



How video sharing, web conferencing, and social networking applications can be utilized to create a hybrid enterprise learning content management system

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Abstract

Three of the most widely used web-based technologies online today are social networking (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites), video sharing (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_video_sharing_websites), and web conferencing (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_web_conferencing_software) web applications.

Meanwhile, eLearning is an emerging force gaining more and more popularity in various companies worldwide due to its ability to train employees all over the world cheaply, securely and effectively. With a Learning Content Management System (LCMS), managers can create content, package it into an eLearning package (using SCORM 2004 for example) and deliver it to employees. Once the content has been delivered, managers can view reports on the course performance, see scores on assessments stored in the course, etc.

The country is moving in the obvious direction of merging these incredibly useful web applications together into a common application. And with the merging of these applications comes major wins for each product individually.

Most people have a profile on some sort of social networking website. Whether it is MySpace, Face Book or another site, people typically access one of these sites many times daily.

Video Sharing websites are very informative. People can log-in to You Tube and find anything from how to throw a bowling ball for a strike to how to do a brake inspection in seconds.

And last but not least, web conferencing software provides an easy way for people to connect together from anywhere in the world and share a synchronous computer screen. This is synchronous eLearning at its best – web conferencing software allows an “instructor” to deliver a virtual classroom to all of the “learners,” the web conference participants.

The connection between these three systems into a common connected system is logical for various practical reasons.

Video Sharing and LCMS Integration

Some of the most useful content on the internet today comes in the form of a video obtained by some search into a video sharing website such as YouTube.

The use of these videos should never be underrated and any good LCMS can link videos from Video Sharing sites into trackable eLearning content.

Again, the LCMS can use remote API technology to obtain individual information about the videos from the video sharing application such as creator, ratings, tags, etc.

Web Conferencing provides the online classroom an Enterprise LCMS Requires

Part of a truly complete enterprise content management system is the idea of actual synchronous classroom events led by a manager, classroom instructor, etc. The events have participants who have event participation tracked by the system. The event organizer can also “score” individuals based on their performance and attach it to the event.

Because web conferencing applications provide a virtual classroom with integrated voice over internet, a learning expert can share their expertise in a timed fashion.

The integration between an LCMS and a web conferencing application is clear – the synchronous online events can actually be virtual web classrooms where the event information relevant to the classroom event is linked to the LCMS.

This not only provides an actual classroom to use but prevents the event organizer from having to manually enter fields like “this user attended” or “this user was a no-show.”

Link LCMS eLearning Content to a Social Networking Web Application

One of the key issues LCMS vendors face is trying to introduce helpful content to the learner. Sure you have all this very useful learning content in the system, but who do you give it to? Who needs to know what when?

The problem is all too often the LCMS is self-contained, and the only information the LCMS contains is the information it has obtained since installation.

Here is where the cross between LCMS and social networking applications meet. The LCMS can be remotely accessed using a plug-in to the social networking web application of the user’s choice to provide and track access of eLearning content.

Because many organizations now require the use of social networking software, the integration of the LMS to the learning population in the company introduces no extra layers... just a plug-in you can add to your companies profile automatically.

The eLearning content from the LCMS can be delivered remotely to the Social Networking Application that the company was already using from the start.

Linking Informal eLearning from a Social Networking Application to an LCMS

One of the key uses of social networking applications in the business world today is the ability to store informal eLearning sessions between multiple individuals in remote locations. When a user runs a search trying to find information about a certain topic, the most usable search results usually reside within a discussion (informal eLearning content).

The link is obvious. An API that will synchronously and remotely connect using XML technology can link social networking discussions to eLearning activities. These eLearning activities will contain a combination of materials, the linked discussions, surveys and assessments to achieve a truly integrated and user-involved eLearning experience that the business world has yet to see.

Recommending LCMS content based on Social Networking Profile

Another classic LCMS problem is having lots of rich, useful content... but not having enough ways to recommend appropriate content to the correct parties in your organization. A search may provide a way to find content, but not much of a way to showcase content.

The plug-in to the LCMS system could send very useful profile information along such as to assist in the “recommended” content to learners from the system. Each day as they use do their social networking, they will see and use eLearning content tracked and reportable from the LCMS.

Use Case 1: Social Networking Application integrated with LCMS – Cisco WebEx Connect with Xerceo Enterprise Learning Content Management System 3.0

Cisco WebEx connect is a social networking product with great self-contained features already. But what makes it so much more useful is the secure open API that exposes encrypted communication between any software application both on and off the web.

Xerceo Learn Enterprise Learning Content Management System 3.0, which already contains remote API technology as well, can utilize many of these features. Here is a short listing of the basic ways the LCMS can tie into the social networking application features:

- 1) A desktop launched application with expandable widgets can be linked with the LCMS user management system.



Here in the screenshot you see WebEx's desktop application. There are several “widgets” available in the list.

