

# For e-learning to grow further

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**W**HILE the dotcom frenzy has somewhat simmered down, one element of that phenomenon that is still going strong is the electronic learning (e-learning) business.

In the higher education and corporate training landscape, e-learning is becoming a common feature. For higher educational institutions, e-learning has become a priority to expand their influence and reach new customers while for corporations, e-learning has become an important business process to improve their employees' abilities.

In the United States, for example, it is projected that about 90 per cent of institutions of higher learning will offer courses via e-learning in 2007 as compared to 30 per cent in 1998. A recent Gartner survey, on the other hand, revealed that organisations worldwide are fast adopting e-learning in corporate training - about 80 per cent of organisations worldwide surveyed in 2000 indicated some form of e-learning in their companies.

Though not as fast as their counterparts in other countries, local educational institutions and the corporate sector have begun adopting this mode of delivering education and training. Slowly but surely, a landscape of e-learning will materialise in this country, says Daniel Chi, director of Inti Management Services Sdn Bhd (IMS), as infrastructure, bandwidth and personal computer (PC) penetration, which were significant obstacles to e-learning, have improved.

Chi says with the growing availability of infrastructure and broadband networks, the corporate sector, especially, is quickly adopting e-learning. However, he believes that



Chi: Blended approach.

to accelerate the adoption of e-learning in the country, issues such as the development of relevant content online and readiness of human resource must be looked into.

"Having the right technology and infrastructure is not enough. The content has to work, it has to be of interest and only then can we get people to use this mode of learning," Chi says. "Besides this, to make e-learning pervasive, there needs to be a shift in mindset in the way we learn."

On high attrition rates, which are common in online learning programmes, Chi says it stems from the missing classroom interactivity which leads to student dissatisfaction.

"Learning should not be lonely and the e-learning environment must be one that generates the social aspect of the classroom," he explains. "Often, high attrition is caused by the lack of interactivity, but it can be overcome by building environments where people communicate with one another, build relationships and teach one another."

Another success factor for e-learning, Chi stresses, is continuous support for students. In most e-learning programmes today, he says, the burden for learning is placed completely

on the learners and when this happens, they fall out.

Chi says IMS, in its recent venture into e-learning, views these aspects seriously. "We have ensured that learning will not be lonely and with the continuous support we provide for students, our e-learning venture will be a success."

"We know that more technology is not the answer, the blended approach is a better method. As such, we will provide classroom support for our students," he adds.

IMS, a fully-owned subsidiary of Inti Universal Holdings Bhd, recently entered into a partnership with Cambridge Online Learning (COLL) and International Management Centres Association (IMCA) to offer Cambridge online Pre-MBA Executive programmes and the University of Action Learning MBA programme. With the partnership, IMS has become COLL's first online partner in the world.

Pre-MBA Executive Certificate and Executive Diploma graduates can progress to IMCA's University of Action Learning at Boulder (UALB) in the US for an MBA qualification. The online Pre-MBA Executive Certificate in Management and Pre-MBA Executive Diploma in Management are offered to working professionals wanting to attain a postgraduate qualification in management.

As for the UALB MBA, it is for executives seeking to achieve greater professional success to obtain industry relevant managerial skills and competencies.

The certificate, diploma and MBA can be completed in 30 months. The first intake is scheduled to commence next month, with another two intakes in July and November.

In addition to interactive environment and face-to-face support, Chi believes that the uniqueness of its online programmes will increase the completion rates. "A lot of working people are not prepared for a full-fledged MBA. Thus, preparatory courses such as the certificate and diploma will help," he says. "In addition, if they intend to go on to the MBA level, they have the advantage of doing a US-based programme."

Chi adds that Inti programmes are work-based, hence learners have the edge of learning while on the job.