

International Maritime eLearning—Update 2010 Support for DOD Logistics

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LEARNING GOALS

1. Setting e-learning standards in the maritime industry is dependent on technology, stakeholders' cultures, and available funding.
2. The US Coast Guard, as principle owner of Maritime Training regulations, is a critical component to direct change and facilitate stakeholder collaboration.
3. Maritime training institutions, facing increased financial burdens through traditional classroom training, seek blended learning solutions in-house as well as through external partners.

The 2010 NDTA Annual Forum will focus several sessions on education and training for logistics professionals, principally active duty and non-uniformed DOD personnel. The discussion of education now includes content and delivery. What is necessary to educate a logistician? What is necessary to certify competence? As written previously in this column, the new Center for Joint and Strategic Logistics at National Defense University is directing research to focus on the role of education in the Joint Logistics Enterprise. Underlying DOD logistics support is the commercial sector maritime industry, responsible for moving the bulk of cargo to OCONUS destinations. Yet the maritime industry is facing continued challenges to recruit mariners, prepare them for certification, and ensure availability of sufficient positions in the industry.

The Maritime training community gathered at the Second International Maritime eLearning conference in July at the MEBA Calhoun School where training and education professionals demonstrated updates and new accomplishments since their first gathering in 2009. E-learning remains a challenge to train mariners due to many factors—lack of industry standards for maritime courses; reluctance of the US Coast Guard to move too quickly to substitute e-learning for traditional classrooms; and

the pace at which maritime institutions can accommodate e-learning systems.

E-LEARNING STANDARDS

There are multiple institutions, essentially self forming, which seek to lay out standards for e-learning. These standards are not necessarily focused on a single industry but are intended to be inclusive of many fields. The presentation from DNV (Det Norske Veritas), an independent organization founded with the purpose of safeguarding life, property, and the environment, focused on the unique challenges of the maritime industry. These are based on regulatory compliance, global oversight through the International Maritime Organization, and dispersed corporate ownership.

Under the guidance of Dan Noonan of the MEBA School, a group entitled “Maritime Technology, Training, Taskforce (M3T) had a full day session at the conference to stimulate collaborative efforts among stakeholders with goals of developing standards and direction. Four key points were offered by the taskforce:

- Maximizing the use of existing administrative resources (essentially, institutions are encouraged to avoid re-inventing the wheel)
- Maintaining access restrictions to both physical and data resources to preserve the privacy and integrity of the course records
- Integrating with existing QSS (Quality Standards System) and Management Practices
- Ensuring that technical course delivery systems work as designed¹

Regionally accredited universities are further along in setting standards in e-learning through organizations such as the Sloan Consortium, an institutional and professional leadership organization. It is dedicated to integrating online education into the mainstream of higher education, helping institutions and individual educators improve the quality, scale, and breadth of education. Originally funded by the Alfred

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

P. Sloan Foundation, Sloan-C is now a non-profit, member sustained organization.²

US COAST GUARD MARINER TRAINING

The US Coast Guard operates the National Maritime Center, its licensing authority, under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security. Their mission is “to issue credentials to fully qualified mariners in the most effective and efficient manner possible in order to assure a safe, secure, economically efficient and environmentally sound Marine Transportation System.”³ The USCG has a great burden thrust upon it to protect the entry of maritime vessels into US waters and ports based on national security concerns of terrorism, hazardous materials accidents, and cargo and human smuggling. This burden is made more difficult because the USCG is traditionally under resourced, even moreso now due to its lead role in the response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

The concerns offered by the USCG focus on the measures available to ensure that proper learning has taken place, offered by the right instructor, and received by the right individual. Traditional classroom procedures have been with us a long time and normally provide necessary reassurances on meeting these components. E-learning is expected to be able to meet the same minimum standards, but the USCG is moving cautiously on the issue. The USCG has permitted two distance learning courses to be offered by the MEBA Calhoun School.

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS OF THE USCG?

