



Case Study

# Implementing a Global Technology Platform

ING's E-Learning Platform Deployment in  
15 Countries

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## In This Case Study

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ING standardized on a global e-learning platform, the ING Learning Center, for delivering and tracking learning across five continents. Over the last three years, ING has rolled out the new system to learners in 15 countries. The solution resulted in estimated savings of \$19.9 million from 2002-2004, when the Learning Center was still in its infancy. The company expects its 2005 expense analysis will show savings in even larger proportions.

In addition, the platform has enabled the company to effectively manage and track training, an especially significant factor for mandatory compliance-related training programs. Going forward, ING is embarking on a competency management initiative that will make the Learning Center an integral part of the company's employee development and performance management strategies.

## Case Study

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### ING Overview

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ING is one of the world's largest financial services companies, offering banking, insurance and asset management services in over 50 countries. With more than 110,000 employees located across five continents, ING faces an enormous training challenge in delivering, tracking, and reporting on learning programs and compliance requirements. Complicating matters further is the fact that the company has no central training function; each country has the autonomy to run its own training programs and operations.

### The Business Problem

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In 2001, ING embarked on some early e-learning initiatives. With no infrastructure or global licenses in place, individual learning teams worked with outside providers to build or host courses. Each country began entering into contracts with packaged content providers and looking at Learning Management Systems (LMSs) to manage and track online programs.

As a global financial services company, ING needs to efficiently deliver and track employee training and to consolidate reporting. The country-specific systems made tracking and reporting extremely difficult. In addition, the company determined that significant funds were being spent on separate contracts with content providers and other e-learning vendors. As a result, ING established a Global Project Team to select and implement a global e-learning platform. The goals were to standardize on a single LMS platform and set of preferred content providers to address the common learning needs of global users, to facilitate reporting needs, and to leverage ING's significant purchasing power.

Bersin & Associates believes that standardizing on a single platform is the best solution for global organizations capable of executing on this strategy.

ING's business case forecasted substantial savings from having a single LMS vendor, consolidating content provider contracts, and enabling employee self-service for classroom enrollments. In addition, moving more programs to e-learning would provide significant savings over its traditional classroom-based methods.

The primary requirements for the LMS were the following:

- Launch online courses seamlessly
- Classroom training administration
- Easy to use for learners and administrators
- Support for multiple languages
- Global reporting capabilities
- Integration with PeopleSoft's HR management system
- Accommodate a variety of architectures and end user hardware platforms
- Reliable 24x7 access.

With employees located across the globe, learner hardware configurations varied considerably. When the initiative first began, many PC's did not support Flash or sound. ING had to support the lowest common denominator so that all learners would be able to access the online learning programs.

## The Solution

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The Global Project Team evaluated the leading LMS vendors in the market and ultimately chose NetDimensions' Enterprise Knowledge Platform. Although NetDimensions was a relatively smaller company compared to some of the other LMS vendors under evaluation, the company had already proven itself in a successful compliance program conducted with ING's Hong Kong learning team.

One particularly appealing aspect of the platform was its Knowledge Center. This area is unique to each course and contains everything the learner needs for that course, including links to pre-work, the online or classroom course, learner satisfaction surveys, online assessments, and a discussion board. The Knowledge Center makes it very easy for learners to find what they need for a particular course – everything is available in one location. The following is a screen shot of the Knowledge Center for one of ING's finance courses.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Knowledge Centre - Internet Explorer 6.0 on Windows 98" displaying the "Knowledge Centre for Analyzing Cash Flow Statements (FIN0223)". The interface is organized into several sections:

