eLEARNING AUTHORING TOOLS 2013: What We’re Using, What We Want

Patti Shank, PhD, CPT

With Joe Ganci
Guild Research Types

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### Community & Resources for eLearning Professionals

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<th>Member-Plus $695</th>
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Executive Summary

“What’s the best authoring tool for eLearning?” “What tool should my team switch to?” These are some of the most prevalent questions asked in the eLearning field. Because answering these questions is like answering the question, “Which neighborhood should I live in?” this report will provide the kind of data that practitioners, managers, and vendors need in order to understand this often-confusing marketplace. It answers these two overarching questions,

• What asynchronous eLearning authoring tools are individuals and organizations using and wanting, and why?
• What are the most desired features in asynchronous eLearning authoring tools at the macro and micro levels?

We developed this report from the answers given by 1,055 respondents to The eLearning Guild’s authoring tools survey, conducted from April 29 to May 17, 2013. Independent contractors made up 9.1% of respondents and 11% of the respondents came from higher education. Almost a quarter came from corporations with 100,000 to more than 250,000 employees. Almost a third of respondents’ budgets for asynchronous eLearning authoring tools fell in the $1,001 – $4,000 range per year.

The vast majority of the respondents actually use the tools to create eLearning, but more than a third also teach others how to use the tools. Of those that use tools, 45.9% consider themselves to be advanced beginners to intermediate-level developers and 49.2% consider themselves to be advanced-to-expert, a fairly even split.

The What Authoring Tools Do Practitioners Use and Want section helps practitioners, managers, and vendors see what types of courses people are creating with these tools, what organizations of different sizes are spending on asynchronous eLearning authoring tools, and what tools practitioners are using and wanting to use.

For example, when we asked respondents what their most important authoring tool was, Captivate came out on top, with 28.5% of the respondents choosing it as their most important asynchronous eLearning authoring tool. Storyline was second with 20.9%, and Lectora Inspire a close third with 18.9%. Many respondents reminded us that they are required to use specific tools by their organizations, so the chosen tools were not necessarily their personal choice. Many told us that they loved or hated the tool that they used, often because of the tool’s features or the tool vendor’s customer service.

We also asked the question, “For the tools that you do not use, pick one tool that you have considered purchasing.” The results for this question provided a different view.
The tool with the highest votes, at 23.3%, is Articulate Storyline. Adobe Captivate is next at 11% and Camtasia Studio is third at 9.6%.

The What Features Are Most Desired in Authoring Tools section helps practitioners, managers, and vendors look at the desired features for authoring tools and gain an understanding about what practitioners want from the authoring experience. This may also be valuable for helping to predict what may be upcoming wants and needs.

For instance, on a macro level, respondents rated the ability to add audio highest and the ability to integrate social media lowest. The top five micro-level features rated by respondents (established by selecting those designated as high and very high by 80% or more of respondents), are, in order of score:

1. Can customize how interactions look and feel (95.2%)
2. Can use numerous text formatting options (styles, bullets, justification, etc.) (95.2%)
3. Can choose from wide variety of question types (including multiple choice, fill-in, hot spot) (94.7%)
4. Can make objects on the screen interactive (93.8%)
5. Can require questions to be answered (93.6%)

The Key Insights (Features) section analyzes the top 20 features desired by respondents.

This report has a lot of data that may be very valuable to different people, so we encourage you to look through the report to find the information of particular importance to you.
Who Should Read This Report?

We wrote this report for learning practitioners, managers, and authoring-tool vendors. Practitioners can use the report to determine the current trends in selection and use of authoring tools. Since it is very hard to keep up with all the tools and technologies in this field, it may help to inform their professional development activities and selection of tools. Those already committed to a specific set of tools still need to understand where the field is heading, so that they may influence stakeholders about the direction tools are going.

Managers need to understand current trends in selection and use of authoring tools in order to make decisions about tool usage in their own organizations. However, they also must remember that the best tool for another organization may not be the best tool for theirs. They need to select the best tool for a given purpose. Knowing the most-used tools, however, does tell you important information about that tool and it’s valuable to analyze why. We have asked a variety of questions and it’s helpful to look at the nuances behind various answers.

The What Authoring Tools Do Practitioners Use and Want? section will help practitioners, managers, and vendors see what types of courses are being created with these tools, what organizations of different sizes are spending on asynchronous eLearning authoring tools, and what tools practitioners are using and want to use. (Remember, some practitioners are required to use certain tools, so it’s quite interesting to also see what else they want to use!)

The What Features Are Most Desired in Authoring Tools? section will help practitioners, managers, and vendors look at the desired features for authoring tools and gain an understanding about what practitioners want from the authoring experience. This may also be valuable for helping predict what may be upcoming wants and needs.
Survey Methodology

We made the Authoring Tools survey available from April 29 through May 17, 2013 in an online format. There were 1,055 responses, 74% of which were from the United States, 5.4% from Canada, 3.4% from Great Britain, 2.9% from Australia, 1.4% from India, and the rest were from elsewhere around the globe.

Figure 1 shows the breakout of respondents from different types of organizations. Independent contractors made up 9.1% of respondents, and 11% of the respondents came from higher education. Almost a quarter of respondents are from corporations with 100,001 to more than 250,000 employees. Some charts may be abridged to show only the higher percentages, so they may not total to 100%.

Figures 2 and 3 (on page 5) show that most respondents spend from 10 to 50% of their time developing (authoring) eLearning and have been developing eLearning for less than a year to six years. Figure 4 (on page 6) shows that 45.9% consider themselves to be advanced beginners to intermediate-level developers and 49.2% consider themselves to be advanced to expert developers, a fairly even split.
**Figure 2:**
Percent of time authoring

Q: What percentage of your job is authoring/developing eLearning (as opposed to instructional design, project management, content creation, administration, management, etc.)?

- 76 – 100%: 10.0%
- 51 – 75%: 15.6%
- 26 – 50%: 30.6%
- 10 – 25%: 30.0%
- <10%: 12.9%
- 0%: 0.9%

Source: eLearning Guild Research

**Figure 3:**
Length of time authoring

Q: How long have you been authoring/developing eLearning?

