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Press Release

Computer-based Training in the South African Army Engineer Formation

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

Benjamin Franklin paraphrasing Confucius

During troop deployments outside the borders of South Africa, it is critical for the health and wellbeing of our forces to have a clean, fresh, and safe source of drinkable water. With this in mind, the SA Army instituted Project Blesbok some time ago. The project is for a complete Water Provisioning System (WPS) that covers equipment for the detection, extraction, purification, and packaging of water from a wide variety of surface and subterranean sources.

This technologically advanced project includes elements that range from simple water pumps and storage tanks through to complex state-of-the-art purification and bottling equipment. All the elements are packaged in modular containers for easy transportation and deployment.

A critical element in a system as diverse and complex as the WPS is the training of the military personnel that will operate and maintain every element of the system. In addition to conventional classroom-based Instructor, Learner, and Assessment Guides; Computer-Based Training (CBT) was identified early in the system planning as being a necessity for the project.



The dedicated facility set up at the School of Engineers

Traditional paper-based training documents are typically used in scheduled training courses which often take many months to organise – meaning that it can take a long time to equip personnel with the skills necessary to run the system. CBT in a dedicated facility, allows students and instructors to literally use the system whenever required without planning, scheduling or organising.

Sigma Logistic Solutions was appointed as the logistic support providers for the WPS. In addition to developing the Logistic Support Analysis (LSA) on every element of the system, they also developed all the support manuals, training manuals, and the CBT.

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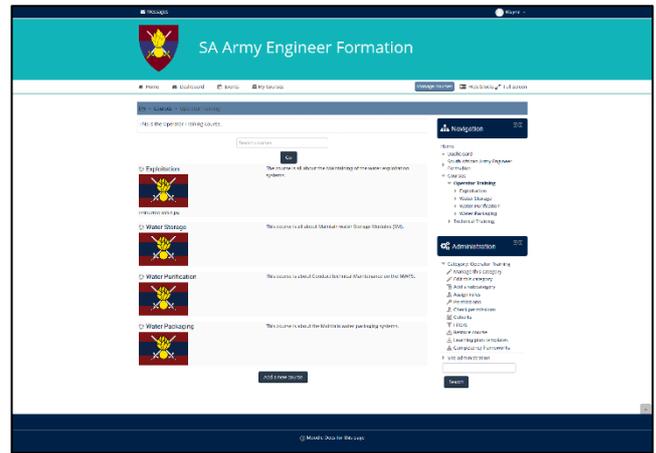
Directors : KM Mokoape (Chairman), WC Swanepoel (Managing), PB van der Merwe

In conjunction with the SA Army School of Engineers at Kroonstad, Sigma supplied all the hardware and software to create a dedicated CBT facility that can accommodate 10 students at a time. The system comprises a server, printer, and 10 workstations all connected on a Wi-Fi network. A projector and screen are also supplied for presentation purposes.

The CBT package provides an alternative training strategy to conventional classroom training by not only allowing time flexibility but also allowing the decentralisation of training. The typical classroom instructor is replaced by video clips, voice instruction, illustrations, and animations. Each learning unit concludes with an outcomes-based assessment.

Assessments are based on multiple questions banks that are either selected by the assessor or by the program carrying out a random selection. Questions can be multiple-choice, true-or-false, short paragraphs, identification-based or by association. The program can also be set up to provide either a general result per student or detailed feedback per question answered. Results are available immediately and can even be emailed to specified addresses.

The CBT package was developed on open-source software which reduced the cost substantially and will allow the end-users to further develop the courseware in the future if necessary. The system will undergo testing at the School of Engineers until early next year, after which final changes will be made ahead of the full implementation of the WPS in 2020.



An Operator Training page from the program

543 words