

Slide 1



Today we will be looking at several tools to help you develop your e-Learning content, for little to no cost. When I started out, there were few tools to help me do my job, and most were fairly expensive. However, we are seeing more and more tools released that are either free, or have a minimal cost. (Of course, as I'm sure you know, minimal is a very relative term.) The biggest problem we see is in finding the tools, and finding the right tools, as those which are free obviously aren't advertising in the magazines we subscribe to, and websites we visit.

Slide 2

This Session's Topics

- Why you need to reduce costs
- How I choose to rate tools
- **Some really cool tools, which won't break your budget**
 - Tools to help you *Plan* your learning content
 - Tools and Resources to *Build* your content
 - Tools to *Deliver* your content

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There are a few topics I'll cover today.

The first goes without saying. We are all looking to reduce our already small budgets in any way possible during these times. When I initially suggested this topic to present, the economy wasn't quite in the shape it is in now. Originally, I was going to ask how many people have had their budgets cut or reduced from last year as the effect of economy was only starting to take effect, but now we can assume that it is nearly everyone. Yet, most of us will still be asked to perform at the same, or even higher, levels than we did last year.


Because of that, I want to show you how I choose to rate the tools I'm showing today. These are by no means the only free, or cheap, software applications available, but the ones I've personally had a chance to use and can verify their usefulness. To that extent, I want to rate these tools so you have an idea of what you might run into as you start to implement them in your own location. So I'll want to explain how I've rated them.

Finally, and mostly, we are going to look at various tools to aid us in the development of an e-Learning project from beginning to end. As an added benefit, most of these tools can be used in any training environment, regardless of the delivery method.

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How I got to know about these
Free tools?

- College
- Industry



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My experience as a trainer has been in both the college setting, and in industry. While I thought I would have lots of money to build training resources in college, I found that the education department didn't get as much as one would expect.

Instead, it was the the football team.

Similarly, when I left full-time academia, I found that training departments often didn't get the budget they needed. So we learned to beg, borrow and (well I wouldn't say) steal what we needed. This included finding free resources whenever and where ever possible.

I work as an LMS Admin, and help develop tools in the training department. When I was hired in industry, they hadn't had a designer/developer like myself, so they didn't know what I needed. So while I had the normal Office Suite, and similar applications, I didn't have a lot of tools I would need to use build the resources my team could use. Therefore I put on my "hunting" cap, and shared them with my team, and now I'd like to share them with you.

Slide 4

How I rated tools

- **Strength**

Can I do what I need it to do?

What else can it do for me?



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The first thing we are going to look at is how powerful is this tool. Is it free because it can't do anything, or can it really do what I need it to.

Can it do other things for me, being a proverbial power tool in my toolbox.

Each item is going to be rated on a scale of one to five, and for strength we are using the dumbbell shown here.

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How I rated tools

- Strength
- **Ease of Use**

"I can't spend months learning some new tool."



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The next thing I care about, is how complicated is the tool. It is has seeming thousands of buttons, and archaic menus to use, then who cares if it cost \$5. It cost too much if its too complicated to use.

If I want it to be working for me today, then I need it to be a no-brainer.

So the next measurement I want will signify with the “No Brainer” icon.

Slide 6

How I rated tools

- Strength
- Ease of Use
- Cost**

Just how cheap is cheap?

Is it a good value?



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Finally, the last piece is going to be a measurement of cost. This is always the most difficult, as cheap for one tool, could be vastly expensive for another. Items like LMS or Webinar solutions tend to be very expensive, because of their complexity, and the number of people who need them. On the other hand, some tools have multiple free versions available, and even pro-tools are not very expensive, because of the lack of complexity.

We'll use a dollar sign to signify the relative cost of an application against it's peers. And a crossed out dollar sign will of course mean it is free.

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Planning Your Learning Content



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I've found that a little bit of planning can go a long way. Of course, I've found this out only after years of shooting from the hip because I didn't have tools like Project, or Visio which I felt was "required" to plan a project. Those were left for developers and project managers.

