organisational systems, it could be considered that this model does not adequately address the transition from the conceptual and informal shadow system into a legitimate and sponsored organisational system (Stacey, 1996). As such, in the enterprise context, it would most likely be rejected by the legitimate management structure at one of the later phases in the model.

### **Online or Offline – what works? Myth versus reality.**

A fundamental question about on-line learning is, does it make the learning any more efficient in terms of meaning and understanding? Currently, there is scant research to answer this question. However, there is no more commonly discussed topic around the

training and development conferences in Australia than the impact of online learning on learning styles and the effectiveness of tuition. Unfortunately, much of this discussion is not based on experience or academic rigour but rather reflects popularist opinion and experience in traditional modes of training. To help redress this, we now explore some of the current literature and practice on the effectiveness of learning online.

Common feedback from organisations benchmarked was that for teaching procedure and declarative types of training (eg compliance, product knowledge and systems training), online learning could be a more efficient learning tool. In one case, trainers were reporting up to 40% time reductions in completing these types of training courses.

Another commonly discussed, but rarely understood, consideration of online learning is the importance of the cognitive style processing preferences of learners. Cognitive style is a person's typical or habitual mode of problem solving, thinking, perceiving and remembering (Allport, 1937). As such, how well each element of instruction caters for an individual's cognitive style will determine the effectiveness of the learning experience.

Cognitive style is commonly described with two independent cognitive bipolar dimensions (Riding & Cheema, 1991): the concrete-abstract dimension and the sequential-random dimension (Gregorc, 1982).

It is important that the instructional design of on-line learning considers the learning preferences of each of the four cognitive styles. For example, the drill and practice activities commonly found in early generation computer-based training would

suit the concrete sequential types of learners but would largely be incompatible with any abstract reasoning or the imagery cognitive preferences of random thinkers.

It is intuitively reasonable to suggest that designing effective on-line learning for the random and abstract dimensions is more difficult than for the concrete and sequential dimensions. To provide some guidance for cognitive style ‘sensitive’ instructional design, the following table suggests techniques and activities to cater for each of the four dimensions. An effectively designed online course will combine a wide variety of these techniques within an intuitive navigation structure.

**Table 1: Examples of on-line learning activities in terms of cognitive style preferences**

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>Concrete</b>	<b>Sequential</b>	<b>Random</b>
on-line tutorials	drill & practice.	on-line tutorials	Visuals
synonymous case studies	Reading	Reading	discussion boards
Mentoring	Discussion boards	peer discussions	Simulations
metaphoric quizzes	Multiple choice questions.	e-mail	case studies

While consideration of cognitive or learning styles can assist in effectively designing elements of an online course at a macro level, it provides little pragmatic guidance for the human resources or training professional in making a decision on what course will or will not work effectively online. To assist with this process, we offer the three-tier model in Table 2. This model draws off simplified cognitive science constructs to help guide the appropriate design and investment decisions a corporation should make when considering whether content should be online or not. For example, when the learning goal is self-awareness and reflection, learning needs to occur through a blend of online, workplace and face-to-face learning. When the learning goal is to grasp a

complex interrelationship of facts, learning best occurs through simulation and metaphor. When, however, simple facts are what is to be learnt, simple PDF files incorporating text and pictures with assessment will suffice.

**Table 2: Three-tier model for identifying what focus to take in instructional design of an online course.**

Type of Knowledge to be learnt	Explanation	Examples of corporate application	Cost	Online	Possible Online Instructional Design Focus
Emancipatory	Self-awareness and reflective. Learning about self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leadership development</li> <li>▪ Change mgt programs</li> </ul>	Moderate to high	Blended Online or face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tutor lead, group learning online.</li> <li>▪ Learning blended between online, workplace and face to face.</li> </ul>
Procedural	Linked and interrelated process or facts. More complex schema to learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systems training</li> <li>▪ More complex compliance training.</li> </ul>	High	Yes. 100% online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systems simulator</li> <li>▪ Scenario / metaphoric based</li> </ul>
Declarative	Simple facts based learning. Facts are not linked schema.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Product knowledge</li> <li>▪ Simple regulatory courses</li> </ul>	Low	Yes. 100% online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PDF and an assessment.</li> <li>▪ Information in PDF presented in pictures and text.</li> </ul>

