The eLearning Guild

The learning experience

Leaders in eLearning deliver innovative online events with Adobe® Connect™ to enhance knowledge, expertise, and practice of eLearning professionals

The eLearning Guild
Santa Rosa, California
www.elearningguild.com

The eLearning Guild (The Guild) is the oldest and most trusted source of information and networking for eLearning professionals. The member-driven organization is a community of practice, offering members a wide array of professional-development resources, including face-to-face conferences, research reports, and online events. These are all devoted to the idea that the people who know the most about making eLearning successful are the people who produce eLearning every day—in corporate, government, and academic settings.

A key component of the organization's professional development program offering is the Online Forums series, consisting of ten online conferences annually. These two-day events feature presentations from subject matter experts and focus on different aspects of eLearning. To help ensure high-quality presentations, The eLearning Guild provides each subject matter expert with a session host, who also serves as a presenter coach.

The Guild's leadership commitment in the eLearning field prompted it to adopt Adobe Connect to facilitate its popular Online Forums. "For an organization in our position, it makes sense to use one of the most advanced eLearning platforms available to deliver our Online Forums," says Chris Benz, director of online events for eLearning Guild. "Adobe Connect is a flexible and powerful solution that represents everything we believe is valuable in effective eLearning: accessibility, interactivity, and a compelling learner experience."
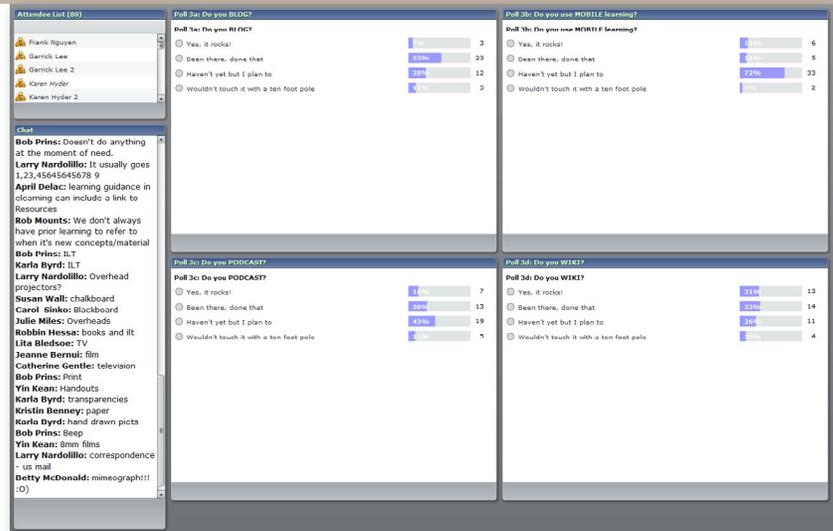
Fostering a community of practice
Each Online Forum attracts hundreds of people from around the world. The conferences are great opportunities for Guild members and other eLearning professionals to demonstrate their expertise, delivering presentations on topics such as instructional design, rapid development, learner engagement, and industry trends.

With Adobe Connect, The Guild offers both live and on-demand content for Online Forum participants. Each event includes an opening and closing session, as well as eight sessions that run concurrently— each session attracting dozens of eLearning professionals—giving participants ample choices. "Online Forum participants can only attend one live session at a time," says Karen Hyder, senior online events host and producer at The eLearning Guild. "So, we use Adobe Connect to record every session to give participants the chance to view all the content when it's convenient, while still enabling them to attend the live sessions that interest them most."

Sessions feature a variety of interactive content and elements to keep attendees engaged. The speaker's audio is broadcast over VoIP, while on-screen functionality in Adobe Connect, such as live polling and real-time chat pods, let participants interact with presenters and other participants to remain actively involved in sharing ideas and input.

Challenge

- Reducing preparation time for new events and sessions
- Expanding reach and establishing online event presence
- Creating a compelling, engaging learning experience for eLearning professionals

Solution

- Provide live and on-demand Online Forums for eLearning professionals worldwide
- Use customized layouts and pods to facilitate highly interactive learning sessions

Benefits

- Increased reach of eLearning content and membership in organization
- Improved access to content, enabling eLearning professionals to attend live sessions or access almost 700 archived sessions
- Improved event preparation efforts through use of persistent meeting rooms and easy customization
- Enhanced interactive and engaging environment for idea sharing
- Eliminated travel costs for event participants
- Provided mobile access to conference and content

Toolkit

Adobe Connect for eLearning

Adobe Connect for Web meetings

A key advantage of using Adobe Connect is that the solution leverages the free and ubiquitous Adobe Flash® Player, which enables event participants to reliably and seamlessly access any live or recorded content from virtually any computer or mobile device without having to download special software. "From the ten live sessions per event, we have nearly 700 recorded sessions in our archives," says Hyder. "Through Adobe Connect, any registrant can view the recorded sessions for one year after the live event. Member-Plus and Premium Members have even more access to the archives; they can access any recorded session from any event for the length of their membership."