However, the more complex the training, the more I need to plan out that project.

Project Management

- **Gantt Project**
- Replacement for MS Project
- Allows you to define resources and personal and assign them to tasks



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Any sufficiently large project needs to use a tool to track and manage it's progress. Otherwise, I know, I tend tend to forget smaller steps, that end of being crucial to the project overall.

Gantt project (link available with the handout) is a free tool which allows you to perform some of the functions you would find in a product like Project. With Gantt Project, you can track resources such as people, and rooms, as well as the time, link task together, and determine the percent completion of any task, or sub-task.


I found this very useful when I was putting together a large project which ran over the course of several months last year.

Now it won't tie in with other Microsoft apps like Project, but it is still a very functional tool, and it cost nothing

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Project Management

- Gantt Project



The screenshot shows a Gantt chart with various tasks and their durations. Below the chart is a table with columns for task names, start dates, end dates, and other project details.

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So we'll give it the free seal. Next, it is very powerful, and you can do a lot with it, so 4 out of 5 on the strength scale.

However, with that strength came some complexity. Especially if you've never had a chance to work with a Project Management Software application.

If you have, I'm sure you will pick it up faster of course. So we'll give it a 3 out of 5 for the no brainers.

Flowcharts & Mock-ups & More

- **Smart Draw**
- You can Develop Forms to Flowcharts, to Flyers.
- Several price levels depending upon the number of licenses.
- 7 day trial available.



The image shows a flowchart diagram with the following steps: Start (oval) -> Develop Content (rectangle) -> Decision: 'Yes Layout?' (diamond). If 'Yes', it goes to 'Add Content' (rectangle). If 'No', it goes to 'Review Content' (rectangle). From 'Review Content', it goes to 'Practice Run Through' (rectangle), then to 'Preview' (rectangle), and finally to 'End' (oval). To the right of the flowchart is the SmartDraw 2009 logo with the text 'Welcome to SmartDraw 2009 The World's Most Popular Business Graphics Software'.

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The next section, which works well for project planning is Flowcharting software. But even better, is over the last few years, we've seen software which was just for Flowcharts, become able to perform other types of diagrams.

One of these is Smart Draw. Smart Draw is regularly updated, and originally was for doing business graphics, like org charts, flowcharts, etc. Not it can even do mockups for your elearning which you can then send out to your graphic designers or content developers to build. Likewise, it still has flowcharting ability so you can build branching diagrams to know how to create the proper test, and resend people through sections they might not have passed.

Smart Draw's other ability include forms, newsletters, and more. While not directly related to eLearning, we've found in our company that we get a better response to training when we advertise our training classes. With something like this, we can put up flyers, and table top display's in addition to posting content on our LMS website and through emails.

Now Smart Draw is a commercial piece of software. So it does cost, however you get additional features like the ability to export to Word, Excel, and PDF. Pricing varies based upon the number of users, and compared to some other packages, it is


cheaper, starting at about \$149 for a single user, and multi-user licenses are cheaper. So 3 out of 5 for cost.

Given how much it can do, I give it 4 out of 5 for strength.

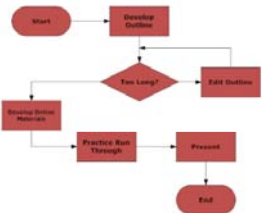
Smart Draw is one of those software packages that is easy to learn, but hard to master, as you can start using it within about 5 minutes of installing, however because it can do so much, you will always be learning a little more about it. I'd download the 7 day trial if you have a few minutes to get a feel for the software before making a purchase decision. So 3 out of 5 for ease of use.

Flowcharts & Mock-ups & More

Smart Draw



Three green dollar signs (\$ \$ \$) and a row of seven black dumbbells. Below these are three circular icons with a red 'X' over them, representing features that are not included or are being crossed out.



```
graph TD; Start([Start]) --> Develop[Developing Modules]; Develop --> Pass{Pass Course?}; Pass --> Add[Add Questions]; Add --> Pass; Pass --> Review[Review Course Materials]; Review --> Practice[Practice Run Through]; Practice --> Passed([Passed]); Passed --> End([End]);
```

Welcome to SmartDraw 2009
The World's Most Popular Business Graphics Software

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Flowcharts & Mock-ups

- **Flowchart.com**
- Web based, so no installs (keep IT happy)
- Supports different types of charts.



