CASE STUDY:

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Creates online eLearning systems with iAPPS to serve busy practicing professionals

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is an organization of 60,000 pediatricians committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental, social health and well-being of all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. Their division of eLearning is a leader in the specialty medical industry and recognized for using technology and the internet to deliver sophisticated Continuing Medical Education (CME) tools and online course offerings via PediaLink.org, AAP’s online center for lifelong learning.

THE CHALLENGE: Prior to deploying iAPPS, AAP used a legacy system consisting of disparate applications created by different vendors. Each system utilized a different development approach, making ongoing technical maintenance difficult. Furthermore, content updates were both slow and costly as content was often embedded within application code, requiring programmers to make even the simplest content changes. Adding to the pain, AAP’s manual version control required the emailing of MS Word documents among project managers, subject matter experts, and reviewing medical experts, increasing the time-to-market for new courses.

The variety and complexity of their eLearning systems was costing AAP time and money. They required a centralized solution that would meet all of their course development and delivery needs while decreasing costs and reducing the time-to-market. They needed a unified content management system with centrally-managed user authentication and workflow processes that was powerful enough to handle their complex course management needs. It also needed to be easy to use as AAP needed their non-technical users to be able to create, edit, and manage content without the assistance of programmers.

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THE SOLUTION: Bridgeline began the initial eLearning project with a robust discovery phase that reviewed AAP’s legacy courseware, processes and systems. At the close of this discovery process, Bridgeline recommended building a solid foundation and methodology for deploying future courses that leveraged more intuitive and organized information architecture, built on the award-winning iAPPS Content Manager. The redefined Course Model reclassified all course offerings into one of three groups – with each group having a defined interface into the enterprise course management system.

iAPPS’ consistent, uncomplicated user interfaces and intuitive information architecture allows users at all levels to easily manage content and the workflow surrounding it. The rich media management of Content Manager provides categorization and control of images, video, and Flash components, allowing for more engaging courseware. Robust personalization features included course status, bookmarking, answer retention, and personal hooks into the enterprise course system from courses. Course material can now be dynamically presented and changed based on a learner’s background, status, permissions, the path they took, or the feedback they provide.

After developing the new PediaLink interface and course model, the AAP has continued to leverage iAPPS for additional eLearning programs. With Prep Self-Assessment, for example, AAP helps pediatric residents prepare for their board exams by providing questions, answers, detailed critiques, and multimedia related to the Content Specifications of the American Board of Pediatrics.

In addition, the AAP’s newly updated service EQIPP (Education in Quality Improvement for Pediatric Practice) builds on the original course model to utilize a repeatable engine for developing continuing education courses. Now AAP’s eLearning team can set up a new course in just weeks from beginning content entry to going live for students, a major bonus given AAP now manages upward of 80 online courses (many of which are EQIPP), with each course in its own site, data cycle and practical tools for physicians. EQIPP is designed for a continuous cycle of data collection starting with a pre-course test through post-course testing. Participants can monitor their progress and improvement in their core knowledge before, during and after the course. The data also allows them to document how changes in their practice stemming from the course affect their ranking in comparison with other professionals in their county or state.

THE RESULTS: The PediaLink Course Model and EQIPP systems have enabled deep and rich integration between course creators and courseware users. Medical experts are able to focus on content creation instead of technology issues while the course takers benefit through a more engaging and seamless learning experience.

By moving off of their legacy business system and onto iAPPS, the AAP was able to immediately recognize numerous benefits. On the course development side non-technical staff is now empowered to handle course setup, creation, workflow, permissions, and launch of courses. Course architectures consisting of predefined templates make the deployment of similarly structured courses much quicker. These predefined templates provide course developers with a structure while allowing the flexibility of selecting different color schemes and course branding graphics.

Course takers now enjoy a better overall experience with consistent user interfaces and intuitive navigation. The multisite, permission-based management of courses provides a dropdown menu to select a different course so there are no more extra logins or logouts to deal with; the focus is kept on learning.