To answer the question raised at the beginning of this section, on-line learning is likely to provide a gain in the efficiency of learning, in terms of meaning and understanding, over conventual classroom training. Much of this advantage is due to the contextualisation of the learning within the workplace, emulated scenarios for systems training and the use of the online learning system to formally manage this learning. The down side compared to traditional classroom instruction is that the design and preparation is time consuming, costly and requires educationally sound instructional design.

However, once the learning material is developed, it can be delivered numerous times and inherently manages standardisation issues.

**Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited – A case study of an effective implementation strategy.**

To place all of the theory discussed in this chapter into practice, a case study of online learning based on the model in Table 2 and its success in the Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) bank is analysed. ANZ is one of Australia's 'big four' banks. As of June 2002, ANZ had over \$185 billion AUD in assets (ANZ, 2002).

The aspects of ANZ's vision that underpinned the online learning initiative were "To be the e-bank with a human face" and "To be a place where people grow." The key HR strategies related to this vision were to encourage lifelong learning, to have access to new knowledge as it emerges and to e-transform ANZ.

In terms of the implementation of online learning, ANZ is the most successful corporate case study in Australia to date and benchmarks favourably internationally. The statistics are compelling; over the past twelve months 27,500 ANZ staff, which accounts for nearly the entire corporate population, commenced 155,000 online training courses of which 110,000 have been completed. This accounts for approximately 75% of all of the banks' training load. This result positions ANZ favourably against global benchmarks.

The vision driving the online development at ANZ was to create a "comprehensive learning structure based upon a web-based learning management and delivery system that allows staff to easily access ANZ training at work or at home.

Strategic objectives aligned with this vision was to create a "Flexible delivery platform,

continuously updated training materials and one training delivery vehicle to unify access and monitoring”.