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Next we will look at a similar tool to Smart Draw. However, with Flowchart.com, the difference is that it is all done in the web browser. This has several advantages. First, if you have to work on something away from the office, and you don't have a laptop to take home, you can still do your work. The other big advantage, is you are less likely to be hassled by your IT department. I know in some organizations, they have very strict rules about what you can and can't install on your computer. With a web based tool, you don't have to worry about installs.

Like Smart Draw, it does more than just flow charts, you can also perform hierarchies, decision trees, and layout mockups for your design team if you have one.

One thing I have noticed, is you will find it runs faster in a browser like Firefox or Chrome by Google because it requires a lot of browser side scripting to work, and some browsers are not as fast as others. Also, you have to essentially download the project files each time, so it can be a little slow when you first login. As you move through it, it becomes faster however.

Flowcharts & Mock-ups

▪ Flowchart.com



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OK, so lets see how it rates:

Right now it is in Beta, but it is also free. This may change when it comes out of beta testing. But for now, we will list it as free software.

It also has an interesting feature, since it is web based, it will allow other people to sign on and work on a project. So you can share documents easily. This is a unique piece of functionality, however, in other areas it doesn't have quite as many features as Smart Draw, so we will list it as a 3 out of 5 for strength, but over time I think it will get more powerful.

It is fairly easy to use. Especially if you have had any experience with diagramming software before, but it is by no means a requirement. The biggest issue is, as I mentioned, it takes a while to start up as it downloads the necessary files. I'll rate it a 3 out of 5 for ease of use.

Building Your Content



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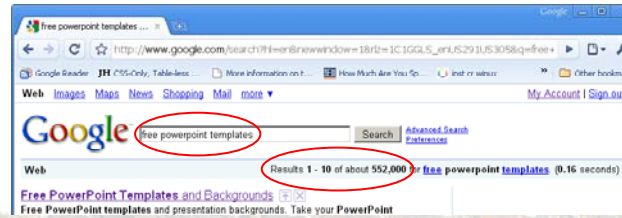
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Now we want to look at putting our content together. We have the concept, the flowchart, etc, but now we need content, images, diagrams, etc.

PowerPoint (& other) Templates

- There are literally tens of thousands of sites which cater to providing Power Point templates for free, or at a low cost.



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Working with Images/Photos



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Photos are the most common example. We've forever needing photos of people, equipment, or relationships to demonstrate what we are trying to convey.

Finding Images and Photos

- Royalty Based 
- Royalty Free 
- Free & Royalty Free 

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One of the big issues with finding images on the web, is you can't be sure of the copyright of the image. While it may not affect you directly, coming from teaching design, we always were careful of other's copyright. If you notice a lot of the images I present are crediting a photographer. I've run into numerous companies and people who have lost tens of thousands of dollars for not having the right license of a photo, even if it was done as an honest mistake.

I bigger issue is if you search for "Free" images, they seem to always want you to pay. What is up with that?

Well this gets into the many different ways photos are licensed. Here are a few things you need to know, so you can better find free or at least cheap images.

First is the Royalty based license....

Next is the Royalty Free license...

And finally, is the Free license...

Low Cost Image Sources

- fotolia (<http://us.fotolia.com/>)
- iStock Photo (<http://www.istockphoto.com/>)



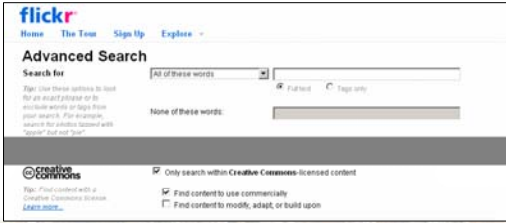
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Fotolia and iStock Photo are two well known websites where you can go and buy stock photos at a reasonable cost. As you can see from the screen shot, the prices start at about a \$1. In both cases, the price is based off of the size of the image, smaller images are cheaper. For eLearning content, you will **almost** never need something larger than a medium size.

