



## Mind the Gap! –How to ensure that global e-training meets local requirements

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**U**S visitors to the London Underground are frequently puzzled by the loud-speaker announcement, “Mind the gap!” Some simply scratch their heads. Others think it an advert for low-cost designer clothing (The GAP, Ltd.), and, as they stumble into the train, they mumble, “I should *watch my step!*”

Exiting the tube and coming to the street the visitor is again warned in large letters painted just beyond the curb, “Look right.” The visitor looks to the right, sees no traffic coming, but then cannot resist the cultural imperative to look carefully to the left as well. This look left takes just enough time for one of those famous London black taxis to come bearing down the other way. The visitor quickly jumps back on the curb, wondering, “When will Brits discover that the world is moving in a different direction?” The British do know which way things move and are courteously trying to save our lives while we are making them wrong for being as they are. There is a *cultural gap* here.

Winston Churchill had this in mind when over fifty years ago, he spoke of Britain and the US as “two great nations divided by a common language.” Cultural gaps can exist even when we speak “the same” language.

### **How do we “mind” the cultural gap?**

Let’s look at this cultural gap as it relates to the challenge of creating, marketing and implementing e-Learning on a global basis. Our focus will be largely on B2B (business to business) e-Learning, though much of what we discuss is even more critical in a B2C and B2E (business to customer and business to employee) context. This paper will help you know better how to:

1. Share knowledge across a diverse organization, to ensure that global strategies have a local element
2. Incorporate an understanding of cultural diversity in global strategy

3. Overcome language limitations in a global organization

e-Learning is fast approaching the apex of the hype curve. Its chief providers are busy creating brand recognition for integrated solutions to corporate training needs. The shake out will soon eliminate contenders who haven’t found their own niche. Corporate confidence will demand and accept only products that will work well, and that their internal and external customers will find easy to use and desirable.

Many corporations were burnt by another recent hype cycle, that of KM (knowledge management). David Hakken, author of *Cyborg@Cyberspace*, speaks of KM in frank terms as “the four-ton dead stinking elephant of Northern European and US business<sup>1</sup>.” He points out that many of the highly touted KM products and efforts proved to have a remarkably short shelf life. They were highly oversold, fraught with technical problems, and attempts to implement them resulted in considerable organizational anxiety. KM efforts in many organizations have ceased or have been radically scaled down in structure and expectations. The ones that have succeeded have paid careful attention to their purposes, planning, marketing, execution and the corporate culture in which they are used.

Similar factors gnaw unseen at the foundations of e-Learning. This paper does not intend to exterminate all of them, but to simply to set a trap for one of them, cultural incompetence. In the globalization and localization of e-Learning ROI may be king, but it will not rule long without attention to cultural detail.

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<sup>1</sup> In a presentation at the ISAGA2000 Conference in Tartu, Estonia, July 2000. The book is published by Routeledge, 1999.

### Why globalize e-Learning?

e-Learning is now a product in the world marketplace. Like any other product, end-users deserve to get a product that “works” in the environment for which it is purchased or created. If our markets are global, so our product must be globally viable. When it comes to online training and performance support e-Learning recognizes that in a global market:

- Learning & teaching styles differ culturally
- Learning content & its application differ by region & market
- It is possible to add value to a product by taking advantage of the wisdom found in a variety of cultural settings via new electronic media.

### There is a globalization gap in e-Learning

The soft skills e-Learning market is growing twice as fast as the IT (information technology) sector and will outpace it by 2003. Despite this, and despite the fact that learning and its application in the soft skills are more culturally vulnerable, there is little to encourage the customer that the e-Learning he or she is acquiring or creating will be culturally competent. To date online globalization has been largely about e-commerce websites, not about e-Learning.

Recently we surveyed 12 major providers of e-Learning services by phone to ask about their cultural strategy and practices. The results of the query were disheartening. They revealed that most content is being rapidly acquired or created without a cultural strategy. Because the market is so hot, existing program material, courses, workbooks are being quickly digitized and sold. Culturally inept material does not improve by being put online!

To date we have been in a transitional situation in which users of many CBT and Internet/intranet courses communicate largely by written text. This gives the illusion that cultural differences are far fewer and less significant than they are in fact. As the media become richer, via new broadband Internet and WAP technologies the cultural gap will grow more obvious.

