

## Not Just Anywhere: e-Learning Away From The Desk(top)

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### ABSTRACT

One of the great claims of e-Learning is that it is anywhere, anytime. But does anywhere really mean anywhere? It usually means at the desk, or at least at home or in the hotel room. What does anywhere, anytime mean for learners who want to use e-learning on the job and who do not work at a desk?

This paper focuses on the provision of e-learning to manufacturing technicians in a clean-room environment of a large semiconductor plant, but equally could apply to similar environments such as pharmaceutical companies, general manufacturing or indeed the army. The conditions in which these technicians work materially affect not only the delivery of e-learning, the how, but also the content of e-learning, the what. In designing an e-learning solution for them, we faced and met a number of specific challenges:

- Working environment
- Access
- Navigation
- Sustainability

Technicians require information that is easily accessed by the tool (i.e. in the factory, at the point of work). Any eLearning solution must take account of the hardware and network restrictions of the existing infrastructure. The solution we devised involved a series of web-based Job Aids that provide information where it is needed and in a format that meets the unusual conditions of the working environment (e.g. learners learning while clothed in clean-room suits, performing 12-hour shifts, with no easy access to desks or desktops).

Job Aids disseminate consistent, up-to-date information across the factory, maintaining expert learning that might otherwise disappear when experienced technicians leave the area. They reduce the training burden on experts allowing them to be utilised in the most cost-effective manner. Job Aids allow critical information to be stored and accessed from a central location that is distributed via an intranet across the factory. Finally, the solution comes with its own sustaining application that means it can be easily maintained and administered by users themselves so that Job Aids remain current and relevant.

The Job Aids e-learning solution demonstrates the importance of providing e-learning not just anywhere or even everywhere, but rather specifically where it's needed most and where it works best.