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Industry Standards and Learning Management Systems: Demystifying Standards, Certification and Compliance

White Paper

This white paper addresses the issues of Industry Standards and their role in the e-Learning industry, more particularly how they apply to Learning Management Systems. It explains who the various organizations are and the difference between Certification and Compliance.

It highlights AICC requirements and refers to the necessary specification documents and Web sites.

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AICC, ISM, ADL, AGR, IEEE, LTSC... What's the Deal?

Finding your way among all the acronyms and discerning what is relevant and what is not may seem like a daunting task at times. So what is what in the e-Learning and Industry Standards world?

If you are involved with e-Learning, you may already have been subjected to some sales pitch from system vendors, coupled with the use of a series of acronyms... Most of the time with the emphasis on Industry Standards as THE element for selecting a system. Vendors talk about compliance and certification, often confusing one with the other. They sometimes make technical and administrative statements that are not entirely correct... The fact is, the adoption of e-Learning by the corporate world is still a bit slow and it is not easy to be a vendor these days. There are many vendors and the basic business principle of distinguishing yourself from the competition is more applicable than ever. Industry standards compliance or certification can therefore be a good marketing element when trying to sell a system.

That does not mean that Industry Standards are only a fad or a marketing ploy. On the contrary, Industry Standards are necessary, they are here to stay and they are an excellent thing for the e-Learning industry. However, we need to recognize that everything is not black and white and things are bound to evolve substantially in the near future. Standards for computer-based training have existed for many years. But the Web is merely 10 years old and the early Web was not yet developed enough for sensible e-learning applications, so standards for Web-based training are relatively young. Another factor is that Web technology is evolving faster than organizations can keep up with. This in turn means that current standards may have to change often in view of technological developments. In other words, standards that are applicable today may not necessarily be applicable next year.

Of course, it is desirable to have some degree of stability. This is the main purpose of standardization. But the fact is that new