- I haven't started: 1.6%
- <1 year: 5.7%
- 1 – 3 years: 21.6%
- 4 – 6 years: 22.1%
- 7 – 9 years: 14.7%
- 10 – 13 years: 16.0%
- 14 – 16 years: 7.2%
- 17+ years: 11.1%

Source: eLearning Guild Research
We asked respondents to tell us about their interest in authoring tools, and Figure 5 shows the responses. The vast majority actually use the tools to create eLearning, but over a third also teach others how to use the tools and more than a third are in positions to determine how the tools work in large contexts and systems. Figure 5 shows an encouraging fact: Those who manage people who use tools, and determine how they should use the tools, are also, in most cases, users of those tools, enabling them to make wiser decisions about tool usage.
Because the survey was explicitly geared to users of asynchronous eLearning authoring tools and their managers, those that either didn’t use authoring tools or authorize budgets for authoring tools were finished with the survey after answering these initial questions. Fortunately, almost 85% of respondents said that they used authoring tools, so our pool of tool user respondents was high, as represented by the N in each chart. We got enough responses from those who authorized budgets or who paid for authoring tools that we were able to gather data about budgets for authoring tools as well (see the Authoring Tool Budgets subsection).

When asking about asynchronous eLearning authoring tools, we started with a list of the most-used asynchronous eLearning authoring tools according to a group of authoring tools experts, but left open-ended spaces in the survey for respondents to write in additional tools (which some did). However, the list that we provided did end up representing the asynchronous eLearning authoring tools that most respondents used.
Introduction

“What authoring tool is best?” and “Which tool should I buy?” are some of the most common questions that people new to eLearning ask those with a longer track record in the field. And although the most common answer is, “It depends on what you want to build,” that isn’t a very satisfying answer. Obviously you need to know something about what you need to build before choosing tools, just as you need to know what you are trying to build before you select tools to build anything. But when you’re choosing asynchronous eLearning authoring tools, it also helps to come at it from the other end—what tools do those who have been in the field a while think are valuable, and what feature sets are available. This report will provide a great deal of information on just these facts.

We caution anyone who is new to this field that many of the people who have been developing asynchronous eLearning answered these questions with specific types of projects in mind. Your projects may be different from theirs! So perform due diligence. Most asynchronous eLearning tools allow you to download or try them free. Try them out with your projects in mind.

Finally, keep in mind that some tools are newer and had fewer people rate them simply because they are newer.

What We Mean by Authoring Tools

The authoring tools referred to in this report are tools expressly created to develop asynchronous (non-live) eLearning. When designing the survey, we did not consider tools that you can use to develop asynchronous eLearning but that were not created especially for that purpose. We did this to manage the scope of this project and concentrate on tools specifically created for creating asynchronous eLearning and for practitioners in our industry (rather than general web-development tools). So we specifically did not consider recorded virtual-classroom eLearning (i.e., synchronous) or web-development tools, for example, although they can be and are being used to develop eLearning. PowerPoint and Flash were also not included, though developers often use both tools for this purpose too. We meant none of this to cast a negative light on those tools, but it was simply a realistic need to limit scope and direct attention to those companies that produce asynchronous eLearning-specific products.

Three General Types of eLearning Authoring Tools

Joe Ganci, technical editor of this report (which means he is checking the accuracy of the report and adding his own insights as he pleases), divides eLearning authoring
tools into three primary categories: PowerPoint add-in tools, installed tools, and cloud-based tools (Table 1).

**PowerPoint add-in** eLearning authoring tools appear as new tabs in PowerPoint, each with its own ribbon. See Figure 6.

**Installed** tools are the eLearning authoring tools that you install on your computer. They stand alone without depending on PowerPoint or other products.

**Cloud-based** tools, often called SaaS (software as a service), don’t usually need to install anything on your computer.

Of the tools we specifically asked about in the survey, here is how we organized them by this categorization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PowerPoint Add-in Tools</th>
<th>Installed Tools</th>
<th>Cloud-based Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adobe Presenter</td>
<td>Adobe Captivate</td>
<td>Allen Interactions ZebraZapps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate Presenter</td>
<td>Articulate Storyline</td>
<td>Brainshark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iSpring Solutions iSpring Suite</td>
<td>Suddenly Smart SmartBuilder</td>
<td>CallidusCloud RapidIntake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivantis Snap! By Lectora</td>
<td>TechSmith Camtasia Studio</td>
<td>DominKnow Claro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zenler Studio</td>
<td>Trivantis Lectora Inspire</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WebSoft CourseLab</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trivantis Lectora Online</td>
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<td>Udutu</td>
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The following tools (all of which are installed tools) prove very popular among eLearning developers. You don’t use them to develop full eLearning lessons, but they have more precise adjunct roles. However, eLearning developers use all of these to a substantial degree, so they are included in this report (Table 2 on page 10).
It’s important to remember that each eLearning authoring tool may have different features; and some are inherently more useful than others for different purposes. Some (like Captivate, Camtasia, or Storyline) may have features that make them better for screen captures, software application demos, and simulations than others, while some do a better job of building branched scenarios than others. In other words, you need to know what you want to do with a tool before you determine the best tool for that purpose.

It is also important for practitioners and managers to remember that authoring tools are a moving target and we need to be prepared to change tools over time. That’s the reason that The eLearning Guild updates this report regularly. Joe Ganci wrote the last version of this report and I wrote the version before that! Suffice it to say that we are both very interested in authoring tools!

Today, eLearning is quickly moving to mobile delivery, and there is a strong desire to deliver courses and performance support via HTML5, which is currently having a large impact on the tools that practitioners want to buy (see the What Features Are Most Desired in Authoring Tools? section). Also, see the resource section for Guild research reports, Learning Solutions articles, and other materials about HTML5, as this is something you will want to know more about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction Builders</th>
<th>Quiz Builders</th>
<th>Animation and Video Tools</th>
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<tr>
<td>Articulate Engage</td>
<td>Articulate Quizmaker</td>
<td>Adobe Edge Animate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbinger Group Raptivity</td>
<td>Questionmark Perception</td>
<td>GoAnimate</td>
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What Authoring Tools Do Practitioners Use and Want?

