

**Dynamic e-Group Learning:
Forming Community of Practitioners through Course
Management Systems**

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In the era of information explosion and knowledge mismanagement since the early 90's, The quest for a networked sphere to engage stakeholders to share, learn, and collaborate as dynamic teams and groups has caught on and become a socioeconomic as well as cross-cultural phenomenon during the heavy transition of the globalization movement (Castells, 2001). The most significant networked applications in such category were spearheaded by groupware in a client-server system, and more recently course management systems (CMS) in the full-blown Internet based environment. In the paper, the authors will investigate the roles, functions, and purposes of two tools for learning in e-groups: groupware and course management systems, respectively

Beyond being fashionable of its heyday, like groupware, the CMS possess virtues surpassing spatial and temporal limitations set by traditional classroom-based training. Based on a survey answered by 120 MBA and MSBE students at a Midwestern university between Spring 2001 and Spring 2003, narrative data were collected based on six functions of CMS: information storage, information sharing, building the learning community, business productivity, security, and training and learning outcomes. The summary of the qualitative findings will be reported.

The author predicts that technology-enhanced, group-based learning will continue to infiltrate both business training and professional education beyond individualized e-learning. Course management system software is already popular at the post-secondary level. Some of this popularity is a direct result of need to sustain contacts and interaction among instructors and students/trainees.

Course management software, as with any software including groupware has definite advantages and disadvantages. Corporations and universities who wish to embrace these new technologies must be willing to put the time and resources into making the implementation a success. No matter how many bells and whistles become available as a result of technology, each training program and educational institution will need to take a step back and truly evaluate if the technology is really enhancing trainees and students capacity and skills through sustainable learning. In addition, it will be imperative to explore learner-centered instead of instructor-centered design of future CMS that will foster critical thinking and creative cooperation. After all, the resources are always limited within a given timeframe, so resource allocation decisions must be thoroughly planned and implemented with a forward-looking vision of developing human potential.