- Online Learning:** A table with columns "Learning Module" and "Catalogue Description". The first entry is "Analyzing Cash Flow Statements (FIN0223)".
- Personal Notebook:** A section with a "Click here to take notes." link.
- Reference Resources:** A section with a "Click on a file name to download." instruction and a link to "FIN0223\_Analyzing\_Cas... (Standard) FIN0223: Reference & Examples".
- Module Tests:** A section with a "Click on the test name to start the test." instruction and a link to "Practice test (007)".
- Evaluate this Module:** A section with a "Click here to evaluate this module." link.
- Peer Comments:** A section showing an "Average Rating" of four stars and a "Click here to view or write peer comments." link.
- News:** A section with a "Click on a News title to read the details." instruction and a link to "Tips for all ILC users". Below this is a notice: "Course materials updated to include real-world examples".
- Overall Status Change:** A section with a "I wish to mark this module finished and remove it from my Current Learning Modules list." instruction and a "Please rate your overall experience before marking this module finished:" form with a dropdown menu and a "Go" button.
- Contact the Instructor:** A section with a "Click on an instructor's name or e-mail account to send a message." instruction and a list of instructors, including "GREEN Jim".
- Discussion Forum:** A section with a "Course Comments" link (last updated 2004 Apr 05) and a "This Learning Module has an associated forum, click to go there." instruction.
- Contact My Learning Group:** A section with a "Here is a list of participants who have enrolled in this Learning Module and are willing to be contacted. Click on a participant's name to send a message or click here to send a message to the whole group." instruction and a table of participants:
 

Participant	About this Participant
MANAGER Brian	
ADMINISTRATOR System	

 Below the table is a link: "Add/Delete me from this contact list."

Callouts on the left side of the screenshot point to the following features:

- Launch class (points to the Online Learning section)
- Take notes (points to the Personal Notebook section)
- Resources (points to the Reference Resources section)
- Assessments (points to the Module Tests section)
- Eval forms (points to the Evaluate this Module section)
- Peer review (points to the Peer Comments section)

Callouts on the right side of the screenshot point to the following features:

- Status Change (points to the Overall Status Change section)
- Course News (points to the News section)
- Contact Instructor (points to the Contact the Instructor section)
- Discussion Forum (points to the Discussion Forum section)
- Group Contacts (points to the Contact My Learning Group section)

Figure 1: Screen Shot of Knowledge Center for Finance Course

In addition to meeting ING's functionality requirements, it was NetDimensions' service and support capabilities that weighed in the ultimate vendor selection. "Most of the LMS vendors we evaluated had many of the same features," commented Ginette Purcell, Global Project Team Lead. "What set NetDimensions apart was their flexibility and willingness to work with us every step of the way and their ability to upgrade the system to meet our needs."

## Implementation

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ING used a phased approach to the LMS rollout, starting with a subset of U.S. learners.

Today the system is up and running in 15 countries with 35,000 learners.

Rolling out an LMS to such a large number of countries is no easy feat. Therefore ING planned a phased approach for the project by first testing the system with a subset of U.S. learners and then making any necessary changes. Since individual countries needed to partially fund the project, the Global Project Team worked with each one to obtain budget approval. For each country, the team first demonstrated the new system, then conducted a pilot, and based on the results of the pilot, justified the costs of the project.

In the 2001-2002 timeframe, obtaining additional funding was challenging, as the company was focused on earnings and expense management. But in most cases, the results of the pilots were compelling enough to warrant the expenditure. And in some cases, the need for a specific type of training drove the decision.

The Global Project Team was successful in its efforts, and 2002 was a year of growth, with utilization of the ING Learning Center expanding across regions. By 2003, each country assumed full fiscal responsibility for e-learning within their business areas.

The main challenges during the implementation phase were content integration and reporting functionality. ING selected SkillSoft and NETg as their content providers and needed to integrate this content with the LMS. In addition, the reporting functionality was initially not as robust as needed. Reporting functionality is one of the most troublesome areas for learning management systems.<sup>1</sup> As a financial services company, ING's business areas are accustomed to robust, easy-to-use reporting capabilities. The ING team worked across business lines to determine what additional features were needed to meet their reporting needs and worked with the vendor to ensure that these needs were met.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: "LMS Customer Satisfaction: *An Industry Study of the Customer Experience*" available at <http://store.bernsinassociates.com/lms-custsat.html>.

## Results

Today the system is up and running in 15 countries with 35,000 learners and an 80% rate of active users. Each country creates its own view in the LMS with content specific to its operations in its native language. The following is a screen shot of the Chilean learning portal.

