

## CUSTOMER

Matthias RAPP is an Educational Engineering Project Manager in the ISD at TRUFFAUT, a subsidiary of the CORA Group specialised in the distribution of plant products, garden layout and furniture, and pet supplies, via 50 garden centres with surface areas of between 2,000 and 13,000 sq. metres.

## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The workforce at TRUFFAUT varies greatly according to the seasons; the 2,000 permanent members of staff can be joined by 1,000 seasonal employees, especially in the spring when garden centres are very busy.

The company's own Human Development & Training Institute supervises the training of the salespeople, department managers and group managers; training courses are usually given at the Head Office or in the stores. These training courses usually deal with the business line and product knowledge to enable salespeople to provide adequate advice to customers.

As it is in charge of the whole training plan, the company's Training Institute also offers and manages training courses related to the Group's other functions.

## CHALLENGE

### Training/Skills issue

The company's Training Institute is confronted with an ever-changing catalogue containing a large number of diversified products. Indeed, TRUFFAUT garden centres not only sell plants and cut flowers, they also sell barbecues, decorative objects, aquariums, birds, pets, etc.

As the company has a reputation for giving good advice to its customers, the salespeople must be given training on the products they have to sell. And seasonal salespeople are not simply there to "lend a hand" but must be just as capable of

providing the same level of service. This is an important point: as TRUFFAUT garden centres are open 7/7, it must be possible for customers to obtain a suitable answer even during off-peak hours.

The only face-to-face training course was struggling to cover the ever growing requirements and to ensure that the knowledge targeted had been assimilated by a large number of people.

"It was within this context that, in the summer of 2008, we studied the possibility of implementing eLearning at TRUFFAUT with a view to optimising the use of training budgets by transforming some of the travel expenses into educational investments" says Matthias RAPP.

The implementation of eLearning also had to take account of the organisation of TRUFFAUT stores – particularly the fact that only administrative staff and managers have computers at their workstations.

## SOLUTIONS

### A broad-brush approach: "canalT"

First of all, the eLearning project had to be given an identity.

According to Matthias RAPP: "eLearning was in some way a new channel for broadcasting educational content at TRUFFAUT, so we launched the "canalT" approach and focussed on it in our in-house communications. This enabled all players concerned to identify eLearning without putting a name to it."

### An original technical solution: the “Formabox”

With regards hardware, the first hurdle to clear was the matter of self-service eLearning workstations.

The company was able to draw lessons from a project that had failed a few years earlier when self-service training courses were provided on computers usually dedicated to administrative staff or managers.

“We decided to use workstations solely dedicated to training, so each store was equipped with one workstation and stores with the largest workforces were even equipped with two workstations. An area offering 3 Formaboxes was even set up at TRUFFAUT’s Head Office,” says Matthias RAPP. These workstations consisted of touch-sensitive terminals fitted with soundproof headphones and placed on a table. Their Windows interface was locked and the browser was secure.

### Training courses developed with MOS Solo

eLearning content is developed in the company via MOS Solo by a dedicated employee working in consultation with product specialists.

This content can be provided “on the fly”, according to whether training requirements concern barbecues, aquariums, lawnmowers, food, etc. and all products distributed by the company. An integration course has been created containing three eLearning modules lasting one hour altogether.

“These modules have replaced the Traditional PowerPoint solution which was rather worn and time-consuming!”

The quality of these eLearning modules was also greatly improved by the use of a video bank made up of several hundred “guidance videos” freely available to Internet users on the [www.truffaut.com](http://www.truffaut.com) website. Some of these videos have been directly integrated into the training course – the video showing how to protect plants using mulch for example.

“We now have dozens of modules, or courses as they are called in MOS Chorus.”

### MOS Chorus – the LMS chosen via an invitation to tender

An invitation to tender highlighted the advantages of MOS Chorus, the solution offered by the Swiss publisher:

“The solution fully meets our current requirements and we only use a small proportion its features. The extensive functional scope of MOS Chorus and the innovative capacity of MOS publisher convinced us that this would be a good long-term partner.”

The training course tracking feature is another strong point of MOS Chorus. Matthias RAPP confirms that it is “useful and even essential as it allows us to send out reminders at the right time; for example, to remind salespeople that they must learn about swimming pools or watering systems in the TRUFFAUT catalogue before the hot weather arrives!”

### The hosting method chosen

Moreover, although TRUFFAUT already has all the computing skills needed within the company, it chose to have the platform hosted by MOS to hasten the implementation process. However, operational management is conducted by the Group’s Training Institute.

## ASSESSMENT

The results are good, confirms Matthias RAPP: “3,000 employees followed training courses on the Formabox, some using just one module, others using dozens of modules. This represented about 72,000 training activities.”

What’s more, managers became very involved as well “following training courses themselves and reminding their staff to do so.”

The solution offered by MOS completely came up to our expectations: “The gradually deployed platform is powerful and comprehensive and we are very pleased that it was developed by teachers for teachers. As a computer specialist, I am impressed by what I’d call the neatness of this software package which was obviously developed by teams who appreciate a job well done.

” MOS Solo, which is the free clone of the generator included in MOS Chorus, is used intensively by the company’s authors.

**GOOD PRACTICES**

The whole project led to the emergence of good practices:

To ensure the success of this kind of eLearning project, it is essential to have a sponsor at the highest level of the company:

“The commitment of the Executive Committee, the CEO in particular and the Operations Manager was decisive and remains so. Furthermore, the close collaboration between the ISD and the Training Institute proved invaluable.”

Choosing a specially designed, touch-sensitive and “hermetic” terminal with self-service access in stores proved to be a wise decision, even if we had to add a mouse later; this terminal was clearly identified thanks to its name, the visual identity it

was given and also thanks to its user-friendliness, like the staff training platform.

To speed up the downloading of heavy multimedia content (like guidance videos), we decided to install them on each store’s local network server connected to the Formabox. The platform hosted by MOS continued to broadcast the central module.

Having the platform hosted by MOS allowed TRUFFAUT’s in-house teams to focus on teaching aspects, contents and change management, while benefiting from the high level of configuration and availability of MOS Chorus.

In-house communication on “CanalT” and the commitment of managers played an important role during the deployment of the project; TRUFFAUT’s in-house magazine was used a great deal, managers’ awareness was raised via an off-the-shelf managerial content package (the “In Vivo” Demos) available on specific manager portals, to familiarise themselves with eLearning concepts.

**OUTLOOK**

TRUFFAUT doesn’t intend to stop now when everything is going so well. The next stages being considered include a tighter tutoring system, supported by Forum or FAQ types of tools which MOS Chorus can implement.

Blended learning should soon make its appearance at TRUFFAUT’s Human Development & Training Institute. This will at least involve following eLearning modules before starting a face-to-face training course. Target: on average, 25% of training activities should be conducted via CanalT.

We plan to start up a cross-functional reporting project: this would involve indicating the data followed via eLearning in overall trend charts as if these were TRUFFAUT performance indicators.

In the longer-term, virtual classes may be introduced: “As Webex is interfaced with MOS Chorus, the technology is available. It would be up to us to ensure that the capacity of our network infrastructure and customer workstations is sufficient.”