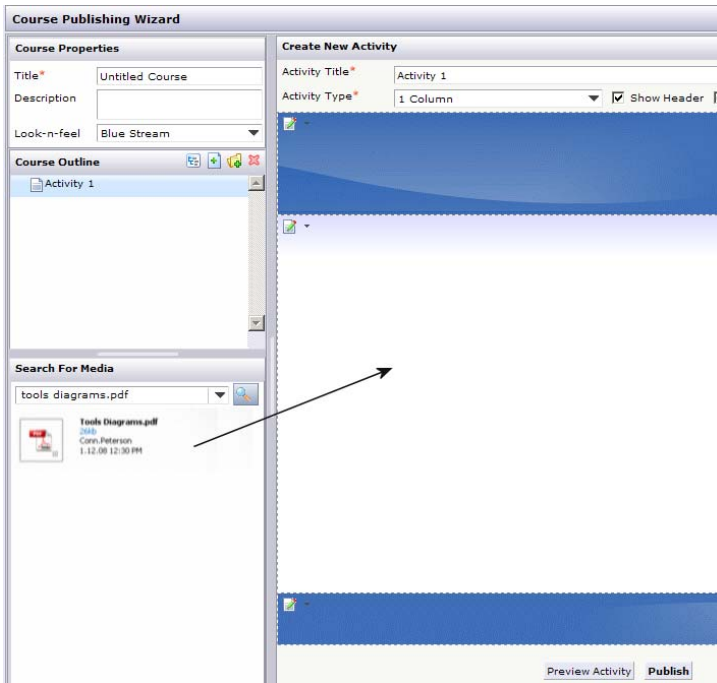
Here the selected widget is the “Contacts” widget which manages a list of work contacts, buddies, etc. with the ability to chat online, email, initiate web meetings with VOIP, etc.

Since the LCMS has a User Management System, the listing of contacts can be non-WebEx connect users based on the LCMS groups the logged in user is in. This provides an excellent way to recommend the WebEx connect application so they too can be connected to the instant messenger.

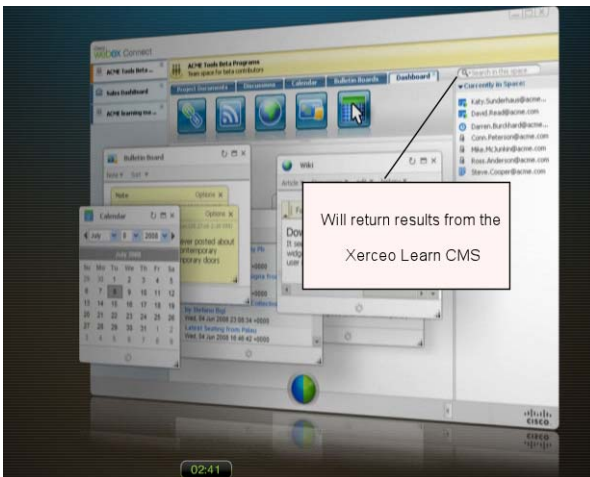
- 2) Content can be shared back and forth between WebEx connect and Xerceo

Since both systems contain a Content Management System, one can integrate both search results from the LCMS to WebEx connect and the search results fired from within the WebEx Connect with the LCMS.

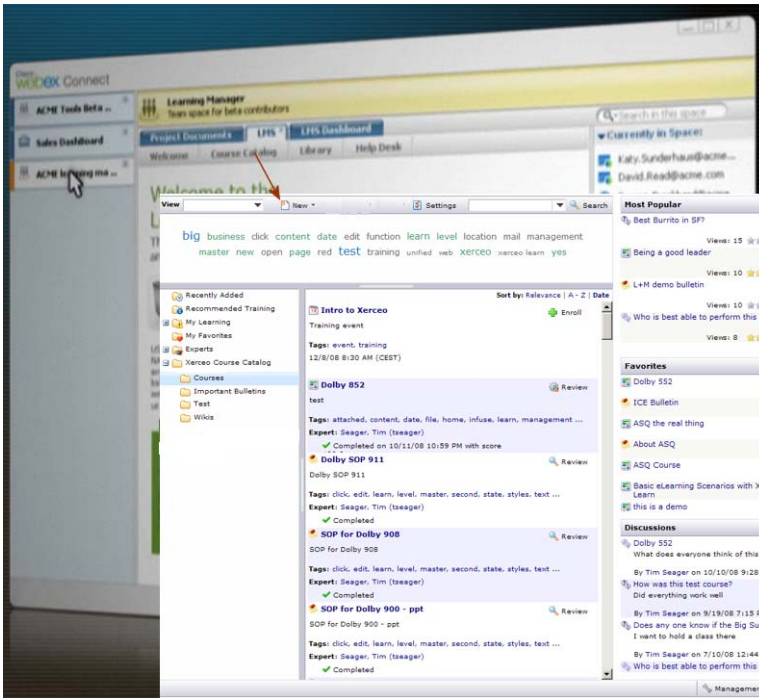
Example 1: Xerceo Course Creator can use a PDF from WebEx connect as content inside a course activity.



Example 2: WebEx search can return results from Xerceo LCMS.



3) The eLearning dashboard for Xerceo can easily be surfaced from within a WebEx community.



Here the particular user of WebEx Connect has several spaces of which they are a member. One of the spaces created is an “LMS” space that is basically Xerceo Learn LCMS exposed from within WebEx Connect.

4) One can create a new WebEx connect widget for current eLearning and recommended content.

Instead of using a Space/Community to surface the LCMS, we can simplify the course launching process by just making a simple widget in the desktop application to show course listing.



We can list any course here based on various properties of the WebEx connect user profile. The LCMS will track the user progress and can report the progress back to WebEx connect.

5) Linking informal eLearning content with Course activities to formalize an informal discussion post, etc.

6) Linking Xerceo Learn LCMS discussion database with the WebEx Connect discussions.

7) Linking Xerceo Learn LCMS synchronous online classroom events to WebEx online classrooms.

About the author:

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