To remain competitive, organizations must search for ways to reduce their costs. In an effort to reduce operational expenditure, it can be tempting to cut training and development budgets. Such a decision, however, can have decidedly negative effects, since reducing funding for training and development risks jeopardizing an organization’s greatest asset—human capital. Limiting career development opportunities in the organization can leave employees dissatisfied, with a resulting increase in turnover. Indeed, lack of professional development opportunities in organizations is one of the commonest reasons for employee turnover. A study by Gallup found that 79% of survey respondents said that employer-sponsored training is the number one factor in employee satisfaction in the workplace.

The challenge for the training manager is meeting the training needs of the organization and keeping staff motivated on a smaller budget. There is a cost-effective and flexible solution to this problem, however. By incorporating e-Learning into your existing training program, you can offer employees additional training opportunities that are more cost-efficient. e-Learning can also increase productivity and its flexibility means that it can adapt to the individual learning style of each employee.

And e-Learning does save money. According to recent studies, travel costs account for more than two-thirds of corporate training budgets. In an organization offering e-Learning, employees have the option of taking courses that were traditionally offered only as instructor-led training. They can take the training in the office, at home, or on the move—wherever it suits them. Incorporating e-Learning into the training package will realize substantial cost savings in training travel expenses.

The flexibility of e-Learning enables organizations to provide just-in-time training to their employees and avoid productivity losses and interruptions to the flow of business. With e-Learning, training is available 24×7. Students can take the exact training they need when they need it from the convenience of their own desks and immediately apply this new knowledge on the job. e-Learning’s modularity enables students to move as quickly or as slowly through the training material as they wish. It also provides students with other resources to supplement their learning. In addition to web-based training, students have access to seminars, workshops, white papers, and articles related to their training topic. Employees who were unwilling to take time out of the field to attend training sessions can now improve their skills with e-Learning without decreasing their productivity. As business matters arise, employees can stop their training, attend to the matter, and resume their training where they left off.

e-Learning is an innovative and cost-efficient way of offering employees a variety of flexible learning opportunities that keep their skills up to date and enable your organization to sustain its competitive advantage.
Mentoring is the human component of SmartForce’s e-Learning solution. Our mentors have multiple IT certifications and a wide background of education and experience. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to answer IT content-related questions. Mentors can be accessed by e-mail, through chats, or by responding to daily e-mail questions or mentored exercises.

When students access mentoring, they are not accessing just one individual but a team of trained mentors who pool their collective knowledge to enhance students' learning experience. SmartForce's online mentoring accommodates different learning styles by enabling students to study when it is convenient for them, as mentors are available around the clock to help students with their studies.

Daily E-mail
One of the great features of mentoring is our daily e-mail questions. They are designed to assist students in their e-Learning experience by rounding out and supplementing the information presented in the learning path. These e-mail messages can include items such as general course or learning management system information, questions on content, or instructions for online labs.

The e-mail is synchronized with the student’s progress through the study content and is designed to motivate and keep them “on track.” This direction will assist them in focusing on their course objectives, which will ultimately lead toward success. Students can activate their daily e-mail by following the instructions under the Change Mentoring Options button, which is found on the Ask My Mentor page accessed from the menu after the course title.

Chats
Chats provide students with the opportunity to ask content-related questions and receive a response in real time, any time of the day. Chats are useful when students need an instant response and the question does not require an overly detailed explanation.

E-mail
Students can also send in questions via e-mail. E-mail is valuable for those questions that require more detailed responses or if the student wants to have a record of the answer. Mentors will respond to questions within six hours . . . guaranteed!

Mentored Exercises
Mentored exercises are learning objects embedded within the learning path. They consist of open-ended questions that students submit to a qualified mentor for feedback. Mentored exercises provide the opportunity for students to complete assignments that demonstrate their mastery of a skill or complex area of knowledge.

Archived SmartSeminars

Introducing IT Project+
This seminar will give you an overview of the CompTIA IT Project+ Certification Exam. Guest expert Bala Swaminathan talks in detail about the specifics of IT projects, why they fail, and how certification aims to improve on their success. Topics covered include
- What is CompTIA and IT Project+?
- Who should take the exam?
- What is the exam format?
- Benefits of certification

Security Responsibilities and Responses: A User’s View
In this seminar, guest expert Cyril Loughlin provides a user’s guide to information security. Some key points include
- Forms of information and how each is affected by security threats
- Information safety measures for organizations and how to implement them
- Security tips for individuals, including guidelines for password creation and password systems
- Internet security issues

The Living Strategy Journey
More and more organizations are coming to the realization that their most valuable asset is their people. Yet the reality of day-to-day organizational life often leaves employees with the sense that they are undervalued as a resource.

In this seminar, author, educator, and researcher Lynda Gratton guides you through the “Living Strategy” journey, her dynamic six-step program for putting people at the core of the corporate strategy.

To replay these events, please visit The Vault in MySmartForce.

