



Jo-Ann Killinger

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If you think that communication technology is advancing at warp speed, try being the person in charge of training people to use it. That's what Jo-Ann Killinger does each day. As director of customer technical-product training for North American operations at Alcatel, a global telecommunication manufacturer headquartered in Paris, she and her team train the company's customers and employees.

How does she keep up with the fast-paced industry? Killinger says it's all about rapid e-learning and knowledge sharing, which takes the teaching function outside of the training department. "Everyone possesses information, knowledge, and valuable experience that must be freely and easily shared when it is needed," she says. "By putting the tools into the hands of subject matter experts (SMEs), information can be more quickly put into a format that can be shared. That way, everyone in the corporation becomes a potential trainer."

And Killinger practices what she preaches: SMEs, rather than the training staff, partner with the department to create the initial content for Alcatel University's online courses. During her decade-long tenure with the company, she also has been an instrumental force behind the company's implementation of a global learning management system. In 2003, she and her team further developed and globally distributed a "courseware assembler" tool that enables developers to standardize the courseware so that portions of the training do not need to be redeveloped for each course. Courses that used to take between 40 and 60 hours to customize now take about eight hours on average. The tool is complemented by standard, companywide course development templates and formats as well as a global management process.

"No matter where it is developed—Milan, Antwerp, or Plano—courses can be reassembled into new ones across product lines and geographic borders within Alcatel," she adds.

Killinger believes that rapid e-learning isn't a temporary fad either. She sees it becoming a permanent fixture as more advanced communication and development tools continue to facilitate the learning process.

"Traditional training and development is evolving into workplace learning, which is part of everyone's job—not just the training department's," she says. "Less-used learning approaches, such as mentor relationships, self-study through online research, communities of practice, blogs, and the involvement of employees in the creation of learning products and experiences, are all emerging as the next generation of corporate learning, development, and knowledge exchange. Rapid e-learning, if managed properly, will help facilitate this essential transition within corporations."

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