

# eLearning: A Process that Must be Well Planned

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## **Abstract**

*eLearning has received popularity and is being implemented in many organizations. The objectives of the eLearning should be clearly stated and well understood; otherwise, the outcome would be something unexpected. This paper described the eLearning Plan of TOT Corporation PCL which had started over two years ago. The first course was introduced on July 1, 2004 and the result is yet to be observed.*

## **1. Introduction**

The Government of Thailand led by Prime Minister, Dr. Taksin Shinawatra, had given approval to the National Information and Communication Master Plan (National ICT Master Plan) 2002-2006 on September 25th 2002. The Objectives are to lead Thailand towards the Knowledge-based Learning Economy by adopting the five flagships, namely: e-Government, e-Commerce, e-Industry, e-Education, and e-Society.

These flagships are well inter-related with each other and will benefit the country in minimizing the duplication of investments, building up markets for private sectors as well as to build up intellectual and knowledge to the people.

Seven key strategies had been laid out, they are:

Strategy 1: Develop ICT so that Thailand be the leader in the Region

Strategy 2: Utilize ICT to uplift the quality of life of the people and social

Strategy 3: Operate and build up potential in R&D on ICT

Strategy 4: Upgrade the potential of the Thai social for future competition

Strategy 5: Develop the potential of service providers for international market

Strategy 6: Promote Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to use ICT

Strategy 7: Utilize ICT to manage and provide services for the government

Many governmental departments thus had implemented plan to utilize eLearning as a mean to develop the human resources. TOT Corporation Public Company Limited (TOT) is no exception. As the national incumbent telecommunication company, TOT had started the pilot project on distance learning aiming to help its nationwide personnel on their personal development and to minimize the overall human development costs. Another objective of the plan was also

to reduce the time needed for individual to travel to the Training Center in Bangkok. Later on the name of the project was changed to eLearning project to concur with the national e-Government and e-Education projects.

## **2. eLearning Background**

Many success stories on eLearning are those implemented for corporate workplace and for higher education. It is rather difficult for employees to be absent from daily work for trainings. Therefore, if the employees could receive extra training aside the normal working hours then there would be no loss to the overall performance. Some companies give incentive to employees who voluntary join the eLearning program.

Grown up persons, especially those who are aiming at higher education, have their own drive for improvement. Some would want to learn about new management skill for better chance of advancement in his career while other might want to keep up with colleague or rather self satisfaction.

eLearning can be implemented at many levels and complexities, ranging from the provision of simple information solutions to the development of e-Books and e-Textbooks. In order to provide better understanding of certain phenomena, special effect presentation and animation are often found to be quite effective.

Life eLearning events demand the students' self discipline to make themselves available and attend classes with others at the scheduled period. In many occasions, the events could be web-casted in such a way that students from different countries and different time zones could jointly participate.

Well planned e-Learning could have built-in interactivity and testing so that the student can measure his achievement. After long training sessions, games and simulations may be added to the module with

the intention to provide the knowledge as well as the relaxation.

## **3. TOT eLearning**

The Human Resource Development Department of TOT had allocated a budget of approximately 30 million Baht for the eLearning project which consists of (1) Procurement of the Learning Management System and the necessary software tools, (2) Procurement of networking equipment to operate the eLearning, (3) Procurement of workstations, and (4) The development of on-line lessons. It was not until October 2002 that the required budget was approved. By the third quarter of 2003, the Learning Management System, necessary software tools as well as the networking equipment were set up at the TOT Training Academy on Ngamwongwan Road, Nonthaburi, Thailand.

In order to expedite the project, two online training modules were purchased. They are the Balanced Scorecard & KPI and English Language Business Writing. Moreover, TOT had outsourced local courseware producers to prepare three more modules, namely: TOT Products, Internet Technology, and Basic English. As the result, the TOT Training Academy has a total of five online training courses to offer.

Starting from November 2003, TOT employees who wish to try any of these online training courses could access via the designated website. TOT plans to set up regional eLearning classrooms at the five regional offices. Fifteen workstations will be installed in each classroom and a total of 647 workstations will be installed at Senior Manager Offices throughout the Kingdom of Thailand.

To test-run the online training courses, TOT Academy had decided to start with only one lesson for each subject from May to June 2004. The official opening of TOT

eLearning program was scheduled on July 1, 2004.

#### 4. Objectives and Targets

Employees who took the online training course(s) and had passed the tests will be recognized indifferent to those taken conventional classroom training. The first target group of online training students is those rank 4 to 10. It is planned that there would be a total number of online trainees in each course as follows:

TOT Products:	6,000
Internet Technology	800
Basic English	760

English Language Business Writing and Balanced Scorecard & KPI will initially be opened to TOT executives.

Objectives of each course are:

TOT Products – *to raise awareness of all products and services of TOT*

Internet Technology – *to enable students to use Internet and surf for required information, to send e-mail, and to understand the fundamental of building a website*

Basic English – *to enable the student to use basic English for general conversation in different places and situations*

Balanced Scorecard & KPI – *to equip the student with management principles stressing the organization management, the development of measurement tools to check whether the principle objectives/goals had been achieved*

English Language Business Writing – *to enable the students to write basic business correspondence*

#### 5. Future Plans

TOT Academy has set general goals to add a minimum of four online training courses each year. In some courses where interactive students and lecturers are mandatory, the combined online and classroom training will be used.

As one can observe from the aforementioned summary, there are quite a number of cumbersome procedures that need to be improved. They are the long process for procuring the needed Learning Management System, software tools, networking equipment, and workstations. Well established training module such as Balanced Scorecard & KPI will be offered together with the outsourced training modules which were developed by courseware producers. It might take sometime to make a comparison between these two approaches.

At the time of preparing this paper, the online training had just started. The outcome of the project is yet to be closely monitored. The strategies to ask all senior executives to take courses irrespective of their willingness and readiness will prove whether one can learn without adequate motivation.

There are many factors affecting the successful outcome of the eLearning. One has to choose the right tools for which up until now no guaranteed procedure is available.