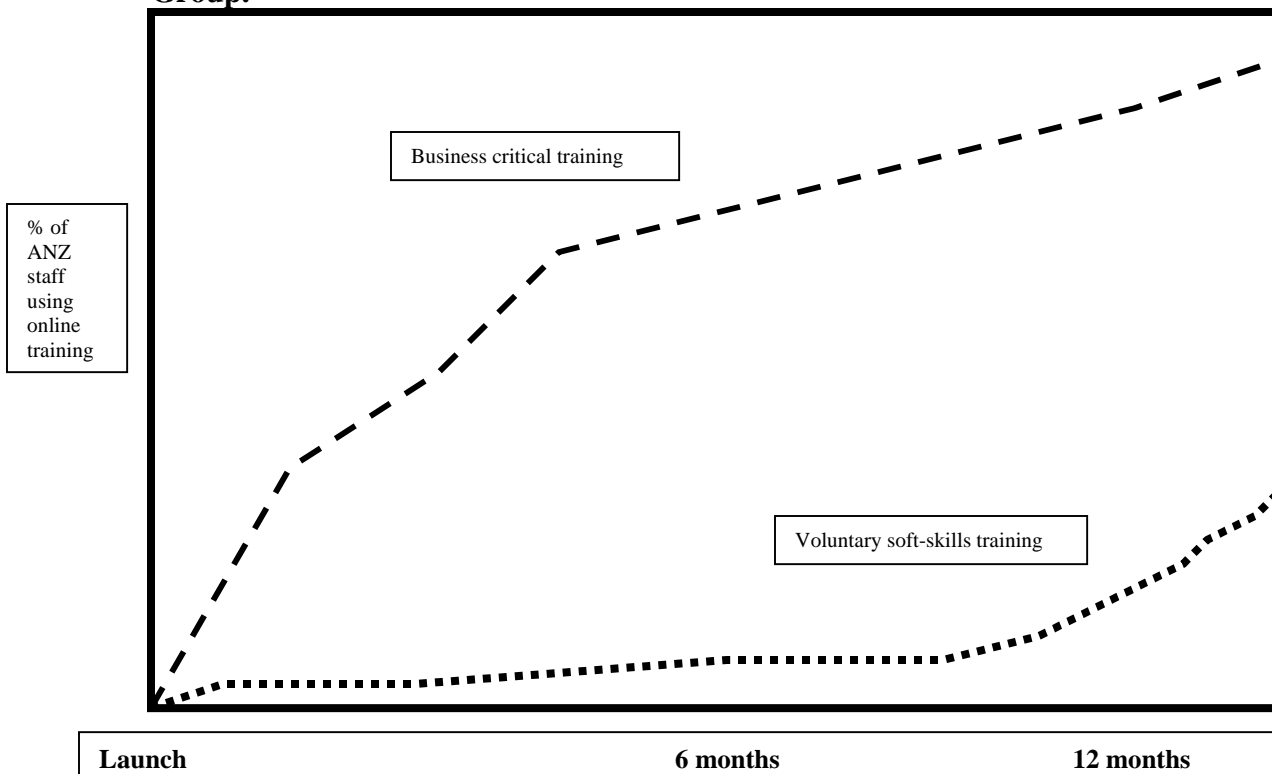
HR’s role in the design and implementation of the e-train included developing the online initiative and supporting business case, analysing competitors’ activities, conducting a risk analysis, reviewing and selecting vendors, developing an implementation plan and HR change management strategy, completing a training needs assessment for the organisation and a review of current practices, and generating a list of current curriculum areas and generating new material.

Online training fulfils an extensive range of business critical training and compliance needs in ANZ. This includes delivery of simulation training for any new major banking system, all of the core compliance and regulatory training needs of the bank and product knowledge training. This training is commonly mandatory and often scheduled into a formal rollout and project to ensure compliance. As with any successful implementation of online learning, the content drove the initiative and, in ANZ’s case, content was not restricted to a single curriculum but cut across multiple business needs.

While the online learning strategy focused on business critical training, it also had a strong equity of access flavour. The intent of the online learning initiative was not only to increase the efficiency of required training but to also greatly increase the opportunity of training across frontline staff. To achieve this, a wide range of several hundred courses are available ranging from off-the-shelf Windows 2000 training courses through to a fully online Masters of Business Administration developed in partnership with Charles Stuart University. As with other organisations benchmarked, these online ‘soft-skills’ courses received a relatively low initial take up and the strategy would not have

been sustainable on these alone. However, over time a very interesting pattern of take-up rates emerged. As the bank approached 80,000 courses commenced, which equates roughly to three to four courses per capita, the interest in soft-skills training significantly increased. Figure 1 shows this trend.

**Figure 1: The take-up of online learning in the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group.**



This pattern experience in ANZ has three causal factors. Firstly, the volume of this training established the internal online learning portal “ANZ eTrain” as a very powerful brand. After three or four courses, online staff viewed ANZ eTrain as a one-stop-shop for their training needs and hence window-shopped the online catalogues when they had a training need. Secondly, line managers began using the ANZ eTrain system to help with development planning, with staff being asked to complete online courses to

increase proficiency in a capability or to fill a skills gap. Finally, and most importantly, after staff had completed three to four online courses, they commonly reported back that they were used to learning online. As such, ANZ’s strategy had been successful through driving its staff to online learning through critical and compulsory business needs. Thus, the change management was effective with staff learning to trust and to learn from online training.