Links to these are available on the handout provided with this session.

Free Image Sources

- Stock.XCHNG
- Flickr
 - Flickr Search Engines



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There are some other sources you might want to be aware of. Stock.XCHNG, and Flickr both allow hosting of images, and **some** are available for free.

The key thing is to know how to search. With Flickr, you want to go to the advanced search page, then go to search for Creative Commons, and click the appropriate check boxes as shown in the screen shot.

Creative commons provides a method for designers, photographers, and others to release their work to the world for free, while still retaining copyright protection. There are different levels, so if you want to use it for your kids class project, you don't have to check commercially, but if you want to use it at your product launch, or paid training, you do. This is why you might notice a little CC at the bottom of the images I've used, with a person's tag. This is a link back to their flickr account.

Sometimes the most obvious place
to get a photo...

...Your Own Camera



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Now I sometimes have to admit, and maybe you do as well, but I won't ask...I get a little focus on a solution, and sometimes fail to see obvious solutions.

When putting together this presentation, I was needing an image for my little no-brainer icon. I searched the sites I reference, and couldn't find one I liked, they were too medical, abstract, or gross. I was about to give up and come up with a different idea, when I realized I was squeezing my little stress toy, which happens to be a little brain. Then I worried about how to get it's image captured, then I realized of course that I had a camera on my phone, a camera I keep in my car, a couple of cameras at home if I just went looking for them...and my problem was solved. Digital cameras are everywhere, and if you don't have one, hopefully someone in your department will, and they can lend it to you for 5 minutes. We've used this many times before to take virtual tours of buildings and such, so why not use it for our presentations.

Low Cost Screen Capture Software

- SnagIt
 - <http://www.techsmith.com/screen-capture.asp>
 - by: TechSmith
 - Standard
 - Can capture windows which need to scroll
 - Add captions
- FullShot
 - <http://www.inbit.com/fullshot.html>
 - by: inbit
 - Add “tears” or “rips”
 - Add captions, notations

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Now I work for a software company, so screen shots are always a must for us. We need them for everything from manuals, to live training, to webinar based training like this session. But even if you don't work for a software company, often there is a need for basic training to cover new employees on your companies custom systems. We are even developing a class on Microsoft Outlook, because while we might all know how to use it, we have found that a lot of recent college graduates have never used Outlook before and have issues with setting their calendars, replying to all, etc. So internally, for software we use, we use lots of screen shots.

There are numerous companies that provide a way to capture an image of your screen. Most of these can be found for between \$40 and \$70 based upon the number of features you are looking for.

Most capture software allows you to provide annotations, like arrows or captions to highlight an important part of the screenshot. Some will even provide little design helps, like adding a drop shadow, or a screen tare where the capture ends.

SnagIt is a very common application on the PC, with several features like if a window is not big enough, it will scroll to get all of the content.

Free Screen Capture

- Jing Project
- Print Screen
 - No downloads – just your keyboard
 - Comes with your OS
 - Print Screen grabs your whole desktop area
 - Ctrl + Print Screen grabs only the active window!



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Jing Project, which also captures moving screen shots, can capture still screen shots. Once selected, it allows you to save the image, or make some minor changes.

Although the easiest one to use, is the one which many people don't know about, and it comes built into your Operating System. It's is the Print Screen Key. Pressing the key grabs a screen shot of your entire application. If you are a Windows user, holding the Control Key when you click the print screen button will capture the active window. This is how we capture the vast majority of screenshots at my work.

