

Chapter 11

Web and Internet

A vital resource to support your learning culture is the Internet, specifically the use of hyper linking files and web pages to support information dissemination and learning tools. At the very least each computer at your organization must be on the same operating system, and be powerful enough to support multitasking between software programs. These connections should be able to access the Internet at more than dial-up speed. Expensive networking lines are not required to make this technology work in a learning culture, but modern computer equipment and software are necessary.

An example: We were attempting to centralize our scheduling calendar for training activities at PFA in 2006. We didn't perform a performance analysis of the computer environment prior to making an Intranet based Microsoft Share Point calendar available to fire department personnel.

One afternoon I was meeting with a fire crew to assess their level of ability with this new calendar program, and they told me it wouldn't work for them. I tried to log on and use the calendar from their station, and I couldn't make it work either. This was simply an information technology problem that was rendering our learning culture useless to our target users. From this event our PFA IT staff developed a “roving log-on” and computer upgrade purchase to ensure all personnel had the same platform for access to the PFA Intranet.

If you are fortunate enough to have an IT department, and your own servers to build your web pages on, you are an advanced user. You will be able to develop the

component of strong Web and Internet resources that will make your domain information and learning materials available to your personnel.

If you are wondering how to go about getting a web site setup there are many options for you. For very low cost there are literally dozens, if not hundreds, of providers that set up initial website design for you. Being able to design web sites is not the focus of why you need strong web and internet in a learning culture. The ability to create and manipulate additional WebPages that are tailored for your needs is what you will need, and this is not as difficult as it sounds. There are numerous ways to develop training web pages that support solid domain information, and I've chosen Microsoft Power Point (PPT) as my HTML creation tool. You may find another program, like Dream Weaver or Front Page are HTML editors of your preference.

By using PPT, I layout my web page design just like with any other web development program. The goal is to have accessible solid domain information in one place, where all personnel can find the most current and accurate information regarding their scheduled training classes and events. Your web site is where you can manage your CLEs and provide the domain information, as well as the facilitator guides. Without some kind of web access for your firefighters, you will need to utilize hard-copy and more conventional multimedia offerings.