

AST CS eLearning Solutions Whitepaper

“Education over the Internet is going to be so big it is going to make email look like a rounding error.” - John Chambers, CEO, Cisco Systems

Our View of Blended Learning

We do software and learning systems making it easy for people to work together.

AST CS, a business unit within the AST Group and our associates and partners, is focused on providing customers with the capability of putting together a blended learning approach. Called the AST CS Learning Pyramid it combines traditional methodologies with eLearning.

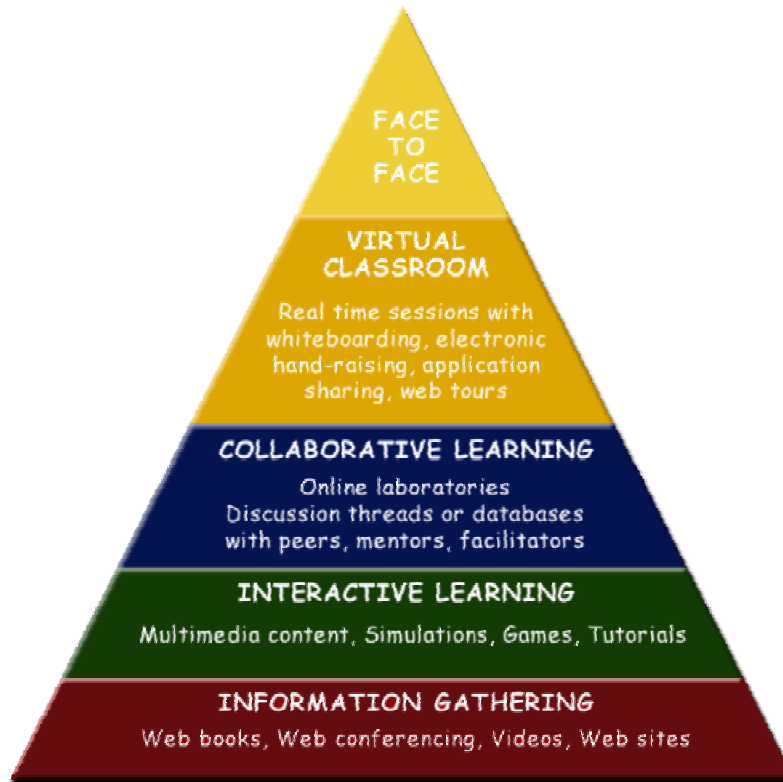
We provide comprehensive, reliable learning solutions that generate measurable results. Our solutions are designed to address key business issues such as sales force and partner training in new product introductions, regulatory compliance, supply chain and ERP implementation assistance and employee orientation.

We define eLearning as a combination of learning services and technology to provide high value integrated learning. eLearning is learning where:

- Learners and teachers are separated by time and/or space
- Face-to-face contact is either absent or reduced to the minimum
- Communication is mostly asynchronous
- Instruction presents itself in ways very different to traditional modes of education
- Learning is more learner than instructor centered
- Using collaborative technologies facilitates interaction between learners-and-learners and learners-and-instructors
- Learning involves real world problem solving contexts in which learners learn-through-doing
- Internet technologies and standards form the basis of the technological environment within which learning is mediated

“On-line learning is not about taking a course and putting it on a desktop. It is about a new blend of resources, interactivity, performance support and structured learning activities.” - Elliot Masie

The AST CS Learning Pyramid acknowledges the roles that the different modes of the learning play in achieving of desired learning outcomes.



Our Team

At AST CS we have a dedicated team of learning specialists complete with consultants, technologists, architects and academics that have been implementing learning solutions for many brand name customers.

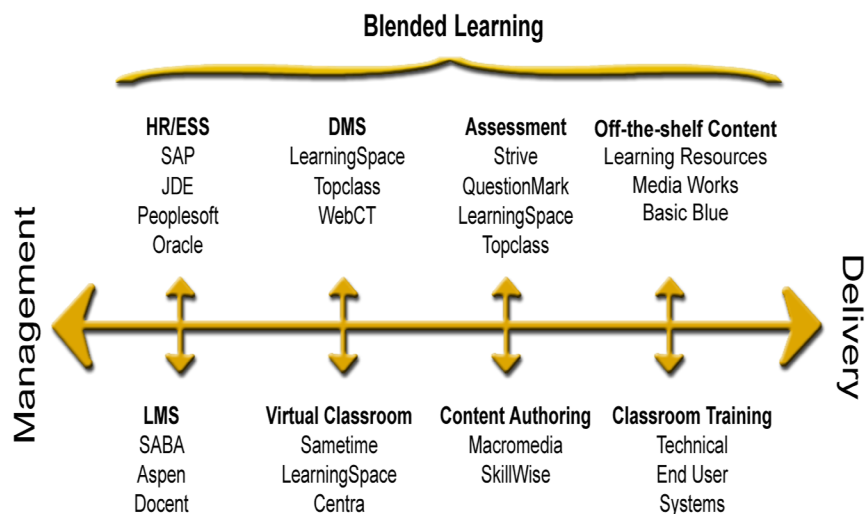
AST CS is a premium IBM business partner. As an IBM Mindspan partner we have the capability to deliver elements of the Mindspan learning offerings.