This section of the report shows the questions and responses from the survey about budgets for asynchronous eLearning authoring tools, the types of courses they create with these tools, and the actual tools that eLearning practitioners use and want to use.

Types of Asynchronous eLearning Respondents Create

One of the questions we asked respondents was what types of asynchronous eLearning they create for their audiences (Figure 7). The three most-frequently stated types of asynchronous eLearning included PowerPoint-to-eLearning (64.2%), software or applications (59.6%), and performance-support tools (54.7%). A lot of respondents added additional answers such as compliance and regulatory, and higher-education lectures. A wide range of additional topics were added such as driver education, disease-specific medical education, engineering practice, new-hire orientation, K-12 study tools, teacher training, and much more, showing the wide-ranging needs of designers and developers.

Figure 7:
Types of asynchronous authoring created
Authoring Tool Budgets

Since we know that it often takes multiple tools to get the job done (see the What Authoring Tools Are Used Most Often section) and authoring tools can be expensive, we wondered how much money most organizations spent on asynchronous authoring tools.

As you can see in Figure 8, almost a third of the answers fell in the $1,001 – $4,000 year range, and that certainly isn’t a lot of money for a department. Table 3 shows the counts.

When I removed unemployed and independent contractors/self-employed (10.1% of respondents), people who we would expect to spend less than others, the numbers moved upwards somewhat. When removing unemployed and independent contractors and the self-employed, 29.6% of respondents were in the $1,001 – $4,000 year range, 14.3% of respondents were in the $4,001 – $7,000 year range, 8.1% were in the $7,001 – $10,000 year range, and 9.7% had budgets higher than $10,000. In short, we saw fewer in the $1,001 – $4,000 year range and more in the higher ranges.

**Figure 8:**
Budget for standalone asynchronous authoring tools

**Table 3:**
Budget for standalone asynchronous authoring tools and number of users

<table>
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<td>More than $10,000/year</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>134</td>
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I also analyzed how different-sized organizations answered the question in Figure 8 (on page 12). However, when I broke out the answers by organization size, some of the counts were too small to analyze. When the response rate for a given type is small, the answers for that type can be a fluke and not be representative of the group. Of those with large enough samples to analyze, the median amount for independent contractors (N=69) was between $1,001 – $4,000 year. The median amount for corporations with less than 500 employees (N=134) was $1,001 – $4,000 year, for corporations with 2,001 – 10,000 employees (N=83) between $4,001 – $7,000/year, for government agencies (N=54) more than $10,000/year, and for higher education (N=77) between $7,001 – $10,000/year.

**Which Authoring Tools Are Used Most Often?**

We asked respondents about the authoring tools they used in two different ways. First we asked them to tell us which asynchronous eLearning tools they used on a regular basis (Figure 9 and Table 4 on page 14). Regular basis, as defined by the question, means *at least a few times a month*. Table 4 (on page 14) includes all the counts.
Captivate is used by 64.2% of respondents, and 42% of our respondents use Camtasia Studio. The last time we did this report, in 2011, 68% of respondents used Captivate, and 18.7% used Camtasia Studio, so Camtasia Studio has shown a very large increase in usage since that time. Camtasia Studio is a popular video-editing tool, but in recent years has added the ability to create more asynchronous, though limited, eLearning lessons, primarily by allowing users to add hot spots to videos that, when clicked, provide learners with more information, and by adding four types of quiz questions. If your eLearning makes a lot of use of video and does not need to do much more than ask questions about the video, Camtasia Studio does the job.

Storyline wasn’t available in 2011; now almost a third of respondents use it. Articulate Presenter and Quizmaker take up the next two spots at 32.3% and 27.6% respectively. More than a quarter of respondents use Lectora Inspire and close to a quarter use Articulate Engage.

To determine the average number of tools used per respondent, I added the count (2,955) and divided by the number of respondents (882) for a count of 3.35.

**What Is the Most Important Authoring Tool? (And Why Is It the Most Important?)**

The other way we asked about authoring tools is perhaps a more important question: *What is the most important tool that you use?* And that is the next question that we asked (Figure 10 on page 15).
Again, Captivate came out on top, with 28.5% of the respondents choosing it as their most important asynchronous eLearning authoring tool. Storyline was second with 20.9% considering it their most important, and Lectora Inspire a close third with 18.9%. Table 5 includes all the counts.

Table 5: List of most important tool and number of users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captivate (Adobe)</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyline (Articulate)</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectora Inspire (Trivantis)</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camtasia Studio (TechSmith)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter (Articulate)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SmartBuilder (Suddenly Smart)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter (Adobe)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage (Articulate)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We then asked why the selected tool was most important and Figure 11 (on page 16) shows that the primary reasons for critical importance include feature set and characteristics that allow for building better eLearning. Because features are so critical to developers of asynchronous eLearning, the second half of the survey included a very detailed set of questions about desired features.
We provided a textbox for comments and many of the comments were revealing. *Quite a few respondents reminded us that they are required to use specific tools by their organizations so the tools they chose did not necessarily reflect their personal choice. Many told us that they loved or hated the tool that they used, often because of specific features or customer service. There were positive comments, especially about support provided by the very active Articulate forums.*

Here is a smattering of the actual comments.

- “I have no budget, so free is very important. It means I need to be very creative.”
- “I am an advanced eLearning developer, so Lectora provides me with the options that I need to develop excellent interactive training. Tools like Articulate are for basic users that are limited to the actions that they can create.”
- “Captivate provides the greatest flexibility in terms of a range of interactions, from built-in options to fully [customized] interactions created with other tools in the Adobe Suite.”
- “Many of our existing asynchronous eLearning is already developed in Captivate. I think we will end up moving toward Storyline in the future because of the huge stride forward in ease-of-use, but will continue to need Captivate to manage the legacy content.”
• “Storyline has reduced my development time by over 50%. I am not a programmer, so it can take me a long time to learn the advanced features of a product. I was up and running right ‘out of the box’ with Storyline.”

• “We use Camtasia video because it is quick and easy to use and publish, and video output is a preferred learning modality for students.”

• “Flash is still the best, and I have [a] library of effects and games.”

What Other Tool Have You Considered Buying?

