

# NlightN Multimedia - A Real World View



eCommunication: making it work

## Part 10 – the big picture

If you think about most of the learning you'd done, it's obvious that it shares one common thread: social interaction. The school classroom was where we received most of our formal education, but even informal learning tends to have at least some aspect of interaction with others. Whether it's "sitting with Nellie", seeking clarification or reinforcing our knowledge by teaching others, most learning involves person to person contact.

So why is it that most eCommunication expects a one-on-one relationship? In my view, this is the single most important weakness of most eCommunication. Rare indeed is the elearning programme that truly integrates interaction into the experience. "Blended learning" has been one of the buzzwords of the past few years but it has rarely been implemented in any meaningful way.

Why is it so important? Simply because human beings are just that: human beings. The learning process is complex and multifaceted: despite the common conception that all that's required is to present information and it'll be absorbed. This results in "info-dump" elearning and eMarketing that's almost entirely ineffective: unless the intention is to send the audience to sleep!



**Kevin Partner** writes a regular bi-monthly column for **PCPro** ([www.pcpro.co.uk](http://www.pcpro.co.uk)), the UK's leading IT magazine and is an expert in eCommunication in all its forms. He's worked in the field since 1989, has seen fads and technologies come and go but the fundamentals of good practice remain the same.

There are many ways to reduce the effectiveness of eCommunication in general, and elearning in particular, is to pretend that it stands alone. In fairness, some topics can be handled perfectly effectively by stand alone products but these tend to be simple and short; one trick ponies.

In the main, however, for any eCampaign to work, it must include interaction with other human beings.

For elearning this means a combination of some or all of these:

- Telephone mentoring
- User group forums
- Group emailing
- Classroom training
- Online multi-user role plays
- Collaborative projects
- Online games
- Video conferencing
- Teleconferencing

For eMarketing this might also include:

- Follow-up phone calls (increases response rate hugely)
- Low rate phone number
- Product forum
- Testimonials

In fact, all forms of learning can be enhanced by this “multi-media” approach. Even if you’re learning from a book, if that book is supported by an online forum (for example) it is likely to be much more effective. We all want to feel as though we’re being supported by other people dealing with the same issues.