### Whose job is it?

Among the provider organizations we surveyed, some were largely ASPs (application service providers), organizations that created and sold software to use in creating e-Learning programs. Others were LSPs (learning service providers), organizations that created both software and designed e-Learning curricula and integrated systems that either they or their customers would host.

Generally speaking, the ASPs felt that it was their customer's responsibility, as curriculum and content provider, to pay attention to cultural issues if they found these relevant. One ASP representative put it this way: “We provide the car. It doesn't matter to us what you play on the radio.” Actually, I expected him to say,



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“It doesn't matter where you drive it,” but his answer was even a step further removed from understanding that the learning medium also bears a cultural message about the nature of learning and the desirable and non-desirable characteristics and practices of the learner.

LSPs that we interviewed also tended to see culture as the customer's responsibility or as a content area on its own rather than a pervasive feature of all training design and content. Both the providers and their B2B customers seemed more focused on global roll out than globalization. Customers appeared to be lured mostly by economies of scale and the need to stay *au courant* with their competitors.

We will contend here that cultural competence should be embedded all along the value chain of e-Learning.

### Minding culture vs. learning cultures

While there are numerous online courses *about cultures* that both service providers and purchasers of e-Learning and might do well to digest, we are concerned here with how culture as a dynamic bears on *all* of the e-Learning content and design that cross over cultural boundaries.

If you have no cultural differences in among the intended end-users of your learning program, this information is not for you. However, it is worth noting that culture itself is a multifaceted dynamic. Though we are discussing globalization and localization primarily in terms of ethno-linguistic dimensions, consideration of other diversity factors such as race, gender, age, profession, educational level, class, organizational culture, etc. can be as important here as they are in everyday organizational life and successful marketing.

### **The vision**

While each organization will have its own vision or mission statement about its e-Learning goals, cultural competence ought not be left out of it. For example, a vision for culturally competent integrated e-Learning effort might read something like this:

*“To provide content and processes that enable each e-learner to acquire & apply knowledge and skills with comparable effectiveness and to be fairly evaluated on his or her performance, whatever his or her language, culture or location.”*

Culture is not static. Nor does respect for the culture always mean that we do not challenge the way things are done or the way learning takes place in our own or others' cultures. After all, training programs exist for us to learn from each other. But, successful teaching requires understanding and using the learning skills and preferences of the learner, as well as challenging him or her to reach out in new directions. Teaching that does not engage successfully with the student either fails or is seen as cultural imperialism or both.

### **The path to successful localization**

From the experience of website Globalization, we learn that it is hard for centrally created and disseminated education to be locally responsive, while fully decentralized education is likely to be costly and inconsistent in its output.

This suggests that the organization that wants globalized and localized e-Learning will probably do best by keeping a degree of central control, but exercising it through a globally representative team. The role of this central team is to empower local teams and professionals to cooperate in the development of the local product.

From a technical point of view the central team can create consistency and reliability, by building a robust infrastructure that works in a user-friendly way on everyone's platforms. From a cultural point of view there needs to be a persistent, consistent and responsive strategy that sets and enforces clear process guidelines. Appendixd to this paper is an interview conducted by the author with a representative of an LSP organization who was able to clearly articulate such a strategy from the service provider's point of view.

### **The changing paradigm of learning**

Everyone, from the central team to the individual local contributor, needs to be educated and aware of the cultural impact of e-learning on the learning process in general. This is known as “culture general” knowledge, as distinguished from the more detailed “culture specific” information that is needed for localization by the local team.

e-Learning is a culture shift *for all cultures*, but how we make the shift in different locations may be culturally quite diverse.

So as not to belabor what many readers already know, below is a quick chart of the elements of this paradigm shift. They not only affect e-Learning programs but also education in general. The table is admittedly stereotypic in its presentation of both new developments and traditional learning. Though classroom learning has been shifting in many of the directions and incorporating technologies that e-Learning now embraces, the table is still useful as a picture of how radically the paradigm is shifting.