We wanted to also ask a question that would give us a hint into what asynchronous eLearning tools are being considering for the near future and what tools developers might choose if they could select their own, as many use the tools their organizations provide. And this question provided a different view altogether. As you can see in Figure 12, the tool with the most votes, at 23.3%, is Storyline. Captivate is next at 11% and Camtasia Studio is third at 9.6%. Table 6 (on page 18) includes all the tools with counts.
Table 6: An asynchronous eLearning authoring tool I've considered buying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storyline (Articulate)</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captivate (Adobe)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camtasia Studio (TechSmith)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZebraZapps (Allen Interactions)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectora Inspire (Trivantis)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raptivity (Harbinger Group)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edge Animate (Adobe)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter (Adobe)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter (Articulate)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectora Online (Trivantis)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snap! by Lectora (Trivantis)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage (Articulate)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iSpring Suite (iSpring Solutions)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionmark Perception</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SmartBuilder (Suddenly Smart)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoAnimate (GoAnimate)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizmaker (Articulate)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainshark (Brainshark)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claro (DominKnow)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easygenerator (easygenerator)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opinions About Authoring Tools

The survey was primarily a quantitative analysis of asynchronous eLearning authoring tool usage and the desire for specific features in these tools. We also wanted to discuss asynchronous eLearning authoring tools with a few different types of users of these tools to get some insights about their use.

Diane Elkins is the owner of Artisan E-Learning and author of the *E-Learning Uncovered* books on Articulate Studio, Storyline, Lectora, Captivate, and more. She sees most of the top asynchronous eLearning authoring tools trying to become like each other by adding features that the others have (like having character libraries and the ability to import PowerPoint slides). She has a couple of blog posts (see the resources section) where she compares the major tools on price, ease of use, interactivity, graphics and animation, assessment, power, ADA, mobile, and software simulations. She does say that she’s worried about some of the cloud tools where you cannot have complete control over your published files.

Diane thinks the most powerful of the major tools is Lectora, but it loses some “cool” points because it’s not as strong in graphics capabilities as some of the other major tools (the other ones that rated highest in our survey). You have to bring in all graphic elements from the outside. With Studio, you have all the great graphics features of PowerPoint built right in. In her opinion, Studio is the easiest to use and Captivate is not as easy to use as many of the other rapid development tools. But this is a snapshot in time. She agrees that things change very rapidly in this market.
Nancy Reyes, eLearning project manager at Visiting Nurse Service of New York, told me that her organization originally used to outsource development of eLearning modules. Like most instructional designers, she built the storyboards but others did the development. Over time, it became more efficient and cheaper to take over development, so eventually she became a developer as well as the designer and the back-up LMS administrator. She now uses Articulate Studio, Captivate, and Storyline. Of all of the tools, she finds Storyline the easiest to work with, and she can build advanced courses because of prebuilt interactions and characters. In fact, she says, she didn’t even need any training. Nancy uses her own money to attend conferences to increase her skills because she sees that the future of her job is increasingly complex, and it’s one of the best ways to cope for ongoing professional development.

Steve Haskin, the owner of Industrial Strength Learning, doesn’t use traditional authoring tools at all and I wanted to understand why. He’s a video and media developer and says he needs to use tools that let him build exactly what he sees in his mind. So his tools of choice are Photoshop, After Effects, Flash, and Premiere Pro. He’s looking to build “visual hooks that tickle the eyeball.” He explained that most instructional designers don’t necessarily think about the fact that learners will view what they design on a computer screen and that a computer screen is like a television. “It needs to capture the imagination, and text often doesn’t do that,” he clarifies. “It’s not that type isn’t the perfect solution sometimes, but most times it’s an easy way out of presenting visual information to learners.”

**Current Costs**

Tables 7 and 8 (on page 20) show the costs in USD (on the vendors’ websites, at the time of writing this report) for the authoring tools that received 10% or more usage on any of the three questions. All prices are full licenses, not upgrades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Cost of common authoring tools as of August 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PowerPoint Add-in Tools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter 9 (Adobe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter ’09 (Articulate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snap! by Lectora (Trivantis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Articulate typically sells these tools as a suite, Articulate Studio ’09, which sells for $1,398.00.
Key Insights (Tools)

In the preceding pages, we discussed data from the What Authoring Tools Do Practitioners Use and Want survey questions. In this section, we will provide some insights from these questions.

In Figure 9 (on page 13) we presented data from the question, Which of these asynchronous eLearning authoring tools do you use on a regular basis (at least a few times a month)? The top three tools were Captivate (64.2%), Camtasia Studio (42.0%), and Storyline (33.0%). In Figure 10 (on page 15), we presented data from the question, For the tools you use on a regular basis, pick the single tool that is most important to you. The top three tools were Captivate (28.5%), Storyline (20.9%), and Lectora Inspire (18.9%).

- We see the second question (Figure 10 on page 15) as being of greater importance than the first question because, while many developers use more than one tool, they generally have one “tool of choice,” the tool they use to develop eLearning most often. Captivate is 7.6% ahead of Storyline for this second question, which is 2.0% ahead of Lectora Inspire.

- Open-text comments about why the tool was most important pointed out that, in many cases, tools were selected by organizations, and individuals often felt tied to tools in which they were already expert. So this “most important” tool may not be self-selected.

In Figure 12 (on page 17) we presented data from the question, For the tools that you do not use, pick one tool that you have considered purchasing. The top three tools were Storyline (23.3%), Captivate (11.0%), and Camtasia Studio (9.6%).

- We didn’t have open responses on this question, so we have to interpret the reason for the change in response patterns from the last two questions. It’s possible that the first two questions show organizational responses (what organizations are using) and this question may be showing individual responses (what individuals may be considering on their own). Another possibility is that the first two questions are retrospective (past usage) and this question is prospective (future usage). These are interpretations, but I believe they are plausible.

- Notice that some tools, such as ZebraZapps, show a much higher rating in this question than in the other two questions. My previous interpretations make sense here as well.