But sometimes we get busy, and forget. Recently I was helping a co-worker. She wanted to grab a chart that was in a PDF and import it into a Word document. Now without the original source chart, or a PDF reader, she was starting to fret. So we just grabbed a screenshot, cropped the image in a image editing application (which we'll see an example of in just a minute) and copied the chart into Word. It took less than 2 minutes, and no new software. I've also used it to send a quick screen shot of an app to a client I'm training to ensure they see the correct screen while we are on the phone holding a conversation.

And since it comes with your operating system, IT can't complain about having to install extra applications on your computer.

Low Cost Screen Video Capture

- Mimic
 - by: Mad Cap
 - <http://madcapsoftware.com/products/mimic/>
 - 
- Screen Mimic
 - By: Decimus Software, Inc
 - For Mac OS X
 - <http://www.decimus.net/ScreenMimic.php>
 - 

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Screen capture in the last few years has taken on another stance. Not just for still screen shots, but videos of use using the software so they can see how the software is used.

This has been a major step forward, and opened up numerous additional training resources. Unfortunately, they are also tending to be very expensive running into the thousands of dollars in some cases.

Luckily in the past year, there have been some cheaper alternatives to come out. Each has their own advantages and disadvantages, with differing tools and capabilities.

Mimic is a nice example of an application which while still a little expensive, gives you multiple output options, and the ability to incorporate with other Mad Cap software products such as their Help Authoring tool.

Price 4 out of 5 as it is a little high compared to some others, but still cheaper than others

Features, 4 out of 5

Ease of use 4 out of 5, you'll be recording basic items in just a few minutes, and able to use more advance features shortly after that, especially if you've had any experience with Captivate.

Screen Mimic allows the standard options such as basic transitions, audio voice over, and other similar features. More advanced editing is limited however, as is the types of files which it can be output from the system, however it works on Macintosh OS X, systems, and cost less than some of the Window's versions.





Price 2 out of 5 – fairly inexpensive

Feature Strength – 3 out of 5

Can't say on ease of use, as we only run PC's in our shop – but if anyone has used it, or decides to, I'd love to get a user's experience.

“Free” Screen Video Capture

- **Jing Project**
 - By: TechSmith
 - <http://jingproject.com/>
 - Ability to easily upload to a website
 - Available for Windows and Mac OS X
 - Pro version available for low cost, and it provides extra features

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Next we'll look at Jing Project. This was just recently released, and come from the same company that makes SnagIt, TechSmith. Jing is a simpler program than SnagIt or Camtasia Studio, an other screen capture application. It only allows recordings of up to 5 minutes, and doesn't allow editing.

However, it does allow audio narration during recording, and automated uploads to a file sharing site. This is one of the nicest features, especially if you are performing a “Learning 2.0” type of peer training over a instant messenger or similar type app because when you upload the video, it automatically gives you a link which you can send to the trainee. Jing's price, if you decide to purchase it is only \$15 a year, and allows you to remove the Jing watermark, and improves the upload ability (now to YouTube) and increases the file transfers from their own sharing site.

It also has the added feature of being available for both Mac and PC.



For professional use, I'd say the pro version is a requirement, so we'll give it a 1 out of 5.

The features are a bit limited, so only 2 out of 5

It is real easy to use, of 4 out 5

Free Screen Video Capture

- **Wink**
 - By: Debug Mode
 - <http://www.debugmode.com/wink/>
 - Allows editing, and event driven screen captures
 - Supports Windows and Linux



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Wink is a truly Free application. It also supports Linux and Windows, so if you have any Unix/Linux based applications which need captured, this becomes one of very few possibilities.

The interface is not nearly as polished as some interfaces, however, it runs well and offers lots of features including multi-lingual support, support for multiple input and output file types, and editing of your recording, including mouse position.

While recommended for smaller recording sections I.e. parts of a screen, not the whole screen, it does a good job, especially for the given price.

No charge,

4 out of 5 in feature strength

2 out of 5 in ease of use, but give yourself a day to play with it, and you'll be working around no problem – especially if you like to remove the little mistakes we all make while recording.