If you wish to unsubscribe to this newsletter, please send an e-mail to knowledgenetwork@smartforce.com and type “Unsubscribe” in the subject heading.
New Content Releases

Below is a list of all new content releases for MySmartForce from March 2002. Please check with your SmartForce representative on the availability of the new content releases for non-MySmartForce deployments.

Technology Suite

Software Development
- Microsoft .NET for Developers: Building XML Web Services
- Microsoft .NET for Developers: Visual Basic .NET for the VB6 Developer

Web Design
- Macromedia ColdFusion 5: Foundation
- Macromedia ColdFusion 5: Experienced
- Macromedia Fireworks 4: Foundation
- Macromedia Flash MX: Foundation
- Macromedia Dreamweaver 4: Experienced
- Web Site Design – Tools

Internet and Network Technologies
- I-Net+
- Interconnecting Cisco Network Devices (ICND)

Interpersonal Skills
- JTI: Teamwork Challenges
- Listen Up
- Feedback Solutions
- Coaching for Performance Excellence
- Why Didn’t I Think of That?
- TalentSelection – Blended Solution

Home and Personal User
- Microsoft Works 2002: Introducing Works 6.0

Business Skills
- Project Risk Management
- Getting Started with e-Learning

To order any of the new content listed above, please contact your SmartForce representative.

A Closer Look at New Content Releases

Below is a brief description of a few of the new content releases from March.

2002 I-Net+ Certification Learning Path
I-Net+ is a vendor-neutral, entry-level Internet certification program that tests baseline technical knowledge of Internet, intranet, and extranet technologies, independent of specific Internet-related career roles. The SmartForce I-Net+ path incorporates conceptual simulations, articles, and mentored exercises into over 24 hours of learning targeted at individuals interested in pursuing a variety of Internet-related careers.

Microsoft .NET Learning Paths
SmartForce has released two additional learning paths pertaining to the Microsoft® .NET Web Services platform. These are Microsoft .NET for Developers: Visual Basic .NET for the VB6 Developer and Microsoft .NET for Developers: Building XML Web Services.

The Microsoft .NET for Developers: Visual Basic .NET for the VB6 Developer learning path is intended for existing Visual Basic programmers who want to start using Microsoft® Visual Basic® .NET. Using interactive graphical lessons and exercises, it outlines the language feature changes that have been made in this version of Visual Basic. The student is introduced to Microsoft® ADO.NET and is shown how to work with datasets. The learning path includes a seminar and workshop on how to migrate projects to Visual Basic .NET. It also goes on to help the student to use Windows Forms, Microsoft® ASP.NET, and Web Forms.

The Microsoft .NET for Developers: Building XML Web Services is designed to show application developers how to build XML web services in Microsoft .NET. Using interactive graphical lessons, simulations, and white papers, it describes the considerations for designing a web service and demonstrates how to design, build, and deploy a web service.

Macromedia Professional Program Releases Overview
Six new learning paths have been released as part of the Macromedia Professional Program. Developed in partnership with Macromedia, this complete program will cover the skills necessary for the planning, design, and building of web sites, web graphics, Macromedia Flash animation, and ActionScript applications. Specifically, the Macromedia Flash MX learning paths cover the creation of animations and the development of applications using ActionScript. The Macromedia Dreamweaver 4 learning paths educate users in all phases of building web sites, including HTML content, CSS, page layout, and JavaScript behaviors. Macromedia Fireworks 4 learning paths help developers to create and edit web graphics, add interactivity using a complete set of bitmap and vector tools, and use Fireworks and Flash integration features. Content covering ColdFusion 5 guides developers in building dynamic, data-driven web applications from e-commerce to business automation.

These Macromedia paths were designed to match Macromedia’s instructor-led exam preparation materials and can be used as an aid to achieving MCP certification.
SmartNews

SmartForce Courses to be Retired

The following courses will be retired at the end of May 2002:

- Making the Most of PowerBuilder 5.0
- PowerBuilder 5.0: The Basics
- PowerBuilder 5.0: DataWindow Concepts
- PowerBuilder 5.0: Implementing a User Interface
- PowerBuilder 5.0: Object-Oriented Essentials
- PowerBuilder 5.0: Maximizing DataWindow Features
- PowerBuilder 5.0: DataWindow Construction Techniques
- PowerBuilder 5.0: Object-Oriented Constructs
- PowerBuilder 5.0: Object-Oriented Implementation
- Moving from PowerBuilder 3.0 to 4.0
- PowerBuilder 4.0: The Basics
- PowerBuilder 4.0: DataWindow Concepts
- PowerBuilder 4.0: Implementing a User Interface
- PowerBuilder 4.0: Object-Oriented Essentials

Here is what you should know about these retired courses:

- These courses cannot be purchased after May 2002.
- This content will be removed from the MySmartForce Control Studio.
- Students who currently have access to the soon-to-be-retired PowerBuilder courses will continue to have access unless the training administrator disconnects the students from that content.
- Technical Support will continue support for the content for one year beyond the retirement date.

If you have questions relating to the retirement of these courses, please contact your SmartForce representative.