

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Mass Customization Opens Up New Revenue Channels For Prosoft Learning

The Client

Prosoft Learning is one of the world's largest distributors of certification programs and assessment products for the information and communications technology (ICT) workforce. As the leader of the job-role certification movement, the company strives not only to provide the best educational content, but also the most innovative tools to alleviate critical skill gaps and increase the value of human capital. Prosoft creates and distributes a complete library of classroom and e-learning courses and distributes content through its ComputerPREP division to corporations, commercial training centers and academic institutions worldwide.

The Goal

While Prosoft's customers always felt the company offered the best and most comprehensive library of IT certification courseware, the company was unable to capitalize on their high-value content by expanding the customer offering and creating advanced services to drive additional revenues. To address this issue, Prosoft decided to work with Xyleme to implement an innovative, industry-leading solution to dynamically manage their content and rapidly deploy new learning offerings. The goals of this project were twofold.

First, Prosoft needed to derive new revenue streams from their existing content to increase profitability and drive future growth. To achieve this goal, the company required a technology that would provide them with key flexibility to reuse existing content and distribute it to any number of content applications such as subscription services, shopping carts and next-generation knowledge programs.

Second, Prosoft needed to significantly lower the cost of creating customized courses. Although the

company recognized these courses as a new revenue opportunity, customizing the company's content to individual requirements was an expensive and cumbersome process. The reason was the proprietary nature of this legacy content and the resulting complexity of mapping the content to the customers' desired learning objectives. These problems were exacerbated as the demand for customization services grew. As a result, Prosoft required a technology that could automate this process and put more content and control in the hands of their customers, enhancing the customer experience while reducing expenses. These goals needed to be accomplished on a limited budget and without re-creating the existing content.

The Challenge

Prosoft's library of IT certification courses was created in a proprietary format; limiting the content for reuse, customization and distribution past the existing CustomPREP CD-ROM product which held only a limited number of courses. What Prosoft really wanted to do was to allow their instructor subscribers to access a Website and create highly customized learning materials on-the-fly.

In terms of cost, Prosoft managed to significantly lower the expense associated with customizing courses for their customers. The process, which used to take Prosoft several days with the previous solution, is now performed either in-house or on-demand by Prosoft's customers within minutes or hours depending on the exact customization requirements of the customers. In addition, the ability that XML provides to reuse content has reduced wasteful processes such as re-creating existing content, searching, cutting and pasting. This reduction drives down production costs and also preserves content integrity.



“By combining individual learning objects, our content is now easily customizable, allowing us to rapidly create unique courses to meet our customers' individual specifications.”

**Lindsay Miller,
Prosoft VP of Operations & CIO**

Therefore, Prosoft wanted a more versatile way to manage their learning content and their decision was to shift to XML. The company viewed XML as an open, flexible and 'future-proof' format that would help ensure the content reuse that their business goals require.

Prosoft also realized that they would need a flexible architecture to allow them to quickly adapt to market requirements and deliver products in rapid time-to-market. So the level of XML support provided by the required solution was of paramount importance. As a result, Prosoft made the decision to implement an architecture that was 100% XML-based rather than a point solution that offered XML merely as an output option.

The Solution

Xyleme's Learning Content Management System (LCMS) solution for Prosoft consists of three functional parts:

1. XML Conversion: A migration tool converts Prosoft's legacy content created in Microsoft Word to rich granular XML. The tool provides a smart utility that identifies and automatically corrects documents that do not conform to Prosoft's standardized look-and-feel. This conversion tool is intended to identify any of the 151 unique styles and elements in Prosoft's instructional-design template. After the Word file is converted to XML, the document is ready for a final authoring and publishing process.

2. XML Authoring & Storage: New and existing learning content is created and formatted in an XML editor that provides role-based workflow to create modular learning elements rather than entire documents. These elements are stored in a native XML repository that feeds all of Prosoft's CustomPREP

Web applications.

3. Course Assembly: The application is a self-service Web site that instructors access to create customized courses. Users search, select and assemble learning elements into a custom course via a point-and-click graphical user interface (GUI). As the course is being built, items such as tables of contents, glossaries and index lists are automatically generated and updated. Learning content can be distributed as printed materials or online courses, or they can be accessed via any wireless device capable of reading a PDF.

The system became operational in August 2005. An upgrade that included new Xyleme components was installed in July 2006. In addition, Xyleme provided training for Prosoft's internal employees on the fully integrated XML solution via live Webex sessions. Prosoft then customized the materials to their instructional-design standards and provided online orientation documentation for their own customers using the course assembly application itself.

The Results

The initiative exceeded both goals that Prosoft set at the beginning of the project.

In terms of profitability, the course assembly application maintained the CustomPREP revenue source within only a few months of implementation. Prosoft recouped the entire cost of the project within one year, and continues to expand the application to drive further revenue and enhance customer experience. In addition, Prosoft was recently acquired by VCampus, which views this application as a key contributor to its growth and profitability for 2006.

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