Free Imaging Software

- Gimp
 - <http://www.gimp.org/>
 - For Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X
 - Lots of plug-ins to extend its ability
 - Provides many of the same features as Photoshop



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Once we have our captures, either from a screen, a camera, or stock photo, we will need to edit these images together. We'll look at 3 free image tools, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Gimp has been around for years, and has a full feature set to prove. Additionally, features not in the core program, and often be found as plug-ins – which are little add in programs which enhance the ability of Gimp.

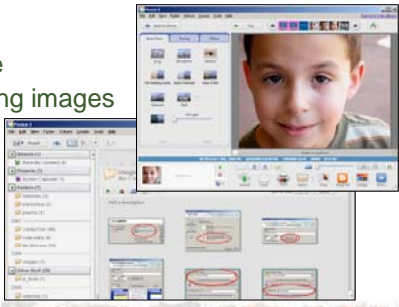
The fact that Gimp is free, and gives you so much functionality is very enticing for many people.

Gimp is available for the 3 main operating systems, and is almost as powerful as Photoshop, some would even argue more, so full 5 out of 5 in strength.

However, given all of it's abilities, ease of use, is not one of it's strengths, especially if you are not familiar with a program like Photoshop, so only 2 out of 5. Those who are designers, and used to using full image editing software, should pick it up quickly.

Free Imaging Software

- Picasa
 - Mac OS X & PC
 - Free from Google
 - More for organizing images



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Picasa is a tool which Google bought a couple of years ago, and has worked on revamping. It has great organizational features, so if you and your company have built up a number of photos over time, it is a great tool for searching for photos quickly. It does this by allowing you to tag photos with key words, then search for those words. So if you wanted to develop training for managers on interviewing for example, you could search your own photos for “meeting”, “interview”, “manager”, etc, and find some images without having to go to an outside resource.

Picasa also allows for basic editing within the application, however, it is limited to editing large portions of an image, which means adding captions, and other features often needed for training resources. However, if you right click on an image, you can choose to open the image in a preferred image editor like the one we’ll look at next.

Picasa, like many of Google’s products, is free.

What it does, helping you find images you already have, it does well, and does fast. Other things, it doesn’t attempt, so it can’t do them poorly. So we’ll give it 3 out of 5 for strength.

We’ll also list it as 4 out of 5 for ease of use.

Free Imaging Software

- Paint.Net 
- <http://www.getpaint.net/>
- For Windows only
- Like Windows Paint, *on steroids*
- Easier to use than Gimp/Photoshop, but not as powerful

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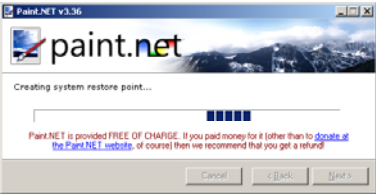
Paint.Net is a nice little program for doing simple edits to your photos, such as cropping, changing the color balance, or adding captions and highlights. It can also do much more, such as remove red eye, and add other effects.

It works well for these features, and this is what I've experienced a majority of the time I need to do to prepare files for my learning content.

Originally, I would have to use Windows built in Paint program. However, as anyone who has used it much before, you know how limiting it can be. Paint.Net is like Paint, but on steroids. Not the bad kind that baseball player's use, but the good kind which makes our programs strong.

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Live Demo – Paint.Net

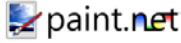




■ Paint.Net

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Let's take a quick look at a live Demo of Paint.Net. I love the little sign on the install, if you paid money for it, the get a refund. We'll just show you how to use it, and how simple it is.

Free Imaging Software

- **Paint.Net** 
- <http://www.getpaint.net/>

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You will need to download the .Net framework to your computer to make Paint.Net work, however it is free just like Paint.Net, so no cost.

While most of the time, you'll be doing simple edits, there is more that you can do of course. For most things, I'll give it a 3 out of 5

You can be up and editing in Paint.Net in a matter of minutes, so it is nice and easy to use. And the more you use it, the more features you'll learn about. We'll give it a 4 out of 5 for ease of use.

