

looking to NMLMs to give them the learning outcomes and economies of scale that they cannot expect from traditional training.

The multimedia interactive training market, estimated at \$60 billion in North America alone, represents a significant opportunity for Canadian training firms that have the potential to set the standard and become a leading developer and user of high technology training tools. Many studies document the benefits of NMLM and the increased instructional effectiveness resulting from its use. As many potential clients have fewer funds to spend on training, the cost reductions afforded by new media based training will prove to be particularly valuable. Shorter training periods significantly decrease the opportunity cost of training resulting from downtime, while the cost of sending key personnel on training for more than a few days, or the travel cost of trainers, can virtually be eliminated by technology based training. Other benefits offered by the technology include instructional consistency, privacy, effectiveness, increased retention, increased safety, motivation, access and greater enjoyment of the interactive learning experience.

The management and monitoring of training is also being facilitated by the technology. Many training software packages now allow trainers to track the progress of a student through a course. This type of technology is particularly useful in allowing managers to verify their employees' training activity and to identify courses taken, passed or failed. This facilitates the identification of a skills set within an organisation and aids in developing training plans to address any skills gaps.

The flexibility offered by NMLM is attractive in some sectors such as the environment industry, engineering and agriculture, where work is often performed at many sites or in remote areas. Having access to training and skills upgrading tools on site is much cheaper and more efficient than transporting employees to distant training sites. In addition, the self directed nature of NMLM is attractive to medical professionals, engineers and teachers.

Distance education and training will become an important part, both of the education systems of many jurisdictions and the training plans of business. This development is being driven by budget pressures and by new developments in enabling technologies. While experts and non experts alike feel that human contact will not disappear, funding pressure on the education sector and corporate training budgets will nevertheless push