Other selected Strategic Alliance Partners also assist us in delivering on a total learning solution. These partners include:

- The University of Pretoria (Strategic and academic guidance)
- Addoceo (ICDL, ECDL courseware)
- LeadTrain (LMS and educational multimedia)
- The Win-Win Group (Learning journeys and multimedia)
- Media Works (ABET)
- Learning Resources (Harvard Management Training Skillsoft and Netg courseware)
- Manchu I-Capital (Strategic consulting)
- Cisco (eLearning infrastructure)
- Strive International Software (LMS and campus management systems)

Our Offerings

Human culture does not make sense if it excludes technology – technology is the current manifestation of our tool making capability. Good tools are those that when picked up naturally fit the hand. Our blended learning model as illustrated below ties our solutions together. The model asserts that any modern day learning solution can be supported by technologies ranging from management to delivery. AST CS is able to customize a solution to specific customer needs using a collection of the elements presented in the model.



AST CS can recommend and resell content from such leading third parties as NETg, SkillSoft and SmartForce. This content can be delivered using Lotus LearningSpace, which is designed to meet the AICC guidelines and support the AICC CMI specification, allowing the use of off-the-shelf content from many companies.

Apart from the technological issues AST CS also addresses an organization's need for complete, enterprise learning solutions with an innovative series of offerings:

- Learning strategy
- Performance consulting
- Transformation consulting
- Planning
- Instructional design & content development
- Technology & infrastructure
- Delivery & support
- eLearning quick start

Learning Strategy

Learning strategy is undertaken to create a complete educational strategy and approach for an organization. Strategy services could include high-level assessment of current approaches, the organization's culture, technical environments strategic direction, and priorities and objectives for learning as well as for using learning to achieve business goals. We endeavor to understand an organization's learning and curriculum needs. Our investigations guide us in helping you select the appropriate delivery methodologies and media from several learning approaches.

Performance Consulting

Our strategy services are guided by a performance consulting approach. Performance consulting is helpful in generating a high-level plan for performance improvements for one or more specific groups and identifies the goals of learning initiatives to address those performance improvements.

Performance measurement services measure the current skill level of individual employees. These services are critical in legally required certification situations and define the "before" state against which the results of learning initiatives can be measured. Performance consulting often leads to follow-on performance measurement and instructional design initiatives.

Transformation Consulting

The emotional effect of organizational transformation on the individual, as well as on groups in the work place should be managed. Transformation consulting offers a change process or journey to assist the learner in dealing with the various change levers and to adapt behavior.

With transformation consulting we address the driving force, implications and benefits entailed in the new learning strategy or process. Attitude assessments are performed to determine the effectiveness of the learning intervention. Learners are also supported in their personal learning endeavors by a journey plan and journey management.

Planning

Planning services consist of instructional, graphical, media and technical analysis and design, and learning management and integration architecture.

Instructional design services help organizations design the specific sequence and structure of learning content and activities – including blends of classroom and online learning – that are consistent with specific learning objectives for targeted learners and the organization as whole.

Media and graphical design is undertaken to assess the need for using various media and designing the media to be consistent with the overall instructional design principles as required by the organization.

Technical design services forms a recommended design for an eLearning environment that is consistent with performance needs, business design goals, IT environment, and corporate culture.

Technology architects apply expertise to design the infrastructure and application components of learning solutions. As part of the technical design infrastructure evaluation services assess the organization's existing network and communications infrastructure and the capabilities of that infrastructure to support various models for centralized and distributed e-learning deployments. A key consideration for implementing learning is the assessment of the existing infrastructure and its ability to support quality learning experiences, various media types, live collaborative learning, access anytime to content, and security, access and e-commerce issues.

An analysis of current training programs can provide valuable insight for the instructional design process, help determine if the programmes are effective, and determines what measures must be made to ensure that future programmes provide measurable results.

Learning management and integration planning help design the integration of your learning management system into an organization. This includes a complete requirements design for deployment and integration of the learning management system with existing business systems.

Instructional Design & Content Development

Content development services are aimed at creating courses and modules that meet the learning needs of organizations. Based on the instructional design services described above, content can be created for a variety of learning delivery modes.

Our Model for Instructional Design

One of the outcomes of our experience in the market has been the development of an instructional design model, which we believe more closely meets the needs of learning projects. The model is the combination of elements from several instructional design models (Hodgkinson's Daisy Model, Lotus' Accelerated Value Method (AVM) and Kemmis and McTaggart's Action Research Framework).

The model suits the rapid development nature of learning solutions and was developed as a byproduct of the project management activities associated with elearning projects. It integrates both performance and transformation management activities into our overall instructional design methodology. As illustrated below the two elements frame all the other elements contained in the model and are present throughout the life cycle of the project.