Traditional learning	➡	E-Learning
There is a time for learning & a time for working	➡	Lifetime learning, continuous learning, performance improvement tools
There is a fixed canon of knowledge	➡	Continuous update & managed knowledge
Teacher sets everyone's curriculum	➡	Learner designs curriculum according to needs
Listen & wait for the information one needs	➡	On-demand packets
Teacher, professor	➡	Coach, facilitator, tutor
Quiz, final evaluation	➡	Ongoing feedback & assessment against pre-assessment & goals
Liberal, learning for learning's sake	➡	Bottom line-driven
Physical campus	➡	Geographically dispersed learners
Tenure is rewarded	➡	Tenacity & flexibility are rewarded
Reactive to environment & events	➡	Interactive with environment & events
Teacher hands information on to student	➡	Multidirectional, networked discussion and exploration of content & processes

Table 1: The learning paradigm shift

***There is no “one size fits all”***

e-Learning technology must learn to do what the good teacher has always done. It must respond to the needs and learning styles of the learner, and speak in language and images that he or she can understand and use. At the same time it must challenge the boundaries of the familiar to expand the horizons of knowledge and deepen skills.

***Defining the Globalization Process***

For the sake of consistency we will follow the definitions created by the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA)<sup>2</sup>. They are already widely used for the globalization of e-commerce. We will explore their functionality for the globalization of e-Learning particularly as a B2B or B2E product.

Let us look at them one at a time.

***1. Globalization***

Globalization per se is not a new concept or practice. Jesuit missionaries to India and China in the 16th century understood most of these dynamics. They looked to what was the essence of their “product,” adapted it to Brahmin and Mandarin life styles, and translated their message into locally understandable terms. They were successful enough to be a threat to both local management and to headquarters. They were destroyed by their competitors and persecuted by the “managers of their end users.” Essentially had a marketing problem on both ends and no teleconferencing to resolve it.

Globalization remains the same in principle, but what is new today is the technology by which it is taking place. What is new is the number of people who must now work in a global environment. What is new is the necessity and extent teamwork across cultures, functions and governments.

<sup>2</sup> See: [www.lisa.org](http://www.lisa.org)

LISA describes Globalization as the overall process that includes the both internationalization and localization (including translation) throughout the organization's diverse markets. After proper internationalization and product design, globalization addresses the business issues associated with taking a product global such as providing marketing, sales and support in the world market. International offices and overseas partners must be involved, and technology complemented with processes that insure quality, reliability and accountability.

## 2. Internationalization

Internationalization is the process of designing and implementing a product that is as culturally and technically "neutral" as possible, and therefore more easily be localized for a specific culture or cultures without major re-design. In short, internationalization makes the product scalable in order to reduce time and development costs in other markets.

This is far more challenging to instructional designers of soft skills programs than to those creating technical training, though it is important for them as well, because as noted earlier, every process carries a cultural message.

LISA goes on to tell us that internationalization sets up proper content design: text, graphics, applications and database structures that make localization easier and more accurate. In the process, the matrix is tested to insure appropriate functionality across all languages and markets. Finally, maintenance and updating processes that support all versions must be put in place and coordinated.

## 4. Localization

Localization means modifying the actual content, design and style of delivery of a specific product to address locale-specific market requirements. It requires both culturally aware instructional design and accurate local input.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For details of intercultural learning design see our earlier paper: "Online: The challenge for interculturalists and diversity specialists" available at: <http://www.diversophy.com/archive/GSIDownloads/online.pdf>

Localization may have to address local legal issues around personnel management, privacy, etc. that differ from one country to another, as well as simple matters like how users' names are appropriately expressed when addressing them online. Coaching and facilitation must be able to respond to user interaction in the user's own cultural and linguistic idioms.

Can a cultural learning style differ so much that an introduction to learning style and values is necessary? The question deserves to be raised and answered in each instructional design.

Language translation is only the most visible part of localization. It also requires adjusting the GUI (graphical user interface) to handle local measurements (i.e. metric or imperial systems), time and date formats, currency symbols and valuations, as well as telecommunication protocols.

This can include also modifying the HTML (hypertext mark-up language) This is the language used to compose pages which can be read by an internet browser, the standard tool for most of the e-Learning now under development. It may also require revision of the tags for search engines, resource files for Web applications, Web database content, plus graphics, and even video and audio files. It is essential to have a system that is able to accept input, perform a search, and index data correctly from languages with different character sets.

Localization also selects relevant help, tutorial examples, and search criteria. It includes testing the product or Web site in global operating environments and conducting quality-assurance testing on the localized product to ensure it is effective and user-friendly.

Here are some common dimensions that the user will quickly notice that need attention in the internationalization and localization:

### a. Text display

Other character sets, the length of text and its directionality may all affect art and layout. Some countries read text from right to left or in columns from top to bottom. For instance, a Middle Eastern marketing campaign for detergent showed dirty laundry on the left,

clean laundry on the right and box of detergent in the middle between the two piles of clothing. Arab viewers were confused about the marketing message since they read text from right to left.

