

Cloud Computing – today's means of learning

Sevenoaks, January 2010 – "Cloud Computing" is certainly part of the large IT trend this year. Businesses and organisations access applications over the Internet by subscribing to a supplier on a "Software as a Service" (SaaS) basis. This business model is also gaining more and more supporters in the HR field. IMC UK Learning Ltd. offers the new release of its successful Learning Management Systems (LMS) under the name "CLIX 2010" and hence also a "SaaS solution".

Indeed, the "subscription software" model enjoys great popularity with businesses. In contrast to the classic software business, expenditure does not lie significantly with the company using it, but with the SaaS supplier. It provides its product by means of so-called multi-tenant architecture in which many organisations share horizontally and vertically scalable infrastructure equally. The supplier takes care of the installation, configuration, maintenance and updating of the software. In principle, customers no longer pay for the technology, but for the service, whose quality becomes the focus. Due to the fact that suppliers of SaaS solutions are largely responsible for the seamless operation of an application, they have an increased interest in the reliability of their products. As a consequence, this has led to high quality software: this incorporates continuous application with patches and updates, automatic back-up of files, simple operation of the software and high availability. At the same time, considerable savings develop on the customer side. Absolute IT costs are reduced, investment costs change to operating costs, deployment phases are reduced, access to applications is speeded up and IT alignment optimised. The simple way of up and down-sizing business processes therefore makes SaaS attractive to businesses particularly in economically difficult times.

Even Dirk Thissen, Managing Director of IMC UK Learning Ltd., is convinced that the benefits of learning technologies in the cloud are established as a business model. "In the meantime, there are numerous best practices for SaaS with strong ROI calculations. SaaS can be flexibly adapted to new corporate structures and training requirements, release its own IT and support the concentration on core competencies by transferring business processes to external service providers". "In addition, companies nowadays do not just have a qualification remit with its own employees. External trade partners, suppliers and customers also have to be trained. Since it is considerably easier if all business partners log in to a protected system over the Internet rather than into their own IT infrastructure to exchange the relevant information in a cumbersome manner afterwards."

Medium-sized enterprises, in particular, are offered promising market opportunities with the SaaS model. Small and medium-sized enterprises are highly specialised in their field; IT experts are, by contrast, usually not. SaaS applications and outsourced IT processes therefore meet this need very well. The new CLIX 2010, which as a classic license model is

Contact:

IMC (UK) LEARNING LTD.
Tubs Hill House, London Road
Sevenoaks, KENT TN 13 1BL
Great Britain

Phone: +44 (0)1732 741888
Fax: +44 (0)1732 741500
E-mail: info@im-c.co.uk
www.im-c.com

imc information multimedia communication AG
Altenkesseler Straße 17 / D3
66115 Saarbrücken / Germany

Presse und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Tel. +49 (0) 681 / 9476-302
Fax +49 (0) 681 / 9476-530

E-Mail: presse@im-c.de
Internet: www.im-c.de

offered both as an Application Service Providing (ASP) and SaaS solution, allowing you to use modern software solutions and at the same time concentrate on your core business.

“With the increasing dissemination of SaaS solutions, continues Thissen, the technological aspects of IT applications fade into the background, thus, issues of cost/benefit and the contribution to added value increasingly dominate.” In the end for specialised sectors, it comes down to which SaaS supplier can optimally support the business processes as a service. Which IT architecture is used as the basis for these solutions is subordinate, provided that the basic aspects, for example, data security and service quality are guaranteed. In other words: for the user of a rental car, in essence, only the on-time delivery, period of use, vehicle category, rental costs and condition of the vehicle are relevant, but, however, not a basic orientation of the vehicle technology, much less knowledge about the precise physical functions of petrol engines. SaaS solutions thus foster decentralised decision-making power as well as the autonomy of specialist departments as a “buying centre” for core solutions.

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Press contact:

Ulrike Jungmann
PR/IR-Manager
Phone: +49 (0) 681 9476 0
Fax: +49 (0) 681 9476 530
E-mail: presse@im-c.de

Gareth Walters
Sales and Marketing Director
Phone: + 44 (0) 1732 – 741 888
Fax: + 44 (0) 1732 - 741 500
E-mail: info@im-c.co.uk

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Editor’s Note

IMC is an international leader in providing services and technology for advanced learning and content solutions. A considerable number of large, medium and small enterprises currently benefit from the products and services provided by IMC in achieving training and education for HR development in online academies or corporate universities. These include KPMG, E.ON, Daimler, UBS and NOKIA. Professional training providers and institutions of higher education are further clients of IMC.

With CLIX®, IMC’s learning management system, LECTURNITY®, IMC’s interactive rapid authoring tool, and SLIDESTAR®, an open content platform, IMC is able to provide an integrated and efficient solution framework for learning life cycle management. Using POWERTRAINER®, IMC can set organisations on the path to creating their own eLearning and blended learning solutions. The Start & Learn package® delivers some real eLearning content, an award winning easy-to-use rapid authoring tool and the support and training to create future in-house eLearning content. The success of any ERP, CRM, SCM or software implementation is measured by the effective use of the system, by the end users. With its Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS) LIVECONTEXT® IMC provides pinpoint information to improve quality and increase productivity and speed to competency.

IMC solutions not only cover the operation and design of training and learning processes, the management and distribution of learning content, the management of human capital and the development of skills and competencies, but also the planning and improvement of training resources. All these aspects are complimented by a strong focus on learning management processes, including a full range of management activities, such as design and planning, operation, and analysis and assessment. IMC focuses strongly on business processes and therefore regards learning management as an integral part of today's business needs. IMC clients place great value on IMC's consulting expertise and excellence in building and implementing learning solutions in the fields of technology and content development.

IMC was founded in 1997 by Dr. Wolfgang Kraemer, Frank Milius and Dr. Volker Zimmermann, together with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. August-Wilhelm Scheer, business expert and former university professor. The company's head office is located in Saarbruecken (Germany) and there are further offices in Freiburg, Munich and Berlin (Germany), a branch office in Sydney (Australia), and subsidiary companies in Zurich (Switzerland), Graz (Austria), London (Great Britain) and Sibiu (Romania).