

# CASE STUDY: BT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PORTAL

**“We needed a system capable of supporting and training our Partners with content being controlled and being kept up to date by our own administrators”**

## Background of Customer

BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions serving customers in Europe, the Americas and Asia Pacific. Its principal activities include networked IT services, local, national and international telecommunications services, and higher-value broadband and internet products and services. In the UK, BT serves more than 20 million business and residential customers with more than 30 million exchange lines, as well as providing network services to other licensed operators.



As a division of BT PLC, BT Retail launched BT Indirect Channels (BTIC) in 1995. Then it was a small unit with a handful of channel partners, today it is a network of over 100 authorised partners and several thousand resellers providing a valuable route to market for BT's core products.

## The Challenge

BTIC required rapid and effective communications with its channel partners specifically to:

- Provide sales and business management training to partners in growing their businesses.
- Provide training and support for the range of products in the BT portfolio.
- Keep partners updated on issues concerning technology and compliance.
- Grow strong relationships within the community of partners.

It was recognised from the start that the challenges above would need to be met from a combination of IT systems, sponsored events, face to face training and web-based training.

Furthermore, to meet BT's overall requirements for continual improvement there was a need for performance of the BTIC initiative to be measured.

## Why Cirrus?

Cirrus Software was selected in partnership with creative media company 'The Creative Engine' after demonstrating together the ability to provide rapid, high quality multi-media solutions underpinned by a robust, scalable IT architecture providing database and workflow applications. This arrangement also offered value for money and highly responsive support arrangements to cope with changes and issues. The software environment is Microsoft .NET.

## The Solution

A bespoke web portal was constructed and called 'BT Learning and Development Academy'. The portal was integrated with the following solutions from Cirrus Software to meet exact BT's requirements.

- **ContentManager** to provide BT with the facility to change Portal Content within a wide range of web page templates and with a built in workflow to ensure authority to publish information.
- **EventManager** to provide on-line booking of events including training, conferences and meetings together with workflow to provide the full management of events including automatic surveys at the end.
- **Learning Management System** to provide a platform for on-line learning and feedback with on-line course material provided cost-effectively by BT's own internal course design staff and also The Creative Engine and other BT suppliers.
- **SiteManager** to provide administration of the BT Learning Academy portal including security and access controls.
- **Datamine** to provide system users with the ability to generate reports from databases to monitor performance and use trends.

## The Project

The initial project started in 1998 and design commenced simultaneously on 3 fronts:

- Features, workflows and 'Look and Feel' of the Portal.
- On-line course material
- Data structures and workflow at the 'back-end'.

Within 3 months, the initial Learning and Development Academy Portal went live with content management available and the first e-learning modules to be provided to BTIC Partners. Since the initial project the System has been updated to its current version released in 2003.

Throughout the project, additional features, e-learning modules and workflow were tested on a development server and then went live on a regular, monthly basis. The project was achieved with close collaboration between BTIC, The Creative Engine, and Cirrus Software. Cirrus Software has used its rapid application development tools and approach to develop workflow and data structures required to provide the functionality of the portal. Cirrus Software continues to provide technical support for the system which includes changes and updates.

## The Benefits

The BT Learning Academy has become an integral part in the development of the BTIC Partners as a community and an effective route to market for the BT Product Portfolio.

As at May 2006, some leading statistics for the Learning Academy Portal are as follows:

- Over 500 Graphic pages under content management
- Over 700 events including training courses, seminars, product launches and conferences organised using the event manager.
- Over 50,000 regular users from BT and the BTIC Partner community.
- Over 80,000 e-learning modules delivered by the Learning Academy.

## Comment from BTIC

"When we started out on the Learning Academy Project, we were not sure whether we could make the system interesting and relevant enough to ensure our key goals of supporting and training partners for mutual benefit could have been realised. However, the project has exceeded our expectations and is an important tool in the management of over 1,000 partners in the UK. The Cirrus Software approach, rapid application methods and tools have ensured the project, system updates and feature changes have been implemented in short-time to meet all our agreed

requirements. We continue to add to the system and keep it refreshed. From a business point of view there is no doubt that the Learning Academy is very relevant has been of great value in attracting, developing and retaining partners providing an effective indirect channel for BT products. As a result of its indirect channel's business, BT has helped resellers to implement countless solutions throughout Europe.”

**Tony Norman - BT**