So why has ANZ been so successful when the majority of other organisations have not? The core difference is a comprehensive and continually developing strategy that underpins the implementation and ongoing management of the online learning agenda. While this paper has explored some of the key aspects of this strategy such as business critical content, there are several other aspects to consider. The following table details all twelve elements of this multi-faceted strategy.

**Table 3: ANZ’s Comprehensive Strategy for the Implementation of Online Learning.**

1. Alignment with corporate strategy and needs.	ANZ’s corporate strategy at the time of launch evolved around a theme of being “the eBank with a Human Face”. While the implementation of online learning does not have to be as closely aligned as this, if the corporate strategy does not support innovation and change through self-service technology then chances of success will be minimal.  Additionally, success of the online learning implementation is heavily impacted on whether the corporation has 1) a widely distributed workforce, 2) an industry requirement for compliance and regulation and 3) the standard of internet protocol (IP) network infrastructure and PC build.
2. Don’t pilot, have faith	Multi-phased strategies, such as that proposed by Strong (1997) are unlikely to be successful in the corporate setting. Pilots are rarely large enough to encompass a large enough cross section of the corporation to gain organisational commitment and bear significant cost and time penalties. Karen Fitzpatrick, ANZ Practice Leader for Learning and Leadership, states “Online learning is like religion, you have to have faith in it to work”.
3. Develop business critical online content	Focus on identifying, developing and deploying content that solves business problems and achieves a tangible ROI. Developmental or IT content alone will not achieve success in the short or medium term.

4. Develop quickly	Rapid development of content and deployment of the learning management system will ensure a best of breed solution is being deployed, avoiding upgrades through the project and minimise the investment required to get up and running. ANZ developed and deployed its online learning solution, including a wide range of content in 120 days.
5. Launch softly	It is important that the marketing and promotion of the online learning solution and content reflects the organisational support, content development and IT infrastructure capabilities. It is also most likely that the online learning deployment will experience problems with technology infrastructure. ANZ deployed for three months prior to using the system for business critical purposes. Considering the absence of a pilot, a soft launch is critical to ensure all problems are rectified before they have any significant impact.
6. Targeted and strategic communications	There are several smart and often simple ways to communicate and promote online learning within an organisation. Rather than a ‘big bang’ communications strategy, ANZ chose to utilise upskilled online learning champions within each business unit. These people managed key stakeholders and provided on the ground support for many people. Combined with a gradual group wide communications plan involving flash animations showing how to log on and use the system, this approach to communication was subtle and successful.
7. Establish help mechanisms prior to launch.	Help must be available for end-users and more advanced users such as HR and systems managers. A common mistake in online learning projects is to try to support users initially within the project team. A successful strategy will attract significant interest early on. At the end of the first week, six thousand staff at ANZ had registered on the system voluntarily. Self-service help, FAQs and online courses in how to use the system can all assist with managing user help requests.
8. Web Literacy Skills training for end-users	It is important to provide training to those staff who are nervous of their computer skills. As this is a core change management initiative, this training is best down by a facilitator. At ANZ the focus of this one day training was to upskill the learners in general web skills, which was successful in initiating interest in the learners to explore and learn further. Using the online learning systems and courses was a secondary focus that drew off the generic skills being developed.
9. Development planning for training and development staff	Typically, the staff who struggle the most to cope with the shift to online learning are the trainers. It is important to provide individual development planning for these people, who, in ANZ’s experience struggled with their IT capability and project management of online content development. It is also reality that many trainers will not embrace online learning.
10. A sustainable management structure	An important concept of online learning is that it is not a project. Unlike a gant chart, the scope and size of online learning keeps on going and growing. Organisations should plan for this in advance through establishing scalable systems administration and content project management capabilities. As Holmes and Richardson (2001) articulated, the biggest problem faced by teams that successfully implement online learning is that the business will love you too much. This was true at ANZ, three months after launch there