Most languages require up to 25% more text than the comparable information uses in English. The internationalized design needs to provide space for this.

### ***b. Icons, graphics & colors***

Mail boxes, salutes, hands, feet commonly used as symbols for email etc. have different forms or connotations, including unpleasant ones, in other countries. Colors chosen for graphics and backgrounds may also send a message that is either residually or explicitly incongruent or unpleasant. As video clips become more common, it is important to recognize that the richer the input, the more culturally visible and vulnerable it is.

### ***c. Translation***

Adaptation and translation of language are a growing concern online. Currently the majority of the world's English speakers speak English as a second language. Within a couple of years the majority of public Web users will prefer to communicate in a language other than English. These are also the people who will be involved in e-Learning.

Translation takes content from one language and puts it into another. In eLearning, this cannot simply be a mechanical or a word-for-word replacement process. A computer translation algorithm cannot convey the overall meaning of the content in a culturally sensitive manner to the end-user's language. Translation requires meticulous hands-on human attention to cultural nuances and deviations as well as to needed style changes. Even with the best talent it is a tricky process. *Traduttori traditori*, the Italians say. The translator is always in some way a traitor.

In addition to the content of a course, companies need to consider translating the product documentation and help systems when preparing a learning product for another culture.

Native English speakers need to learn to speak and write ESL. A corporate language is not necessarily a fair language. It allows the dominant speakers to dominate and to NOT learn what is going on in other language groups. It sends the dominated underground with unanswered questions and systemic problems.

Since 1992 the Canadian Minister of Public Works has provided a handbook of the rules of *Plain Language: Clear and Simple* in both English and French<sup>4</sup>. Compare:

***Instituting such ameliorative linguistic procedures will provide and extraordinary opportunity for e-learning product enhancement.***

with

***Using plain language can make your online course much better.***

### ***Localization is good business.***

The more corporations understand that success is directly linked to the success of their stakeholders, e.g., vendors, suppliers, unions, government, the more they will offer their learning resources to their value chain partners. In many cases this means a jump into other areas of local culture that do not share the corporate global outlook, procedures and expertise.

Information can be dynamic. It can need to be updated on a daily basis if necessary. It also needs to remain interactive and functional. Unlike a book that, if successful, undergoes editions every couple years, online interactive media, if they are to add value, are constantly being reshaped at the same time that they must continue to function online successfully. Information must be up-to-date for the area in which it will be read and applied.

### ***Learning & Stories***

What is culture and how is it best conveyed and managed? Definitions abound. Our favorite comes from a children's book and runs like this:

***"The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to***

<sup>4</sup> Available from the Canada Communication Group Publishing, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9, ISBN 0-660-14185-X.

*you, care for them. And, learn to give them away where they are needed.*

***“Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other’s memory. This is how people care for themselves.”***

Barry Lopez, *Crow & Weasel*

Amy Zuckerman, an instructional design professional at DigitalThink, a major supplier of e-Learning designs and implementation to corporations, points out that “E-Learning is *both* a fast problem-solver and a means of sharing stories” People need stories and examples of “how things are done around here,” in order to solve the problems they face survive and succeed in their environment.

The interactivity of mentor and student and among students themselves, enabled by e-Learning, encourages the use of both these features more effectively than traditional learning technology.

Stories embody culture while theory strips it away. Theory is both important and useful, but when crossing cultures, it is the story sharing that is essential and easily overlooked as a major part of the problem solving. Sharing knowledge in terms of experience and perception across a diverse organization is what bridges the culture gap. Mediating this exchange is an important part of online mentoring.

### **Promise and perils**

While e-Learning is seen by organizations as a strategy to unite globally distributed workforces—a tool for cultural unity—“unity in diversity” is not yet an applied value in the field.

Culturally appropriate and well-designed e-Learning will build loyalty among end users to the process and the organization. It will be an important component of global ERP (enterprise resource planning).

All this requires culture KM capability, relational databases capable of delivering tacit knowledge about culture in explicit ways just in time. Well-managed and culturally sensitive e-Learning is likely to be the way that the delayed promise of KM will finally reach us.

Audiences, particularly in developing areas of the world are eager for education in order to participate as equals and real players in the economic and geopolitical scheme of things. But both they and we are entitled to ask what the cultural will costs be to them.

