ABSTRACT

This paper gives an overview of the work done at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s (PolyU’s) E-Commerce Laboratory on teaching and learning platforms for electronic commerce (EC), ranging from an E-Mall shopping platform to an agent-based EC Trading Platform. The platforms are designed and developed to encourage the nontextbook learning of EC concepts through active learning in role-playing games. We describe the overall design and development of some EC platforms used for undergraduate business and management students at PolyU. Our experiences indicate that students like the practical components of the course and are interested in a nontextbook approach to learning by playing games. We believe that other business colleges with EC curricula will benefit from this approach.

Keywords: e-commerce; teaching and learning of e-commerce; undergraduate courses

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce (EC) is a buzzword in our daily life. Students majoring in business and management have the foundation of a traditional business education. They will benefit if they gain an added set of skills in EC. An understanding of EC is valuable knowledge for their future careers. However, teaching and learning EC is so new that it is a new challenge for most university teachers. Most are still trying to figure out how best to incorporate EC into their existing school curricula and introduce it to students. In addition to a traditional approach using textbooks to teach the EC concepts to students in class, the Department of Management and Marketing at PolyU developed several prototypes to support EC teaching and learning. Most of the prototypes are designed as EC-simulated environments. Throughout the activities of the simulated games and structured exercises, students can practice the knowledge and skills they learned in class. Computer software is best learned by “playing” with
it (Tilbury & Messner, 1999). We believe that EC is also best learned by “playing” with it under a simulated environment.

The overview of each prototype is presented in the following section. We believe that the results of our research will be valuable to the teaching and learning of EC.

**A PROJECT-BASED TEAMWORK GAME IN E-COMMERCE**

(http://ec.mgt.polyu.edu.hk/ecmgt/e-mall)

An EC course was offered to all second- and third-year business students enrolled in the BA program in Business/Management, and was delivered to approximately 120 students at the Faculty of Business and Information Systems. The class was held 3 hours per week, with a total of 14 class meetings. All of the students had already taken “IT for Business” as their first IT course in their first year of study. Most of the students had no prior experience in programming. We bore this in mind when designing the course.

Business school students and graduates need training in theory and in the practical skills to become market-ready professionals (Floyd & Gordon, 1998; Envick, 1999). A project-based EC teamwork assignment was designed and developed to meet this requirement. The project aims to promote the concept of “learning by doing” to make use of project learning to nurture various abilities, knowledge, skills, and learning attitudes in students. The success of the learning by doing approach is proven by the large number of systems that have been adopted for private, commercial, and military use (Katz et al., 1996; Woolf, 1996). The project will enable the students to enjoy learning via project-based teamwork assignments, enhance their effectiveness in communicating, help to develop in them a spirit of teamwork, and foster their creativity.

For most organizations, consumer EC is the latest element of EC. In this project, the students will engage in in-depth investigation work to set up an e-shop from scratch. They will develop a simplified, yet realistic e-shop that addresses the EC educational needs of small and medium business proprietors. The idea of this exercise is to provide an integrated learning experience, including writing an e-business proposal, developing an e-shop, and writing a debriefing report.

**THE PROJECT PROCEDURE**

The project consists of five phases, described as follows:

**Phase I—Formulating a Team**

Students are asked to form a team consisting of not more than five members using an online team formation system (as shown in Figure 1).

**Phase II—Simple Business Plan**

Each team needs to propose a business plan that outlines the product line and target, describes how the business will operate, and forecasts the business’s profitability.

**Phase III—E-shop Development**

Each team builds their e-shops using an “e-shop template,” which is provided and made available to students. Participants are only required to upload three main items to the Web server via “shop owner template” (as shown in Figure 2). These items are (a) images of their products/services with a description, to
A Web Service Architecture for Revenue-Earning Information Products
www.igi-global.com/article/web-service-architecture-revenue-earning/1502?camid=4v1a