	were over 100 requests for the development of assessments and content and significant challenges were faced by not having enough governance of courseware projects being managed outside the central expert team.
11. Rare skills required in online learning project managers	The key to the success at ANZ was a team which each had the rare skills mix of 1) extensive training and general human resources experience, 2) cognitive science and instructional design background and 3) strong information technology capabilities. This mix of capability allows the individual to manage specialist technology staff, whilst being pragmatic about how to make the system work and also understanding how to achieve effective learning online. All of these traits in one person will be more effective than a team blended from the three disciplines.
12. Develop strong relationships with sustainable providers	<p>While ANZ outsourced all content development, even organisations with internal development capability would be wise to consider working with other organisations. Online learning is a relatively new experience for nearly all developers and different organisations have different approaches and capabilities. Expect this relationship to be a learning experience for both organisations. In ANZ's case, often the customer was helping develop the capability of the content development house.</p> <p>In regards to partnering with Learning Management Systems providers, it is equally important to establish a strong relationship. Additionally, as most providers were established in the 'dot.com' era it is critically important to consider risks such as financial sustainability of the provider and, critically, whether they can provide the necessary local support not just in the short-term but in two years time when you have saturation across your organisation.</p>

### **Conclusion**

The experience with implementing online learning gained in Australia can provide valuable lessons to corporations globally. The case study of the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group is particular powerful and provides one of the first pragmatic and proven strategies for the effective implementation of online learning.

The key lessons gleaned from assessing Australia's online learning approach through a literature review, benchmarking and a case study are:

- 1) Prepare leadership on the use and misuse of technology; weigh costs with gains in efficiencies and intellectual capital; understand the limitations and the capabilities of different technologies;

- 2) Develop a 'vision' about the use of technology that fits with the business needs & HR strategies - Be clear about why using technology;
- 3) Establish a partnership between IT and HR; Select sustainable providers; Develop strong relationships with providers;
- 4) Online development manager to have knowledge in IT and instructional design and extensive experience in training in order to evaluate, match solutions to needs, use online technology, manage deployment, incorporate human issues into design;
- 5) Do not underestimate the effects of new technologies on people; Understand human-machine interface issues; Provide users and trainers with web literacy skills;
- 6) Ensure a well-planned and executed implementation strategy based on corporate strategy and careful assessment of all internal and external influences (eg. Social, political, organisational culture, risk management, technology structure, business unit structure) (cf. Härtel & Härtel, 1996; Paterson, & Härtel, 2002; Wilson-Evered & Härtel, 2002; Wilson-Evered, Härtel & Neal, 2001);
- 7) Secure buy-in through tying learning outcomes to specific business needs and clearly defining deliverables and evaluation criteria;
- 8) Account for different cognitive learning styles (see Table 1); integrate multiple technologies; Link online design to type of knowledge to be learnt (see Table 2);

- 9) Soft launch with targeted strategic communications and use of champions to secure stakeholder support;
- 10) Establish help mechanisms prior to launch; Ensure security, reliability, and privacy;
- 11) Ensure a sustainable management structure.

The future of online learning in both corporate and public Australia will be dramatic and rapidly growing. The geographic distribution of the Australian workforce combined with Australia's technological adoptive culture and one of the highest per capita rates of access to the internet in the world suggests that technology will continue to play an important role in training in Australian society. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether the growth in online learning will be dramatic and driven by strategic government investment or be organic, driven by corporate sector success.

We close this chapter with this quote from Professor Rod McDonald, Special Advisor, Australian National Training Authority (13 June 2002, personal email communication).

"For many years, companies have been exhorted to think that 'training is good'. Now, thankfully, the agenda has moved so that the most forward-looking companies are looking on learning and skill development with interest, not because they are 'good', but for the contribution that it can make to the capability of their workforces, which in turn increases their intellectual capital. The question remains, though, of how to actually do it. For the companies which have understood this, on-line learning brings the vision closer: better targeted, more easily accessible, available in bite-sized chunks, and overall better-aligned with business goals. It's the right thing at the right time."

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