Unmanaged cultural gaps will send a message of behavior and undermine confidence. Today’s “cyber immigrants” or “electronic expatriates,” those folks who are daily working abroad from their home base, will experience subtle cultural domination and silent culture shock. They will sense that their own cultural resources and personal identity are being devalued. They will be right.

As a result, organizations lose local competence and cooperation and the value added that diversity management can bring.

### **A vision and a strategy is required**

A global bottom-line cultural e-Learning strategy should include the following elements:

1. Setting standards of cultural competence for instructional design & technical implementation
2. Putting an effective globalization/ localization team and process in place
3. Searching out & acquiring content that is already culturally competent where it is available
4. Developing culturally competent online materials, coaching, facilitation & support
5. Making cultural competence & transparent language part of your brand

Another commentator has expressed it well,

***“Management’s mission is to combine a series of discrete, unlinked and unmeasured training activities into an enterprise-wide process of continuous and globally distributed learning that directly links business goals and individual learning outcomes. We believe the Internet and its distributive architecture will, for the first time give winning corporations the power to reach this goal.”***<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> McCrea, Fred, et. al., “Riding the big waves, A white paper on the b2b e-learning industry.” Thomas Weisel Partners LLC.

In the rush for content, off-the-shelf content libraries will not be culturally improved by being put online. Intelligent web-optimization of content with appropriate interactivity and personalization is where the culture value added can occur.

In order for this to happen, organizations need to set standards of cultural competence for instructional design & technical implementation. A robust functionality must be a goal met in the globalization localization process.

The digital divide – organizations have the resources and the motivation to close this gap in the availability of technology and connectivity. In the meantime the digital divide protects fragile cultures from assault until culturally appropriate materials are developed for them.

### ***The possibility***

Despite the rise and fall of hype, there is a truth worth fighting for here. For the first time in history, universal, multicultural, learner-centered education is not simply an ideal, but within our reach, if we but grasp it. Grasping the nettle of culture is part of the bargain.

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## Appendix

### Globalization & localization in training design & delivery

George Simons ([gsimons@diversophy.com](mailto:gsimons@diversophy.com)) interviewed Kay Baldwin-Evans, SkillSoft International Ltd ([kbaldwin-evans@skillsoft.com](mailto:kbaldwin-evans@skillsoft.com)), a leading supplier of e-Learning in the "soft skills". The interview took place in connection with a recent e-Learning conference in London. The purpose of this interview was to determine what an organization might look for and expect from a cultural perspective in contracting a vendor or supplier for the development of e-Learning that is both global and local.

**Simons** *SkillSoft is one of the leading providers of "soft skills" eLearning programs. How do you go about making sure that the cultural components of these programs are sensitively managed?*

**Baldwin-Evans** At SkillSoft, one of the ways we address the issues of globalization and localization in training design and delivery is by working with in-country partners. These partners take the content and "localize" it for their particular country. Usually this means translating the audio, modifying the text to recognize different cultural and speech nuances, changing business and legal terms, altering or changing some of the graphics and configuring the delivery to best meet the needs of the client in whichever country they are operating.

For example, SkillSoft uses high quality photographic images in their course content. Having been developed initially in the USA some of the graphics (such as in some of the teamwork courses) are very American, e.g., baseball visuals. Clearly this wouldn't work in other countries so this visual is changed in most cases to soccer visuals, or in cases where there is another, different more widely recognized sport, to that. We change the graphics to reflect different dress styles and change the names of our fictional characters to be more reflective of a local name.

The reasoning behind this is that the effective "learning" of soft skills is about observation and behavior modeling and therefore the student must see the situations or graphics that are representative of their own culture or working environment.

**Simons** *Does the so-called digital divide affect the delivery of eLearning as a cultural factor?*

**Baldwin-Evans** In terms of delivery, SkillSoft offer a variety of delivery options: Internet, intranet and CD-ROMs. Extranet hosting- where we host the content for customers - is also very popular. In countries where the Internet is not widely used and organizations do not have widespread intranet, we deliver all course content via a CD-ROM. In countries, where the technology is far advanced, in Scandinavia, for example, we deliver the training via the Internet or an organization's intranet. The two key issues are accessibility and consistency. Organizations need to ensure that the programs can be used by as many people in the organization as possible, irrespective of the technology infrastructure. From a consistency perspective, no matter what delivery medium the learner uses, the look, feel and instructional integrity of the programs must be the same.

