



# e-learning for Millwrights

BY GUYLAINE LAJOIE

## THE QUEBEC FOREST INDUSTRY COUNCIL (QFIC) HAS RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF E-LEARNING INTERACTIVE, MULTIMEDIA MODULES FOR THE MILLWRIGHT TRADE AND HAS AWARDED A CONTRACT FOR 25 MODULES

**T**his project was born out of a common need in the industry for a flexible training program that would quickly, economically and efficiently train millwrights. The challenge of an ageing workforce, coupled with fewer and fewer highly competent younger workers is making it a must for mills to be able to address the concept of self-sufficiency for some key generic transportable skills. According to Germain Gaudreault, industrial relations director at the QFIC, e-learning was chosen as the delivery mode for the many advantages it offers:

- decrease in training time by up to 50%, as documented by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD);
- increase in retention rate (documented by ASTD);
- training available anywhere, anytime;
- learner-centred, self-paced;
- consistency of message;
- very flexible, can also be used as job aids, reference material, etc.;
- user-friendly.

As a firm with a very close relationship to the forestry sector, Humeng International has been mandated to identify the key portable and transferable millwright skills and develop world-class e-learning modules for these skills. One key person per mill has been trained to use the authoring system to personalize the 25 training modules, if needed. A learning management system will also be installed in each of these mills as a portal for e-learning and to manage all other administrative aspects of e-learning. The software has been used by many organizations and has satisfied ISO 9000, 2000 and 14000 requirements.

The project manager at Humeng, Guylaine Lajoie, calls this an "intelligent" project in the sense that training modules are produced with generic transportable content and then each operating site has the flexibility to personalize the content to fit its equipment. Each module is engineered for individual learn-

ing and includes pre tests, progressive learning exercises, post tests and final summative evaluations. The passing mark on the summative evaluation can be determined by each site to respond to individual mill requirements.

Through its many experiences with e-learning, dating back to 1994, the firm has been able to conclude that many employees prefer e-learning to traditional training when they have been properly introduced to the medium. A case in point is Dupont, Thetford Mines where e-learning was implemented in 2003. According to a survey done by the company, although 42% of the plant's employees had never used a computer, 96% of participants found this training method to be "good" to "excellent".

According to Sylvain Dumas, training coordinator at the Domtar, Hull, ON, mill, the millwrights that have seen some of the modules find the content and approach very motivating. They had no difficulty navigating through the computer-based application and found it quite enjoyable. According to Dumas, these modules will provide new millwrights and more experienced ones with a common language, greatly facilitating the transfer of best practices.

Luc Parent, the maintenance manager at the Smurfit-Stone, La Tuque mill in Quebec, acknowledges the user-friendliness of the platform and the compatibility of the content with mill-wide training needs. Parent also sees the opportunity to further improve mill efficiency by including the e-learning modules in the existing skills management system at the mill. According to Parent, the modules will help transfer best practices to new millwrights and ensure commonality of practices in the existing workforce.

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