### Table 8:
Cost of other authoring tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction Builders</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Quiz Builders</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage ’09 (Articulate)</td>
<td>$399.00*</td>
<td>Quizmaker ’09 (Articulate)</td>
<td>$599.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Articulate typically sells these tools as a suite, Articulate Studio ’09, which sells for $1,398.00.
There has always been, and continues to be, confusion among people who develop asynchronous eLearning as to which tool or tools would best fit their needs, along with a gnawing feeling that there might be a better tool than the one they’re using. No tool is perfect for every need, and sooner or later developers hit a wall with their tool, either because the tool itself cannot do everything they need or because the tool makes it difficult to use certain features. They also may not have adequate training and not know how to use their tools well. This is one of the reasons that many developers have more than one tool.

On the other hand, it is sad when one must compromise good design because the tool can’t handle it or because the developer doesn’t know how to use the features of the tool. For example, if an instructional design requires that the learner place elements in the correct sequence to show that they understand the content, and the tool doesn’t allow for sequence interactions, it’s not adequate to simply change that interaction to multiple choice. It’s better to invest in a more robust tool. Some developers treat their authoring tool like a religion, as if it were The One True Tool, but that’s usually because they’ve invested so much time into the tool that they don’t want to see their investment wasted. It’s also because once they reach the upper echelons of expertise in a tool they can contort the tool to make it do what they want in ways that less expert developers can’t.

Newer tools have come on the market since we issued the last report two years ago. Those that have begun to garner real interest tend to be those with more power. This is clear from the answers given as to which tools and features developers want. In some cases, it’s a question of hitting a sweet spot in the balance between power and ease of use and in others it’s the price or the amount of support available.

Tools will continue to evolve, and vendors will continue to try to leapfrog their competitors’ feature sets. Pricing structures change, in some cases dropping a great deal. Competition is good and leads to better products and better pricing. To become an informed tool buyer, ask others who use the tool, try them out as demos, and stay on top of the field. It’s not easy, but reports like this help. Also check out our other resources, including other research reports. Our members and our staff do a lot of legwork for you! You are not alone in figuring out which tools do what.
What Features Are Most Desired in Authoring Tools?

In the last section, we saw in Figure 11 (on page 16) that the most important aspect of an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool to the respondents of the survey was its features. In this section of the survey, we asked questions about the importance of specific authoring tool features.

Realizing that there could be differences between different kinds of developers, we started first with a question about the importance of power or ease of use (Figure 13). We intentionally set the question up as a dichotomy to force respondents to choose. Interestingly, many more chose power than ease of use.

We asked some broad questions about general feature sets and, depending on the level of importance to the respondent, followed up with more in-depth questions on specific features.

The broad questions included:

- How important is the tool’s user community and support when choosing an authoring tool?
- How important is being able to control branching and navigation when choosing an authoring tool?
- How important is being able to add games, scenarios, or simulations when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is being able to add audio when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is being able to add video when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is the ability to create assessments when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important are graphics and animation features when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is being able to format templates, themes, skins, and text when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is being able to use scripts and variables when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is user accessibility when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is integration with social media when choosing an authoring tool?
• How important is progress tracking when choosing an authoring tool?

Figure 14 shows the mean (average) answer to each question, on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being the lowest and 6 being the highest for respondents who said that power was important to them versus respondents who said that ease of use was more important to them.

**Figure 14:**
Difference in importance of features for power vs. ease-of-use respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Feature Importance for Power vs. Ease-of-Use Respondents</th>
<th>Mean Ease User</th>
<th>Mean Power User</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add audio</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create assessments</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics and animation features</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control branching and navigation</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add video</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format templates, themes, skins, and text</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add games, scenarios, or simulations</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress tracking</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User community and support</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use scripts and variables</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User accessibility</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with social media</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Power users generally gave these features a slightly higher score and ease-of-use users generally gave these features a slightly lower score. One place where there is the most divergence is with scripts and variables. Power users rated the category a 5.0 and ease-of-use users rated the category a 4.1. Actually, the fact that ease-of-use users rated it so high is a testament to the fact that ease-of-use developers expect to become fairly savvy with authoring, I believe.

For the rest of this section, we'll look at the specific individual features that we asked about. Because of limited room in the charts below, we are only showing the percentages for medium high, high, and very high.
Audio Features

Respondents who said that audio features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 15. The features that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of those who responded include, in order of score:

1. Can embed audio files (91.4%)
2. Can trigger audio in interactions (85.6%)
3. Can set audio quality and other options (78.1%)
4. Can record narration audio (73.1%)
5. Can perform basic audio editing (71.6%)
6. Can store audio in a library (66.3%)
7. Can export recorded audio to MP3 (59.9%)
8. Can record system audio (58.9%)
9. Can add links to external audio files (57.5%)
10. Can perform advanced audio editing (51.5%)

Figure 15: Importance of specific audio features
Assessments Features

Respondents who said that assessment features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 16. All of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents. Below are the ratings in order of score.

1. Can choose from wide variety of question types (including multiple choice, fill-in, and hot spot) (94.7%)
2. Can require questions to be answered (93.6%)
3. Can show review of question after score (92.2%)
4. Can format question pages as desired (91.1%)
5. Can track assessments (90.3%)
6. Can create randomized questions (84.4%)
7. Can create global quiz preferences (83.7%)
8. Can shuffle answers (83.0%)
9. Can add media to questions (82.6%)
10. Can randomize questions from banks or pools (80.6%)
11. Can create pretests where results drive course navigation (76.3%)
12. Can show references (such as electronic references) to be used with questions (77.2%)

Figure 16: Importance of specific assessment features

Q: How important are these assessment features? N=765

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Branching and Navigation Features

Respondents who said that branching and navigation features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 17. All of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents. Below are the ratings in order of score.

1. Can add simple branching (89.1%)
2. Can add custom navigation (84.3%)
3. Can add complex branching (76.4%)

Figure 17: Importance of specific branching and navigation features

Q: How important are these branching and navigation features?  

- Can add custom navigation: 11.0% Very low, 21.2% Low, 37.8% Medium, 61.1% Medium high, 63.1% High, 20.4% Very high, 0% N/A
- Can add complex branching: 8.9% Very low, 15.8% Low, 25.5% Medium, 50.9% Medium high, 50.9% High, 4.2% Very high, 0% N/A
- Can add simple branching: 8.9% Very low, 20.4% Low, 68.7% Medium, 68.7% Medium high, 68.7% High, 0% Very high, 0% N/A

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Graphics and Animation Features

Respondents who said that branching and navigation features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 18. Every one of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents. Below are the ratings in order of score.