**Simons** *What if your customers, for financial or other reasons, want to do this kind of cultural adaptation in-house? How would you advise them?*

**Baldwin-Evans** If a client would rather make "cultural" changes themselves, we offer a consultancy service in which an implementation expert will work with each client and advise on the changes necessary. This will typically involve the consultant spending time with the client working through material. Additionally, we are licensing our tool set to major customers so that they can make content changes themselves if they would rather do it this way.

**Simons** *Cultural adaptation is a very tricky matter. Are there any other safeguards you would take to avoid "cultural disasters?"*

**Baldwin-Evans** A rigorous feedback and Quality Assurance program complements these efforts. Independent business professionals and learning specialists based in the countries where the training is to take place assess the content to ensure that the translation and other changes are right for that country.

We have a variety of different delivery options to suit all clients—whatever is best for them regardless of the country they are in. In addition, as mentioned above, we have a number of services in place to ensure that the training delivered meets the local needs of the people using it whilst ensuring that the content is global. This means that for global, multicultural organizations, the same content is delivered to all employees, in the most culturally sympathetic way for each country. This is obviously very important to ensure consistency of learning, although the delivery mechanisms might be different.

In addition, we have accreditation from a number of industry bodies in the UK and USA and we are in the process of seeking accreditation in other countries.

**Simons** *Where can you get the learning materials for all of these different end-users?*

**Baldwin-Evans** We have the largest range of generic web-based interpersonal and business skills courses available in the world. The benefit of this is that we can offer what is essentially a "knowledge or learning repository" to organizations on an enterprise wide basis.

**Simons** *How do you alert your clients to the cultural consequences of global e-Learning?*

**Baldwin-Evans** We spend considerable time with our multicultural clients to ensure that the cultural differences in each of the countries our training is going to be delivered are discussed and reviewed against the standard content.

In addition, we offer a number of courses as part of our curriculum on managing cultural diversity and cultural awareness, which our clients can use to increase their awareness and knowledge in this area. At the moment these are aimed primarily at the US market but as with all our courseware, we will be localizing them for individual markets in the near future.

**Simons** *Content is only one dimension that needs cultural attention. How about the way people differ in their learning styles and preferences. Can e-Learning take this into account?*

**Baldwin-Evans** Ensuring that the training meets the needs of the individual doing the learning is a key challenge. In multicultural organizations, there will be cultural differences in the way people learn. If our training is going to be effective therefore, we have to ensure that the courses reflect this.

In addition, in interpersonal and business skills there are differences in what is acceptable behavior that varies from country to country. Compare the formality of the Japanese leadership style compared to the often-informal style of the US culture, for example. To ensure that global training is effective these differences must be accounted for, but it has to be done on a country-by-country basis, which in itself is challenging and often expensive.

Maintaining quality at all times is key. When content is localized, it is critical to ensure that any of the inherent quality of the content is not lost and is absolutely right for the "local" audience. This requires significant investment in time and resource to ensure the right people with the right skills, in both training and cultural understanding, are assessing the content for each local audience

**Simons** *What are the advantages of globalizing and localizing training?*

**Baldwin-Evans** Global organizations can train all their employees, at the same time, with the same content, cost-effectively. For organizations wanting consistency of learning, for large groups of employees across a number of different countries, this is a huge benefit.

Localizing the "global" content ensures that whilst all employees learn with the same basic courseware, they have it adapted to their local needs. This means they are more receptive to it, and will therefore learn better.

Today many organizations frequently move employees around the world. Globalized and localized e-Learning means that the trainees can pick up where they left off in any course regardless of where they are or when they want to do it. At SkillSoft we have a learner management system that can track how an employee is doing on any given course—where he or she is in the content, what level of mastery they have achieved, etc. A manager therefore can see how an employee is progressing with their training, regardless of where that employee started the training, where they are based or where they finished it—even if they moved several times while taking a series of courses.

**Simons** *Like many of the companies in this booming e-Learning market, you are expanding rapidly. How does such a company as yours attend to the cultural consequences of cross-border growth in its own make-up? Do you hire for diversity?*

**Baldwin-Evans** In addition to our HQ in the USA, we currently have an international operation based in the UK and an office based in Australia looking after Asia Pacific. In Europe particularly, where we have no local presence ourselves, we go to the market with local partners. The majority of our staff, and in particular our client facing staff have a wealth of experience of training and training in a variety of different cultures.