

## At De Beers, Success with an LMS is Spelled: O-U-T-S-O-U-R-C-E

### Background

De Beers Group is the largest diamond mining company in the world with mines in South Africa, Botswana, Canada and Namibia. De Beers Consolidated Mines is the South African operating company of the De Beers Group.

As a company literally on the cutting edge of its industry, it was no surprise that De Beers invested in e-learning more than six years ago to train its global workforce. Initially, there was a groundswell of support for online learning. De Beers launched a campaign to tout the benefits of e-learning. And employees applauded the new tack on training.

### Challenge

By 2005, however, De Beers found itself questioning the viability of e-learning. With the passing of each year, excitement for online training slowly dwindled. As new employees joined De Beers, they often failed to take advantage of the company's e-learning offerings. And according to De Beers, the company could've done a better job of marketing the benefits of online training. Compounding the problem was the fact that e-learning managers at De Beers seemed to almost come and go with each year. Admittedly, De Beers had lost sight of a strategy for e-learning.

### Solution

"In 2005, De Beers was at a crossroads with e-learning," said Tienie Krugel of De Beers. "We had confidence in the technical capabilities of our learning-management system, which we bought from SumTotal Systems. But we lacked a strategy for e-learning, and someone to champion its value. In spite of this, we had initiatives for which a well-crafted online learning program might help."

For instance, in 2004, the President of South Africa signed legislation that required mining businesses to comply with a number of laws aimed at promoting economic development, protecting the environment and providing employment opportunities.

Later that year, De Beers chose to outsource its e-learning program to Kalleo Learning. South Africa-based Kalleo offered not only strategic counsel on building e-learning programs, but also designing e-learning content and implementing learning technology.

Willie Maritz, managing director of Kalleo Learning said, "In part, De Beers outsourced e-learning to us because they wanted to see a more focused approach to e-learning matching business requirements and delivering value.

"The SumTotal<sup>®</sup> TotalLMS<sup>™</sup> was among the best technology of its kind in the world, so we had an excellent platform in place at De Beers for managing and delivering learning," added Maritz. "But we also convinced stakeholders of our philosophy that e-learning is not always the best fit for everything. We created a strategy that pinpointed where e-learning was best suited. Second, we aimed to understand and address De Beers' business initiatives. Lastly, for e-learning to work at De Beers, we had to facilitate it, offer self-help and ongoing support."

According to Maritz, his team made it standard operating procedure to always speak to business stakeholders to find out where, specifically, e-learning would solve a business problem.

"That was our yardstick. Every e-learning project had to have a beginning and end date, along with specific business objectives in mind," remarked Maritz.

Along with vetting online learning, Kalleo implemented an e-learning help desk where De Beers' employees could immediately get help whenever they were ready to learn.

Kalleo appointed “learning facilitators” whose mission is keeping tabs on a learner’s progress, breaking down any technical barriers and making sure employees completed online courses.

“We entered a situation where a world-class organization, De Beers, had the best LMS money could buy,” said Maritz, “but lacked the vision and resources to leverage it. De Beers saw outsourcing as the way to engage and educate its staff.”

### **Results**

When Kalleo took over the De Beers project in January of 2006, De Beers staff were completing, on average, 135 online courses per year. Since that time, employees at the global mining business have completed more than 4,000 online classes. According to Maritz, the course-completion rate has jumped from a low of 30 percent to more than 75 percent.

“We’ve managed to move away from delivering nice-to-have courses with TotalLMS to supplying classes that meet specific business objectives,” said Maritz. “We’ve focused the power of e-learning and the LMS on specific company projects, for example a project to train staff on how to use SAP’s business software, as well as adhering to legal requirements on health and safety legislation.”

Kalleo has developed e-learning content outlining the legal requirements for health and safety representatives for each of De Beers’ mines. For all of these courses, Kalleo has utilised SumTotal’s ToolBook™ product to create courses and simulations.

Maritz adds, “Since outsourcing its e-learning program to Kalleo, De Beers has been able to focus e-learning on where it matters most.

“In the future, we’ll be encouraging De Beers to use its LMS to do workplace assessments,” said Maritz. “Several months after an employee completes his or her course, we’ll log onto the LMS to see how much they’ve retained and how they’re applying their learning on the job.”