Easy set up, instant access

The frequency and depth of the Online Forums creates a substantial amount of preparation work for The eLearning Guild. Each month, the Online Forum features new sessions and topics, which require new content delivered by different presenters. "Adobe Connect streamlines the preparation process for each new session," says Hyder. "Persistent meeting rooms and the different layout setup options in Adobe Connect enable our session hosts to very quickly get presenters up to speed and ready to engage effectively with participants."

With the flexibility of Adobe Connect, session hosts and presenters can easily expand the layout to include additional interactive features, such as Q&A, polling, presentations, and share pods. These features help maintain a high level of interactivity in a session. "Each month, new presenters prepare for their sessions and have little time to learn a new interface. The presentation environment needs to be easy to access and intuitive to navigate," Benz says. "Adobe Connect offers great balance flexibility, making it an ideal environment for organizing an online event with such a variety of topics and presenters."
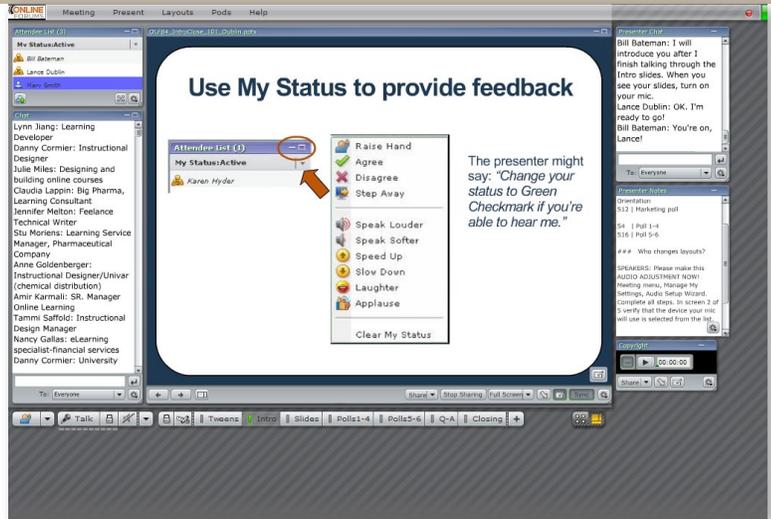
The solution offers a variety of pods—video, chat, polling, and others—that facilitate lively communication and collaboration among presenters, participants, and support staff, both in the session and behind the scenes. Presenters, for example, can rely on a session host and dedicated technical support person to ensure their presentations run smoothly. Support staff use the presenter chat and note pods to hold ongoing dialogues behind the scenes to guide the presenter through the session.

Meanwhile, participants enjoy the interactivity of multiple chat pods and frequent polls conducted during presentations. "In some presentations, we have as many as ten public chats or three or four polls going simultaneously," says Hyder. "It creates a flurry of interaction and communication that completely engages members in the presentation. People have a platform to express opinions and ideas, which is what real learning is all about."

"Adobe Connect is a flexible and powerful solution that represents everything we believe is valuable in effective eLearning: accessibility, interactivity, and a compelling learner experience."

Chris Benz
Director of online events,
The eLearning Guild

True value

Over the years, The Guild's online conferences have proven to be a valuable addition to the organization's service offerings. Using Adobe Connect to conduct Online Forums, the organization can reach hundreds, if not thousands more people, more often each year with important and timely professional development content.

The Online Forums enable presenters and participants to go more in-depth on topics with an interactive environment like Adobe Connect. In addition, Internet-based sessions are easier to schedule and attend, eliminating the travel required for a face-to-face event.

"The Online Forums provide another great service for our members, complementing our face-to face events and other offerings," says Benz. "Adobe Connect has been an important catalyst in moving this program forward because it breaks down the barriers of time, distance, and cost that prevent so many professionals from accessing career-enhancing information in a timely manner."

For more information
*www.adobe.com/products/
adobeconnect*

Adobe