



Kineo Survey Report







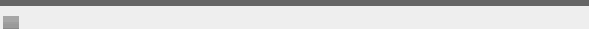



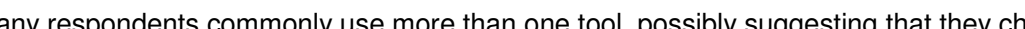
Rapid E-learning Authoring Tools

By Matthew Fox

Rapid E-learning continues to be a major topic of discussion in the learning and development space in 2006. With a major expansion of tools available and an increased range of features and complexity, we thought it was a good time to take the temperature of the market place and find out what people are really doing in rapid e-learning, and which authoring tools are helping them do it.

Our brief survey was published in June 2006. In it we asked respondents about: what tools they use; the factors that influence which ones they buy; how many people are skilled in using them; the time taken to become competent; what type of content they develop; how they use that content; and what features are missing in general from existing tools.

Which tools are used?

1. Which of the following authoring tools do you use?		
		Response Percent
Breeze		15.2%
Authorware		7.6%
Audacity		3%
Lectora		19.7%
Atlantic Link		15.2%
Toolbook		1.5%
Capitivate		39.4%
Raptivity		1.5%
Wink		1.5%
Powerpoint		40.9%
Other		68.2%

Our survey showed that many respondents commonly use more than one tool, possibly suggesting that they change and adopt the most appropriate tool for the task.

While PowerPoint and Captivate stole the show by some distance, we found the response quite fragmentary with Atlantic Link, Breeze and Lectora bring up the second row.

In the 'Other' category we saw a wide range of responses including, amongst others: Articulate, RapideL, Flash, Dreamweaver, Easy Generator, ReadyGo, Course Genie, BuildIt, Camtasia, Dialogue Design.

Kineo Insight: There's no clear winner in the tools market – not yet, at least...

How well embedded are rapid authoring skills?

Our second question asked about the number of people in the organisation skilled in authoring.

Talk about extremes - respondents were split between five or less and a hundred or more. In the latter case this was generally where the organisation was a specialist developer or was an academic institution where academics are heavily involved in producing content.

What factors influenced the tool(s) that have been purchased?

4. How important are/were the following factors in choosing an authoring tool for your organisation?						
	very low	low	medium	high	very high	Response Average
Price	10%	10%	49%	22%	10%	3.13
Vendor reputation	3%	10%	31%	39%	16%	3.56
Ease of use	0%	5%	6%	27%	62%	4.46
Ability to incorporate existing content	6%	8%	19%	32%	35%	3.81
Ability to incorporate graphics and media	0%	2%	8%	40%	51%	4.40
Ability to publish SCORM/AICC compliant courses	2%	6%	8%	27%	57%	4.32
Ability for multiple users to work simultaneously	8%	27%	11%	19%	35%	3.46

While price was not the most important factor in the decision making process when buying a tool, ease of use stood out as key. Adherence to standards such as SCORM or AICC and the ability to bring in different media were also ranked as important.

Vendor reputation was seen as important but not critical, while the ability to import existing media was also seen as crucial.

Kineo Insight: don't buy your tool on price alone – if it's not easy to use, you'll pay for it several times over...

Time to competency

Often a hidden cost when bringing on board new technology, the time to become competent in authoring with a new tool should more often be a decisive factor in the purchasing decision. It can also have a significant impact on whether the tool is properly embedded and adopted for use in the organisation.

For most of our respondents the learning curve to become competent took from three to five days (41%), though another large group felt competency came within two (35%).

Kineo Insight: Don't forget to budget for this at least three person days per author as time to competency in your initial costs for rapid e-learning.

Content areas

Rapid e-learning appears to have no boundaries in terms of subject matter. While systems / IT training tops the rankings at 66% (not a surprising result in view of the popularity of Captivate amongst our respondents), induction training (52%), compliance (50%) and product knowledge (63%) all make a strong showing. Coaching (35%) and customer service (40%) also feature quite high, while in the popular 'other' category we saw a wide range of respondents clustered around higher education, basic skills, policies and procedures and technical training. Health and defence also made an appearance in the list.

Kineo insight: there seems to be no topic area that can't be considered for rapid e-learning, with the right tool.

www.kineo.co.uk

Kineo Report: Rapid E-Learning Authoring 5

Not to be copied, reprinted or redistributed without permission. ©Kineo 2005

Uses of rapid authoring tools

By far and away the most common use of authoring tools was either as a part of blended solutions (81%) or for straightforward standalone applications (82%). As many as 70% of respondents use tools as a rapid response to emerging business needs. However only 40% use tools to help internal subject matter experts produce their own e-learning. We expect this area to grow as organizations seek to tap into and reuse knowledge from experts more effectively.

Other interesting categories that were flagged include 'throwaway learning' for very short-lived initiatives and adding course material which is expensive to maintain and update to keep costs low.

Kineo Insight: If you have an authoring tool, and are not encouraging your subject matter experts to use it, you may be missing an opportunity to get your learning to market quickly – especially if information changes rapidly, and the people best placed to create disposable learning are your experts.

Tool wish list

People reported a wide range of 'nice to have's' in our extra features question. Highlights include:

- Outputting content to XML
- Collaborative authoring environments
- More templates for quick start development
- Embedded best practice design principles

- Better compliance with accessibility requirements
- Publishing workbooks or handouts
- Better reporting capabilities
- Stretching into gaming design for learning

Clearly most tools offer adequate functionality, but there is no 'killer app' out there which does most of what authors want.

Kineo Insight: Tool companies take note, there's a lot more that needs to be done, especially in helping authors get off the starting blocks with some hard-coded design.

Conclusions

So what are the headline conclusions from the survey? For us, the key messages that emerge are:

- The tools market is fragmented and user loyalty tends to swing to a range of tools. Authors pick the best one for the job; it's as simple as that
- Cost, ease of use, interoperability are the most important factors in the buying decision
- Time to authoring competency tends to be quick for most people and can be as little as two days – a credit to the simplicity and usability of most tools. This factor alone brings the soft implementation costs significantly down compared to previous generation tools – but don't forget to budget for them nonetheless
- Rapid authoring appears to be able to make an impact in many important subject areas and can be used in a wide range of delivery including standalone and blended approaches. There are few barriers to using it for key learning and development initiatives
- There seems to be extensive scope for enhancing and improving tools both technically and in terms of how they guide best practice design. Perhaps the tool companies need to undertake more research with their customer base?

Kineo will be devoting more space to rapid authoring in the coming months, including some exciting new services in this area addressing many of the items on our survey wish list. If you are interested in finding out more, drop us a line at info@kineo.co.uk or call us on +44 (0)870 3830003.

www.kineo.co.uk

www.kineo.co.uk

Kineo Report: Rapid E-Learning Authoring 8

Not to be copied, reprinted or redistributed without permission. ©Kineo 2005