- Identity of the individual enrolled
- Identity of the individual taking USCG exams
- Capability of the online instructor
- Capability of the online learning management system
- Which types of training courses are suitable for online learning and which are not

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Design Driven Innovation: Changing the Rules of Competition by Radically Innovating What Things Mean

Design Driven Innovation: Changing the Rules of Competition by Radically Innovating What Things Mean, by Roberto Verganti, published by Harvard Business Press, 2009, \$35.00 list, hardcover, 288 pp., ISBN-10: 1422124827

This book is very consistent with the 2010 NDTA Forum theme of “Outside the Beltway—Outside the Box.” Until now, the literature on innova-

tion has focused either on radical innovation pushed by technology or incremental innovation pulled by the market. In *Design Driven Innovation*, Roberto Verganti introduces a third strategy, a radical shift in perspective that introduces a bold new way of competing. Design driven innovations do not come from the market; they create new markets. They don’t push new technologies; they push new meanings. It’s about having a vision and taking that

vision to your customers. Think of game-changers like Nintendo’s Wii, Apple’s iPod, or 3M’s Post-it. They overturned our understanding of what a video game means, how we listen to music, and, with only a slight exaggeration, office information sharing. Customers had not asked for these new meanings, but once they experienced them, it was love at first sight. But where does the vision come from? With fascinating examples from leading European and American companies, Verganti shows that for truly breakthrough products and services, we must look beyond customers and users to those he calls “interpreters”—the experts who deeply understand and shape the markets they work in. *Design Driven Innovation* offers a provocative new view of innovative thinking and practice. **DTJ**

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The STCW (Standards for Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping) was created in 1978 and amended in 1995 in order to ensure that US Merchant Mariners have the skills and abilities to serve aboard seagoing vessels. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the owner of the STCW. The US Coast Guard implements its policies through legal means established in 1978 and amended in 1995.⁴ There is constant interaction between the maritime industry and the USCG on modifications in STCW components and re-interpretations of training methods. STCW enables the USCG to be a key decision maker in accepting online learning standards.

MARITIME INSTITUTIONS AND E-LEARNING

Degree granting maritime academies (directed by state education officials or the Maritime Administration) and non-degree granting maritime institutions (usually controlled by their founding maritime unions) are the primary means for mariners to be trained to work in the industry or to maintain their USCG licensing. Among these is the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, which currently devotes significant resources to train and qualify its mariners on STCW. In an interview with Joe Keefe in *Maritime Professional*, Massachusetts Maritime Academic Dean Capt Brad Lima stated, “The concept [of blend-

ed learning] has merit,” adding “We’ve got to find a way to reduce the burden of the STCW training requirements. Combining a traditional system with online training might be one way to do that.” Lima then cautioned, “There are more than a few wrinkles to iron out.”⁵ The State University of New York Maritime College has implemented online learning to supplement its on campus learning through Janet Peck, Adjunct Professor at SUNY Maritime. She finds that teaching via online distance learning programs is equal in quality to the traditional classroom but understands the hesitancy of the USCG.

Non-degree granting institutions such as GMATS (Global Maritime Transportation School) at Kings Point, Long Island, and MITAGS (Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies) have implemented blended learning through partnership agreements with the American Military University, an exclusively online institution and a member of the regionally accredited American Public University System. (Full disclosure: this author has represented AMU in these agreements). Establishing in-house online learning is expensive, and the quality of learning management systems varies. Partnerships with accredited online universities may expedite their evolution into online learning.

The gathering at MEBA Calhoon raised many questions on the path toward acceptance of e-learning. All agreed that there is a future for e-learning. Collabora-

tion among stakeholders will be a key to how quickly the future comes. **DTJ**

- 1 <http://m3tgroup.org>
- 2 www.sloan-c.org
- 3 www.uscg.mil/nmc
- 4 www.uscg.mil/nmc/stcw_policies.asp
- 5 Joe Keefe, *Maritime Professional*, June 2010, www.maritimeprofessional.com/Home.aspx.

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