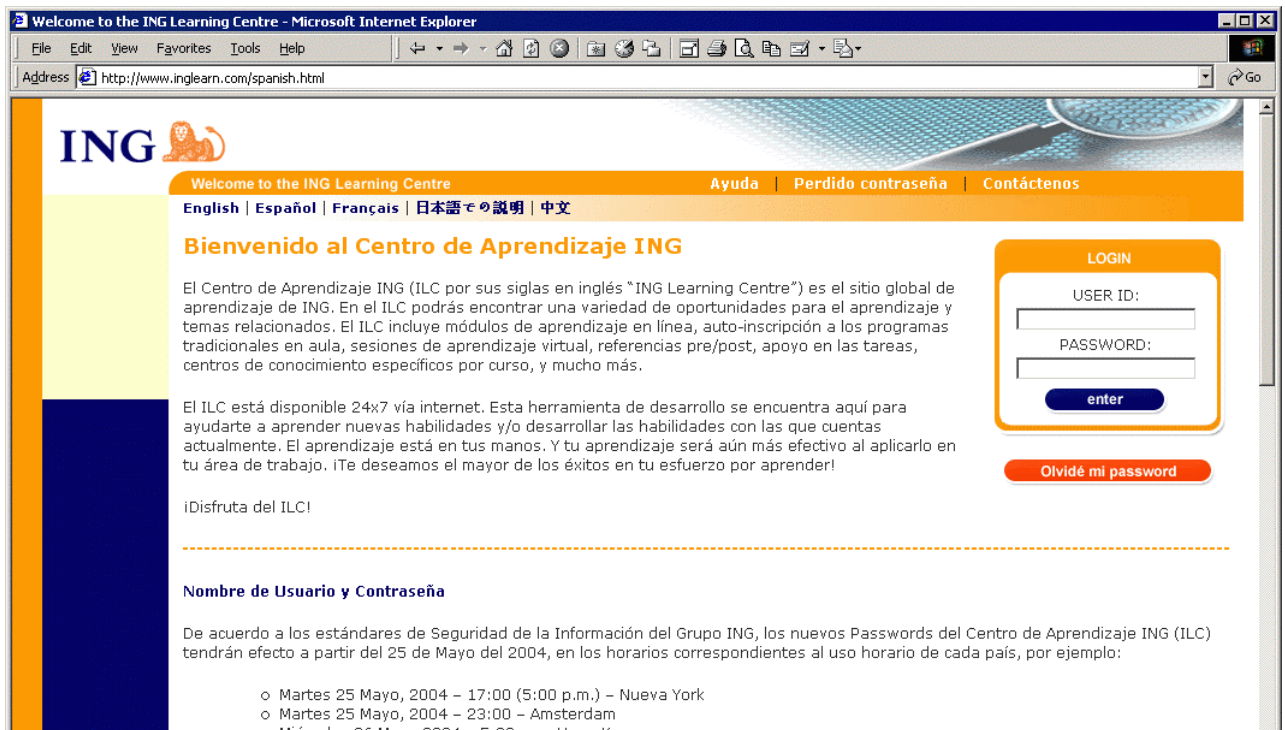


Figure 2: Screen Shot of Learning Portal for Chile

As shown above, the learning portal is offered in the country's native language, but the user may also select a different language. The portal offers country-specific news and events and often features one of the country's executives or employees.

ING's countries have made significant advancements with the new platform. Over the 3-year period, ING quickly moved from the "pilot" stages to using the ING Learning Center as a strategic tool. Many of the countries have been very creative in promoting utilization, using incentives to increase awareness of the learning resource. Home-grown custom courseware, certification testing, mandatory training modules, and linking content to business issues have also contributed to the significant utilization growth. However, Purcell notes, "The bottom line is that these efforts are only successful in the context of an LMS platform and content that are reliable, accurate, easy-to-use, and relevant.

## Cost Savings

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ING estimates that the total savings in the initial 3 years of using the Learning Center has been well in excess of \$20 million.