Web Based Imaging Software

- Aviary
 - Multiple types of imaging tools: photo editing, pattern making, etc.
 - Small Subscription Fee
 - <http://aviary.com/home>
- Sumo Paint
 - Photo Manipulation and Painting
 - Free
 - Requires no sign-on
 - <http://www.sumopaint.com/>

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There are several web based image editing tools, most of them are currently free or a low cost. Web based imaging software has several advantages, and disadvantages over installed software. First, since you don't have to install anything, your IT department is less likely to complain about potential viruses, licenses, etc. Of course you do have several limitations in speed, upload/downloading of the image, and feature set, but for basic image manipulation, and then some, these web based tools do provide options that may not be otherwise available.

Most of these offer more than enough power for your standard uses a training department will need them for, cropping, changing the brightness/contrast, etc. However, they don't offer the full functionality of Photoshop, but we don't need that much control either.

Likewise they are fairly easy to use, as long as you are patient enough while they download.

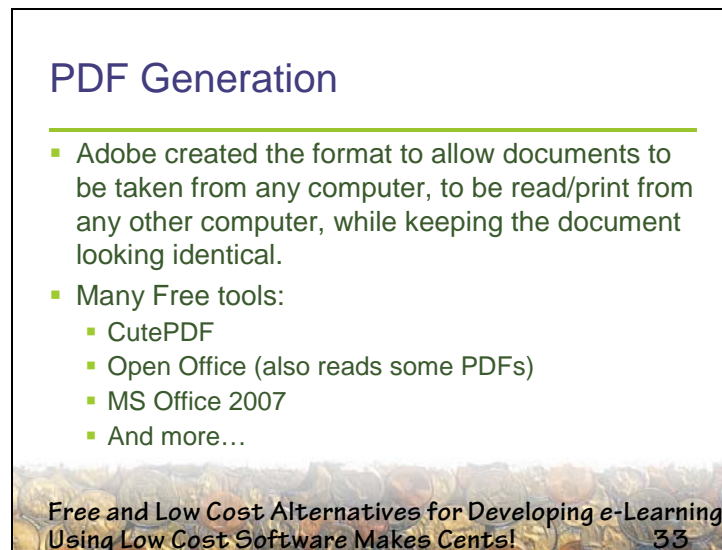
Delivering Your Content

I have to send it where?



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Most people I've noticed generally either develop their on-line content in PowerPoint, or an app specific to their company for use in their LMS. So I want to move forward into how can we push this digital content out, if its not for formal learning, or if your budget for distribution has been reduced.



PDF Generation

- Adobe created the format to allow documents to be taken from any computer, to be read/print from any other computer, while keeping the document looking identical.
- Many Free tools:
 - CutePDF
 - Open Office (also reads some PDFs)
 - MS Office 2007
 - And more...

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One of the most common formats to output our learning is PDF. Whether it be for distributing slides, notes, or other handouts, we tend to use it everywhere. However, Adobe Acrobat Pro is not cheap, and often a training department will have only 1 or 2 copies, so everyone has to funnel it through those few people.

There are numerous free PDF converters available. On my machine I use CutePDF, which looks like a printer, so I just select the PDF printer, and go. I also have used Open Office from time to time in the past. It has several advantages, such as it can read some PDF documents, and is a full suite of Office tools, such as a word processor, spreadsheet application and presentation software. I've used Open Office to set up small businesses, which didn't have Microsoft Office available.

The last one, which many people don't know about is actually Microsoft Office 2007. If you have Office 2007 already, you can go to Microsoft's website and find a free PDF converter. All you have to do is download the file, which takes about 2 minutes, and run the install program. We installed in for our team after we upgraded to 2007, because Adobe Acrobat was taking too long to convert documents to PDF from the new Office version. Conversion takes about as long as saving the document normally does.

There are of course many more, but we won't get into those, as we could spend all day just talking about this one topic, and there are a few other's to discuss.

Web Page Development

- Few of us will have to do full web development.
- But, as many of us output to HTML, we occasionally are called upon to edit a file.