1. Can make objects on the screen interactive (93.8%)
2. Can animate screen elements (85.5%)
3. Can edit images, basic (76.4%)
4. Can insert HTML5 animations (74.2%)
5. Can choose from multiple transitions (fade in, etc.) (72.7%)
6. Can insert Flash animations (71.8%)
7. Can insert text animations (69.1%)
8. Can use built-in characters (61.6%)
9. Can edit images, advanced (59.5%)

**Figure 18:**
Importance of specific graphics and animation features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Medium high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can make objects on the screen interactive</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can animate screen elements</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can choose from multiple transitions (fade in, etc.)</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can use built-in characters</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can edit images, basic</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can edit images, advanced</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can insert HTML5 animations</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can insert Flash animations</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can insert text animations</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Video Features

Respondents who said that video features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 19. The features that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of those who responded include, in order of score:

1. Can embed video files (92.5%)
2. Can trigger video in interactions (85.0%)
3. Can link to external or web video files (84.6%)
4. Can set video quality and other options (77.9%)
5. Can record screen video (77.5%)
6. Can export recorded video (68.5%)
7. Can pan and zoom (66.5%)
8. Can store video in a library (66.1%)
9. Can perform basic video editing (58.1%)

Figure 19: Importance of specific video features
Format Templates, Themes, Skins, and Text Features

Respondents who said that template, theme, skin, and text formatting features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 20. Every one of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents. Below are the ratings in order of score.

1. Can use numerous text formatting options (styles, bullets, justification, etc.) (95.2%)
2. Can customize how interactions look and feel (95.2%)
3. Can create your own custom themes (92.7%)
4. Can create your own custom templates (92.0%)
5. Can create master slides or pages (91.1%)
6. Can customize built-in player skins (77.5%)
7. Can choose from player skins (75.5%)
8. Can create your own player skins (71.9%)
9. Can choose from built-in themes (63.9%)
10. Can choose from provided lesson templates (61.2%)

**Figure 20:** Importance of specific template, theme, skin, and text formatting features

Q: How important are these features for formatting templates, themes, skins, and text?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Medium high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>N=711</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can use numerous text formatting options (styles, bullets, justification, etc.)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can create your own player skins</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can customize built-in player skins</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can choose from player skins</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can create master slides or pages</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can customize how interactions look and feel</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can create your own custom templates</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can choose from provided lesson templates</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can create your own custom themes</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can choose from built-in themes</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Games, Scenarios, or Simulation Features

Respondents who said that games, scenarios, and simulation features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 21. The features that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of those who responded include, in order of score:

1. Can add interactive scenarios (91.3%)
2. Can add simple software simulations (84.3%)
3. Can add complex software simulations (70.5%)
4. Can add simple game elements (68.6%)

Figure 21:
Importance of specific game, scenario, or simulation features

Q: How important are these game, scenario, or simulation features?

Source: eLearning Guild Research
User Community and Support Features

Respondents who said that user community and support features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 22. The features that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of those who responded include, in order of score:

1. Has easy user support (90.9%)
2. Has available free intro training modules (82.8%)
3. Has an active user community (81.1%)

Figure 22: Importance of specific community and support features

Q: How important are these user community and support features?

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Progress-tracking Features

Respondents who said that progress-tracking features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 23. The features that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of those who responded include, in order of score:

1. Tracks in SCORM 1.2 (84.0%)
2. Tracks in SCORM 2004 (64.7%)

(Tracks in Experience API almost made it with 49.3.)
Scripts and Variables Features

Respondents who said that scripts and variables features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 24. All of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents. Below are the ratings in order of score.

1. Can use user variables that you create and track (87.1%)
2. Can use variables for personalization and data tracking (83.3%)
3. Can use system variables, such as current date and time (80.7%)
4. Can create simple scripts (79.5%)
5. Can create complex scripts (61.5%)

Figure 24: Importance of specific script and variable features

Q: How important are these script and variable features?

Source: eLearning Guild Research

N=637
User Accessibility Features

Respondents who said that user accessibility features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 25. Every one of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents. Below are the ratings in order of score.

1. Can provide closed captioning for audio (75.2%)  
2. Can provide closed captioning for video (73.1%)  
3. Provides accessibility (ADL Section 508, etc.) features (66.9%)  
4. Can transcribe audio to text (59.9%)  
5. Can use text-to-speech (with included voices) (58.5%)  
6. Works with JAWs and other screen readers (53.2%)

---

**Figure 25:**  
Importance of specific accessibility features

Q: How important are these user accessibility features?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Medium high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works with JAWs and other screen readers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide closed captioning for video</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide closed captioning for audio</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can transcribe audio to text</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can use text-to-speech (with included voices)</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides accessibility (ADL Section 508, etc.) features</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Integration with Social Media Features

Respondents who said that social media features were important in an asynchronous eLearning authoring tool were asked to rate the features in Figure 26. None of the features received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents.

Figure 26: Importance of specific social media features

Q: How important are these social media features?

Source: eLearning Guild Research
We asked all respondents to respond to the next three categories of features, as they are comprehensive and relevant to all authoring programs.

**Authoring Options**

The authoring options (Figure 27) that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents who responded are:

1. Can author in Windows (86.8%)
2. Instructional designers can author content (70.4%)

**Figure 27:**
Importance of specific authoring options

Q: How important are these authoring options when choosing an authoring tool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Medium high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>N=875</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMEs can author content</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional designers can author content</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can do collaborative authoring</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can author on mobile devices</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can author online (in the cloud)</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can author in Linux</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can author in Macintosh</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can author in Windows</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Publishing Options

The publishing options (Figure 28) that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents who responded are:

1. Can publish to mobile web (e.g., HTML5) (74.6%)
2. Can publish to Flash (61.8%)
3. Can publish for review with included or free reviewer application (59.2%)
4. Can publish to video (57.5%)
5. Can publish to PDF (51.7%)

Figure 28: Importance of specific publishing options

Q: How important are these publishing options when choosing an authoring tool?