ING negotiated longer term (3-year) contracts with its two chosen content providers, SkillSoft and Thomson NETg. The actual savings achieved from consolidating vendor contracts and lengthening the terms will amount to more than \$800,000, while at the same time expanding the number of course offerings from 225 to over 2,000.

Besides the SkillSoft and NETg courses, the LMS provides the capability to administer classroom-based programs as well as internally-developed online courseware, enabling ING to create product- and business-specific modules. Automating these tasks has resulted in additional savings. For classroom programs alone, allowing employees to self-enroll resulted in a savings of \$275,000 over a 16-month period.

ING estimates the total savings in the initial three years of using the Learning Center has been well in excess of \$20 million.

## New Capabilities

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The new system has allowed ING to do things they couldn't easily do before. For example, one of the company's key challenges is in meeting annual compliance requirements. Compliance training is such a critical issue at ING that employees can be terminated for non-compliance. In the past, each employee needed to print, sign, and submit a form after receiving compliance training. Even at the local level, tracking which employees had completed the training was extremely difficult, as the process was mostly manual.

Today the process is automated through the LMS. Learners complete the required training, take an online test, and the completions and scores are captured in the LMS. Managers receive regular reports on which employees haven't completed their required training so that they can follow up to ensure that all employees are in compliance.

## Next Steps

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For the future, ING is working on a competency management initiative within the LMS. Key job profiles will have associated competencies, and the LMS will use these to specify appropriate developmental actions to learners.

The following is an example of what learners might see when viewing their job profiles and development plans. In this hypothetical example, the employee has two assigned job profiles, which have seven associated competencies. He has successfully satisfied six of the competencies. On the left side of the screen is



the learner's training plan, showing five courses to be completed with associated priorities and schedules.

**Competency Center**

STUDENT New (STEVE)

**News**

Click on an icon in the top frame to switch between Job Profiles, Competencies, and Certifications.

The listed items enable you to determine how your qualifications map to current requirements.

**Assigned Job Profiles**

IB001 - Business Solutions Consultant  
IM002 - IT Director

**Training Plan**

Collaboration in Virtual Teams (TEAM0223)	High	2005 Aug 31
Effectively Communicating in Teams (TEAM0172)	High	2005 Aug 31
ING Leadership Expedition (IBS_LEX_LP)	High	2005 Sep 26
Business Manager Programme (IBS_BM_2_A)	Medium	2005 Oct 31
ING International Business Course (IBS_IIBC)	Low	2005 Dec 31

**Competency Completion Status**

Business-specific Knowledge	✓
Create a Compelling Vision & Strategy	✓
Drive for Results	✓
Business-specific Knowledge	✓
General Requirements Knowledge	✓
Identifying and Documenting Requirements	✓
Build High-Performance Teams	✗

**Certifications Awarded**

PS146

Figure 3: Example of Competency Mapping

With the new competency plan, learners and their managers will be able to see exactly what competencies are needed for different jobs and can develop the skills they need for current and future career opportunities. Having a hosted system enables employees to access everything they need from home. "This brings learning management to a whole different level," said Purcell. "Our system continues to grow with our business needs."

## About Us

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Bersin & Associates is the only research and consulting firm solely focused on What Works® e-learning research. With more than 20 years of experience in e-learning, training, and enterprise technology, Bersin & Associates provides a wide range of services including market research, best-practices, vendor and product analysis, corporate workshops, corporate implementation plans and sales and marketing programs. Some of Bersin & Associates innovations include a complete methodology for LMS selection and application usage, an end-to-end architecture and solution for training analytics, and one of the industry's largest research studies on blended learning implementations.

Bersin & Associates offers the industry's first e-learning research subscription, "The E-Learning Research Center," (<http://www.e-learningresearch.com>) which offers up-to-date research, product selection guides, whitepapers, and access to other experts online. This service enables corporate training managers, vendors, and consultants make faster, better decisions about e-learning strategy, programs and technology.

Bersin & Associates can be reached at <http://www.bersin.com> or at (510) 654-8500.

## About This Research

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