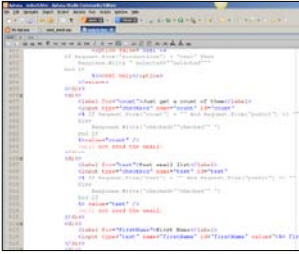
© by Bull3t

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Now many of us won't have to do much web development, however, I've noticed a lot of the applications we use, have to be tweaked just a little bit to make it work correctly. For example, our web server is a secure server so we have to convert all of the http to https.

Free Web Editors

- Aptana
 - Text/Code only editing
 - Lots of add-ons available
 - Becoming more Programmer Centric, but quick edits still possible



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Aptana is one of the web editors I use for solving both simple and complex web problems.

It only allows you to edit in text mode, however one of the nice things about Aptana, is that it color codes all of your elements for you, which makes it nice for quick edits of code. It also has built in preview for Internet Explorer and Firefox, so you don't have to necessarily launch browser to test that your changes work.


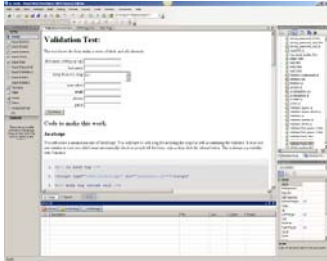
Aptana works with Windows, Macintosh, and Linux operating systems. And has a nearly fully functional free version, as well as a pro version.

It is continuously being updated, and will work well in many web development teams, as it is moving away from the normal user. So the strength of it, is nearly a 5 out of 5 for those who need it.

However, because it is a complex application, available for work in many instances and requires one to know HTML, I would rate it as a 2 out of 5 for ease of use.

Free Web Editors

- MS Visual Web Developer Express Edition
 - WYSIWYG editor
 - Can do full web programming as well as simple pages



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If your looking an easier to use web design tool, I'd recommend Microsoft's Visual Web Developer Express Edition. This is a WHYSIYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor which is actually a free product from Microsoft. While not as powerful as their full fledged development tools, it still provides a lot of functionality which the average person needs. Add to it a simple editor which makes creating web pages as easy as typing in Word, and you have the starting of a descent application.

If you are so inclined, you can edit in code as well as design mode, and it even supports editing for full .Net web applications, but that is usually best left to your web programming team.

So this application is Free, and being from a name like Microsoft, means that your IT department will probably have less to say about you installing it.

It has a fair amount of power, so 5 out of 5 in strength, and 4 out of 5 in ease of use. Microsoft has also provided some tutorials on their website for you to view to see how to use this application.

Web Conferencing

- **Yugma, DimDim, Yuuguu**
 - Groups of up to 20
 - Includes ability to share white boards, documents, desktop, etc.
 - Free and Fee based depending upon needs
 - Runs in the browser Yugma (with Java support) & DimDim (Flash) or as separate download (Yuuguu)



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Next we'll look at some simple web conferencing applications. These are much simpler than something like Adobe Connect or WebEx, however, for performing in house training at different locations, they provide a much cheaper alternative. The 3 I reviewed, include Yugma, DimDim, and Yuuguu. They each allow up to 20 connections, and allow use of features like sharing documents, whiteboards, and other features.


Each has a free version for up to 20 connections, while paid versions allow additional connections and features such as recording your event, personalized branding, etc.

I have used Yugma and DimDim, and each was easy enough to create an account, and start a meeting.

Each has their own advantages and disadvantages which have to be weighed.

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

- Moodle
- Free Web Based LMS
- Runs in any browser for both admin and user
- “Needs” to run on a Unix/Linux server



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Learning Management Systems can be one of the largest expenses for a school or business running from the 10s of thousands of dollars, on up to the millions of dollars. This is the only LMS I’m aware of which is free. It is Moodle, and based off of the Joomla Content Management System.

It, like all LMSs, does take a bit to run, and given it’s design, runs better on a Linux server. However, it is a full fledged LMS, so if your company doesn’t have one this is an option. If you are looking for an interdepartmental LMS, this would clearly work, as the cost to run one is low.

Thanks for Attending!

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