E-learning has developed over a long period of time – from its tender beginnings to exorbitant hype and back into the real world; back to a practical and objective understanding of E-learning as a valuable and worthwhile teaching aid.

Classroom Manager can be used to create a personal library of training aids from existing and new digital learning media such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, PDF and other media such as JPGs etc. Furthermore, training programmes for different subjects can be integrated into Classroom Manager and so individual courses can be developed fast and simply using digital learning aids.

This creates a course structure which provides information concerning the training concept's time frames, the degree of classroom-based lessons, required training aids, entry requirements, certification and a diverse range of communication options.

Prior knowledge in practice
Classroom Manager is operated intuitively. This simply means that the process of integrating content or creating and compiling courses is purely logical and little is required of the user.

However, Osnabrück's vocational schools for example, possess extensive knowledge in the field of IT, which can be presupposed of most comparable training institutions. They have all been working with IT for a long time and can thus fall back on comprehensive basic knowledge. Therefore the use of Classroom Manager does not represent a great challenge. The primary objective is, after all, to facilitate learning and teaching and not to complicate matters.

Harmonisation of learning content
A remarkable effect of using learning management systems such as Classroom Manager is the conscious or unconscious harmonisation of learning content. Even when colleagues at a vocational institution work hand-in-hand, this is not the same as working with harmonised training structures. This however can be achieved by using this type of solution. In the case of the vocational schools at Osnabrück, a shared learning structure with uniform content is the declared objective. This is of course highly desirable, but extremely difficult to achieve in the classic learning environment.

Curiosity and motivation
As well as the advantages of Festo Didactic's solution that have already been mentioned, another important synergy effect must be noted. Typically we speak of such effects when in business certain factors have a positive influence. This is no different in education. Learning with the help of new media awakens the student's desire to learn more.
Festo Didactic offers an extensive range of contents, which are important to modern, successful vocational training. One reason for this is the immediate feedback and the possibility of learning whenever and to some extent wherever required. The general affinity that users have with technology is another and the motivation to discover something new in this field is a third. This combination of curiosity and interest together with the digital generation’s almost inborn affinity with technology generates a high degree of motivation – and it is well-known that “vitamin M” is the best teacher.

The bottom line

The use of Festo Didactic’s Classroom Manager at the vocational schools in Osnabrück is an excellent example of best practice in vocational training. It goes without saying that the Classroom Manager can and will be applied in other fields too. This clearly demonstrates the potential for E-learning and just how important development in this direction is. A combination of classic learning and E-learning appears to make something possible that many students and apprentices – much to their chagrin – feel is almost impossible: Learning can be fun and make us want to learn more – painlessly and successfully.

The opportunities for integrating E-learning into modern training concepts are becoming increasingly diverse. eLearning Journal spoke to Günter Willmann from the vocational schools in Osnabrück about the use of Festo Didactic’s Classroom Manager and his own initial assessment.

eLearning Journal: How are E-learning components and content used in your institutions?

Günter Willmann: We have been using the “lo-net” working environment with our students for years (lo-net – teachers online for schools). However the working environment does not provide us with the freedom to establish further E-learning structures. We post work material and student results, but we cannot use WBTOs. This, however, is being further developed with the help of Classroom Manager. Furthermore, for several years we have been allowing pupils to use our software licences at specific times via a VPN access. This has proved extremely successful and will be developed further.

eLearning Journal: When did you start using Festo Didactic’s Classroom Manager and what is your initial impression?

Günter Willmann: Around 200 students are involved and we are still really in the test phase. We have been using the software for about 3 months. The software has been well accepted by users as an additional training aid. They are able to deepen their knowledge and monitor their learning progress. We will continue to extend this platform at our schools; the aim being to use Classroom Manager for the whole school (and the teachers). My colleagues do work hand-in-hand, but our ultimate objective is a common training structure with uniform content for all colleagues.

eLearning Journal: Do you also use the E-learning system for assessment purposes?

Günter Willmann: Not at present, but this will definitely be the case in future.

eLearning Journal: What is your own personal opinion: On the whole, are the teachers and students at your schools better off using an E-learning solution?

Günter Willmann: Yes, I think so, because the motivation to use the structures provided by Classroom Manager has proved extremely positive in all tests.