Source: eLearning Guild Research
Global Features

The global features (Figure 29) that received a high or very high rating from 50% or more of the respondents who responded are:

1. Can spell check (80.0%)
2. Can place elements on slides (78.8%)
3. Can perform find-and-replace (74.4%)
4. Can set global preferences (73.2%)
5. Can place elements on a timeline (70.3%)
6. Can add screen annotations or notes (64.0%)
7. Can grammar check (60.5%)
8. Can bring in PowerPoint slides (58.3%)
9. Is part of a suite of tools that work together (53.8%)
10. Can create storyboards with the tool (52.2%)

![Figure 29: Importance of specific global features](image-url)
Key Insights (Features)

In the preceding pages, we presented data from the What Features Are Most Desired in Authoring Tools survey questions. In this section, we will provide some insights from these questions.

Respondents generally preferred power (58.8%) over ease of use (36.6%) despite 45.9% of respondents considering themselves to be advanced beginners to intermediate level developers and 49.2% of respondents considering themselves to be advanced-to-expert, a fairly even split.

We show the features that rated highest below. We established them by selecting those designated as high or very high by 80% or more of respondents, in order of score.

1. Can customize how interactions look and feel (95.2%)
2. Can use numerous text-formatting options (styles, bullets, justification, etc.) (95.2%)
3. Can choose from a wide variety of question types (including multiple choice, fill-in, and hot spot) (94.7%)
4. Can make objects on the screen interactive (93.8%)
5. Can require questions to be answered (93.6%)
6. Can create your own custom themes (92.7%)
7. Can embed video files (92.5%)
8. Can show review of question after score (92.2%)
9. Can create your own custom templates (92.0%)
10. Can embed audio files (91.4%)
11. Can add interactive scenarios (91.3%)
12. Can create master slides or pages (91.1%)
13. Can format question pages as desired (91.1%)
14. Has easy user support (90.9%)
15. Can track assessments (90.3%)
16. Can add simple branching (89.1%)
17. Can use user variables that you create and track (87.1%)
18. Can author in Windows (86.8%)
19. Can trigger audio in interactions (85.6%)
20. Can animate screen elements (85.5%)
21. Can trigger video in interactions (85.0%)
22. Can link to external or web video files (84.6%)
23. Can create randomized questions (84.4%)
24. Can add simple software simulations (84.3%)
25. Can add custom navigation (84.3%)
26. Tracks in SCORM 1.2 (84.0%)
27. Can create global quiz preferences (83.7%)
28. Can use variables for personalization and data tracking (83.3%)
29. Can shuffle answers (83.0%)
30. Has available free intro-training modules (82.8%)
31. Can add media to questions (82.6%)
32. Has an active user community (81.1%)
33. Can use system variables, such as current date and time (80.7%)
34. Can randomize questions from banks or pools (80.6%)
35. Can spell check (80.0%)

We can see some commonalities among the top 20 features. Five of the top 20 features have to do with assessment, showing that respondents are quite aware of the importance of assessments within asynchronous eLearning authoring. Respondents are also conscious of how crucial interactivity is in general in learning applications, as we list several interaction features in the top 20. Respondents clearly want to be able to customize look-and-feel and add media. They don’t want to be limited to predefined templates and models, at least not without being able to customize them.

Most eLearning professionals would agree that the most important elements in an eLearning course are interactions that engage the learner to focus on the content, media appropriately chosen to enhance the learning of that content, and progress tracking to ensure that the learner is correctly learning the content. Ideally, ongoing progress checks also lead to each learner receiving an individualized learning experience so that content experts can quickly prove learners know the material and that their time is not being wasted, and content novices can receive as much extra help as needed to ensure that they too reach a proper level of expertise.

To accomplish these goals, interactivity, media use, and progress tracking are all intertwined and crucial. Respondents seem well aware of this as their choices bore out these needs.
Conclusions

Considering how important the features in the previous section are to respondents, there’s a strong indication that the tools required to accomplish this kind of asynchronous eLearning need to be reasonably powerful.

Many of the PowerPoint add-in tools (Table 1 on page 9) can accomplish a lot, but most cannot accomplish all of the top 20 desired features. For example, they don’t typically allow developers to create user variables to keep track of a learner’s name and then embed that name in question feedback or other text elements, something that helps personalize lessons. Some may not let you create freeform drag-and-drop interactions for learners. If what they provide is enough, and it’s determined that the missing elements are not important, PowerPoint add-in tools can be quite attractive because they allow for faster development and sometimes have a lower initial cost.

When the PowerPoint add-in tools are not adequate for the instruction you need to build, it’s time to consider the installed and cloud-based tools (Table 1 on page 9). These tools tend to cover more instructional design needs, but extra features come with a need to learn those options, meaning a steeper learning curve. It’s entirely possible to create boring, linear presentations with Captivate, Storyline, Lectora Inspire, or similarly powerful tools, but that would be a waste of their potential and a waste of time and money as well. (Yet, many new developers start there and that’s an acceptable start. Opinion alert: Just don’t stay there too long!)

Remember that our respondents split close to 50/50 with newer and more expert developers, yet well more than half want more power in their tools. They know that this is how they will gain more instructional power.

In our 2011 authoring tools report (“Rapid eLearning Authoring: Top Tools”), the top tool (not including suites) was Adobe Captivate with 70.9%. Articulate Presenter was next with 29.8%. Storyline was not available then. People could pick more than one tool in that survey so this question was most akin to the question in Figure 9 (on page 13). (The question was somewhat different so the comparison isn’t fully 1:1.) It is interesting to note that Camtasia Studio received 19.5% in 2011, whereas it has 42% in Figure 9 (on page 13).

Captivate is still in first place but Storyline has quickly made inroads. So has Camtasia. The tools in Articulate Studio (Presenter, Quizmaker, and Engage) are still doing well. Lectora is quite strong as well.
We are moving towards wanting to produce more mobile eLearning content. The feature, “Can publish to mobile web (e.g., HTML5)” received a 74.6% high or very high respondent rating. In our recent LMS research report, an average of 65.9% of respondents rated mobility features as very important or extremely important. Given where we are with the desire for mobile learning, I would expect the next authoring tools report to show a wider impact from mobile learning. Perhaps there will be different tools to report on, or the available tools will have more mobile capabilities. (Many are starting to.) We may demand different or more mobility features.