All other activities required for the successful development of learning solutions are represented in the three blocks in the centre of the model. Their depiction indicates their relative importance to the various stages in the project. The model envisages a great amount of analysis and design and very little implementation activities at the start of the project. The amount of time spent on these activities changes over time and implementation and summative evaluation activities grow in importance as the project nears its end. The project life cycle should be seen as a zig zag (from left to right) of activities across the middle blocks (red, green and blue) for the duration of the project.



Technology & Infrastructure

Lotus LearningSpace is currently a key technology component of our service offering. LearningSpace is a learning technology platform that provides the industry's most flexible learning experience and broad support for curriculum planners, instructors and administrators implementing learning initiatives. Lotus LearningSpace offers self-paced, collaborative and real-time learning experiences, tracking and management capabilities, and seamless integration of course content and authoring tools. An open, standards-based Web application, Lotus LearningSpace utilizes best-of-breed technology as its foundation. With its multi-tiered architecture, Lotus LearningSpace can be configured to run on a single server to meet the needs of departmental training or across multiple application, collaboration, content and course/tracking database servers for enterprise-wide "corporate university" deployment.

It is the most comprehensive of all the product offerings on the market with the ability to cater for:

- Self-directed interactive learning
- Collaborative, asynchronous learning
- Collaborative, live learning
- The powerful assessment of learner progress
- Learning and learner tracking and management
- Integration with several HR systems
- The integration and use of the full suite of Macromedia authoring products
- AICC compliant content

Delivery & Support

Delivery consists of facilitator training and support services, hosting services, and outsourcing.

Facilitator training and support services offer support for learning facilitators to help resolve technical and non-technical issues impeding effective delivery of the eLearning courses.

In addition to hosting and learner support services, AST CS can provide outsourcing services to manage aspects of enrolment and the tracking and reporting of the learning environment. It can provide these outsourced services in major deployments both within and outside the corporate firewall.

eLearning Quick Start

We focus on turning eLearning into a tangible experience by offering an AST CS Learning Pilot bundle as a quick start to run over a period of three months.

The bundle consists of the following:

- Strategic consulting
- Installation of LearningSpace
- Learner setup and management
- Pre-test on Windows and Basic Computers
- eLearning Content on Windows and Basic Computer Skills
- Electronic feedback mechanism or smilometer
- Communication framework for change management
- Final analysis and report on findings

References for Blended Learning

Our philosophy is that client needs - not technology - must drive every solution.

This section details samples of reference sites that AST CS has implemented. Due to the sensitive/confidential nature of some of these engagements, please contact AST CS for further reference information.

Name of project	ESKOM eLearning Strategy and Consulting Services
Description of projects	Consulting services to the South African electricity utility company.
Nature of the solution provided	AST CS provided consulting services to ESKOM to develop a holistic strategy for the deployment of eLearning within the organisation. The strategy included elements of both training and knowledge management.
Products used	Consulting tools developed by AST Collaborative Solutions.
Name of project	DaimlerChrysler eLearning Pilot
Description of project	Provision of eLearning consultancy to manage and implement an eLearning pilot.
Nature of the solution provided	AST provide a range of consultancy services to DaimlerChrysler to assist them in building a realistic plan for the further implementation of eLearning within the organisation. The pilot includes the use of both static and dynamic eLearning tools.
Products used	AST consulting tools, Lotus LearningSpace, NetG.
Name of project	Santam eLearning Systems Training
Description of project	Business Intelligence process and systems training for the largest short term insurance provider in South Africa.
Nature of the solution provided	Development of systems training content to train Santam employees on the process and systems needed for the use of a new business intelligence initiative within the organisation.
Products used	Macromedia Authorware with custom developed tracking system.
Name of project	Department of Justice eLearning Systems Training
Description of project	Customised content and tracking system regarding: Basic Computer Skills Windows 2000 MS Word XP, MS Excel XP, MS Outlook XP

Nature of the solution provided	Development of eLearning to train Department of Justice employees on the abovementioned software customized to their templates and profiles within the organisation.
Products used	Macromedia Authorware with custom developed tracking system.
Name of project	Toyota Marketing SA Dealer Training
Description of project	eLearning for Toyota dealers on release of new Toyota Corolla.
Nature of the solution provided	Development of customized multimedia content to be rolled out to their dealer network.
Products used	Macromedia Authorware with custom developed tracking system.
Name of project	Anglo Platinum
Description of project	eLearning regarding content in the process business area for Anglo Platinum employees.
Nature of the solution provided	Development of customized multimedia content to be rolled out to their employees.
Products used	Macromedia Authorware.
Name of project	ESKOM eLearning Pilot
Description of project	Provision of eLearning consultancy to manage and implement an eLearning pilot. AST provide a range of consultancy services to ESKOM to assist them in building a realistic plan for the further implementation of eLearning within the organisation.
Nature of the solution provided	AST consulting tools, Lotus LearningSpace, NetG
Products used	Provision of eLearning consultancy to manage and implement an eLearning pilot.
Name of project	British American Tobacco
Description of project	eLearning regarding an orientation program for all BAT employees running in LearningSpace.
Nature of the solution provided	Development of customized multimedia content to be rolled out to their employees using Lotus LearningSpace.
Products used	Lotus LearningSpace and Macromedia Authorware.