I was happy to see that many of the top features desired by respondents were those needed for instructional integrity. But I noticed that we’re not demanding better accessibility and we don’t think it’s important that SMEs can author content. I’m ready to argue those points on Twitter!
Major Takeaways

• The authoring tools discussed in this report are tools specifically created to develop asynchronous eLearning. When designing the survey, we did not consider tools that one can use to develop asynchronous eLearning but that were not created especially for that purpose.

• We looked at three types of asynchronous eLearning authoring tools:
  » PowerPoint add-in eLearning authoring tools appear as new tabs in PowerPoint, each with its own ribbon.
  » Installed tools are the eLearning authoring tools that you install on your computer. They stand alone without depending on PowerPoint or other products.
  » Cloud-based tools, often called SaaS (software as a service), don’t usually need to install anything on your computer.

• Today, eLearning is quickly moving to mobile delivery, and there is a strong desire to deliver courses and performance support via HTML5, which is currently having a large impact on the tools that practitioners want to buy (see the What Features Are Most Desired in Authoring Tools? section). (Also, see the resource section for Guild research reports, Learning Solutions articles, and other materials about HTML5, as this is something you will want to know more about.)

• When we asked respondents what their most important authoring tool was, Captivate came out on top, with 28.5% of the respondents choosing it as their most important asynchronous eLearning authoring tool. Storyline was second with 20.9%, and Lectora Inspire a close third with 18.9%.

• The vast majority of the survey respondents actually use asynchronous eLearning tools to create eLearning. Over a third also teach others how to use the tools. We had a large sample size (N=1,055, although that many did not answer every question) of heterogeneous tool users answering questions about tool usage and feature requirements.

• Many respondents reminded us that they are required to use specific tools by their organizations so the tools chosen were not always their personal choice.

• When we asked respondents why the tool was most important, the top answer was that it had the needed features (65.3%).

• We also asked the question, “For the tools that you do not use, pick one tool that you have considered purchasing.” The tool with the highest votes, at 23.3%, is Storyline. Captivate is next at 11% and Camtasia Studio is third at 9.6%.
• On a macro level, respondents rated the ability to add audio highest and the ability to integrate social media lowest. The top five micro-level features rated by respondents are (established by selecting those designated as high or very high by 80+% of respondents, in order of score):
  » Can customize how interactions look and feel (95.2%)
  » Can use numerous text-formatting options (styles, bullets, justification, etc.) (95.2%)
  » Can choose from a wide variety of question types (including multiple choice, fill-in, and hot spot) (94.7%)
  » Can make objects on the screen interactive (93.8%)
  » Can require questions to be answered (93.6%)

• Authoring budgets: Almost a third of the budgets fell in the $1,001 – $4,000 per year range. When I removed unemployed and independent contractors/self-employed (10.1% of respondents), 29.6% of respondents were in the $1,001 – $4,000 year range, 14.3% of respondents were in the $4,001 – $7,000 year range, 8.1% were in the $7,001 – $10,000 year range, and 9.7% had budgets higher than $10,000 range.
Resources

The eLearning Guild

Articles


Research Reports


Additional Resources

Websites


Tools

Adobe Captivate

Adobe Dreamweaver CC

Adobe Edge Animate
http://html.adobe.com/edge/animate/

Adobe Flash
http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/

Adobe Presenter
http://www.adobe.com/products/presenter.html

Allen Interactions ZebraZapps
https://zebrazapps.com/

Articulate Engage

Articulate Presenter
http://www.articulate.com/products/presenter.php

Articulate Quizmaker

Articulate Storyline

Articulate Studio

Brainshark
http://www.brainshark.com/

CallidusCloud Rapid Intake
http://rapidintake.com/

DominKnow Claro
http://www.dominknow.com/features.cfm

easygenerator
http://www.easygenerator.com/

GoAnimate
http://goanimate.com/

Google GoMo
Harbinger Group Raptivity
http://www.raptivity.com/

iSpring Solutions iSpring Suite
http://www.ispringsolutions.com/ispring-suite

Microsoft PowerPoint

Questionmark Perception
https://www.questionmark.com/us/perception/Pages/default.aspx

QuickLessons
http://www.quicklessons.com/

ReadyGo Web Course Builder
http://www.readygo.com/

Skilitix InterAct
http://www.skilitix.com/

Suddenly Smart SmartBuilder
http://www.smartbuilder.com/product/features

SumTotal ToolBook
http://tb.sumtotalsystems.com/

Techsmith Camtasia Studio
http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html

Trivantis Lectora Inspire
http://lectora.com/e-learning-software/

Trivantis Lectora Online
http://lectora.com/online-e-learning-lectora-online

Trivantis Lectora Publisher
http://lectora.com/online-training-software-lectora-publisher

Trivantis Snap! by Lectora
http://lectora.com/rapid-e-learning-snap-by-lector

Udutu
http://www.udutu.com/

WebSoft CourseLab
http://www.courselab.com/view_doc.html?mode=home

Zenler Studio
http://www.zenler.com/
About the Authors

**Patti Shank, PhD, CPT** is the researcher director of The eLearning Guild and president of Learning Peaks. She is listed in *Who’s Who in Instructional Technology* and is an often-requested speaker at training and instructional technology conferences. Patti is quoted frequently in training publications and is the co-author of *Making Sense of Online Learning* (Pfeiffer, 2004), editor of *The Online Learning Idea Book* (Pfeiffer, 2007, 2011), co-editor of *The E-Learning Handbook* (Pfeiffer, 2008), and co-author of *Essential Articulate Studio ‘09* (Jones and Bartlett, 2009).

**Joseph Ganci** is president of eLearning Joe, a custom training and learning company located in Ashburn, Virginia, near Washington, DC. Since 1983, he has been involved in every aspect of learning development. Widely considered a guru for his expertise in eLearning development, Joe holds a degree in computer science and is a published author, having written several books and many articles about eLearning. He teaches eLearning development classes and seminars at commercial companies, government facilities, leading universities, and at many industry conferences. Joe is an expert in Adobe Captivate, Articulate Storyline, and several other development tools.