Adapt Learning: Vision breakdown and principles

Document control

Abstract:	Breaks down the vision statement into various themes and explains these.		
Audience:	Anyone working on the project or wishing to understand the vision and how we apply and work towards it.		
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Summary of Changes:	Versions	Date	Description
	0.1	14 / 11 / 2013	Initial draft for review.
	1.0	19 / 11 /2013	Review with Ryan. Promotion to version 1.0

Purpose of document

The purpose of this document is to break down and explain the vision statement and define the applicable principles for each of the major disciplines.

The document is intended for briefing newcomers as well as serving as a checklist for decision-making or reviewing work.

Vision statement breakdown

Below is the vision statement as agreed as part of the setup of the Adapt Learning open source project. We acknowledge this may not be perfect or as clear as it can be. However, it captures a lot of the intention and ambition and a good amount of time has been spent trying to phrase it. This section aims at summarizing and explaining the various themes and thought processes that are contained within the statement.

Vision statement

In the table below, the vision statement is broken down into identifiable chunks:

ID	Statement
VIS1	To create, as a community, the leading e-learning authoring tool for producing responsive content (i.e. single version output) that works across multiple types of devices.
VIS2	To develop a freely available authoring tool for organisations that wish to develop their own responsive e-learning content, specifically those in education but also commercial companies and public organisations.
VIS3	To encourage a large, global community of end users and developers and drive for widest possible adoption by releasing the code under the GPL open source license and ensuring a low barrier of adoption for all types of users.
VIS4	To ensure that the tool is intuitive and easy to use for those with limited technical knowledge.
VIS5	To ensure the authoring tool produces content, which can be deployed to a typical environment that end users may have (e.g. Moodle, SCORM-based LMSs etc.)
VIS6	To support the principles of collaborative development and transition to a community led governance structure.

Extrapolation and explanation of themes

In order to explain the vision statement, the table below highlights the themes and thoughts, which are contained within the vision. It also attempts to describe the though processes behind each of the themes.

Related VIS ID	Theme	Description
VIS1, VIS6	Development as a community, collaborative development and community-led governance structure	The key elements we wanted to capture here are: That this project is not the effort of one particular organization or partnership but rather something that's meant to of benefit for the whole learning and development industry. That everyone can get involved and their contribution will be recognized. Significant contributions will be rewarded with influence as long as the collaborator is aligned to the vision statement and principles.

		The principles of a meritocracy apply.
		We work collaboratively. The particular aspect to highlight is that we would like this project to be a place where neither hierarchies nor competition or individual business goals play a major role. Our particular aim to let everyone achieve their individual goals and to orchestrate these efforts towards the common vision.
VIS1	Learning and e-Learning in particular	We stay focused on learning and e-learning in particular. This means making the best decisions in terms of creating a tool and framework, which consider the goal of their primary audience to be the production of learning materials.
		We endeavor to strike the right balance between flexibility / configurability and ease of use. We will avoid trying to please everybody (in particular those who are using Adapt for anything other than producing learning materials) and watering down the vision in doing so.
VIS1, VIS3	Market leading authoring tool	We are ambitious and strive for the best possible result. We want to produce the best (i.e. market leading tool), no matter whether we are compared to proprietary or other open source tools. We accept that this means working intelligently and hard on an ongoing basis.
		To narrow down the statement a little, we are aiming to produce the best server based tool, which produces responsive design e-learning content.
		We believe we have a very good chance to achieve this seeing as:
		• The marketplace does not have (m)any mature solutions in this space at the time of writing the document • The marketplace is ready for open source models and software business models have been changing significantly • We can scale up the contributor capacity (developers in particular) much beyond the capabilities of a proprietary model.
		However, in order to achieve this, we must also consider the following:
		• We have to achieve mass adoption. Various considerations apply including openness, being thorough, producing a high quality product, marketing, etc. These considerations are woven into the project in various places. • We have to be led by our end users. It's important to engage end users and listening to them in terms of demand, what's needed and where the pain points are. • We have to satisfy the needs of commercial e-learning producers (described in more detail below). • We have to enable service based business models (described in more detail below). • We have to enable scalability of design and development activity on the project.
		Satisfying the needs of commercial e-learning producers:

This means making it beneficial for companies like Kineo, Learning Pool and Sponge to use the framework or tool in their production work. E-learning companies need to work quickly, cost effectively and they need to have enough flexibility to meet their clients' needs. Our set-up accommodates this as follows:

- It's possible to use the Adapt framework only, i.e. without the authoring tool. We hope this will encourage developers in commercial companies in adopting the Framework. Having the codebase available to them should save cost of developing their own and any ongoing maintenance and further development.
- The Adapt framework is modular and flexible. It's easy to add to and also accommodates overrides, which helps avoid customizations. This will enable commercial producers to use the codebase and achieve high-end, bespoke output. We also hope that developers who benefit from the codebase and create extensions will contribute these back to the project, meaning the wider community benefits.
- All code is available under GPL, which means content producers (who are essentially service providers) can create content and package the codebase without any impediment to their business model.
- One of our success criteria is to make the Adapt Authoring tool cost effective to use for commercial content producers. In other words, it has to be quick and fit with s variety of production processes.
- The Authoring Tool also has to deliver the ability for content producers to collaborate with their clients. This is designed to help with the workflow (customer engagement) and producing high quality output (e.g. by keeping the data in a single place and managing versions, comments and issues lists).
- Ability to configure and extend the workflow. Working practices vary across organizations and even clients and projects. The ability to reflect the workflow closely and offer (optional) functionality at various stages will enable more end users to use the tool for their purposes. It will be possible to extend the workflow in the Authoring Tool (using workflow plug-ins) to reflect working practices very closely. This also means that as working practices evolve (or community members think of better ways to work than we have done), it's possible for the tool to improve and move with the times.
- Considers regular challenges of working with tools for developers via overrides functionality. If the output of a tool has to be modified by a developer, these changes can be made once, uploaded to the authoring environment and will then be included every time an end user publishes. In our experience, this can save a lot of time and effort.

Enable and support service based business models:

		In order to get to a market leading position, we appreciate that offering the tool has to make commercial sense to service providers. Commercial service offers are a sign of mature and successful open source projects. The ability to get experts (suppliers and end users) in the marketplace forms a part of this and enables clients (especially in the private sector) to consider and buy into open source software as they can satisfy 'purchase' requirements such as contracts, service level agreements and the ability to find and recruit system owners / administrators and users. Unlike with some commercial open source projects, we are not providing a cut down free and a paid for enterprise version but rather we will: • Make the entire tool and framework available for free (thus enabling and encouraging mass adoption). • Build in features, which support commercial service provision (e.g. multi-tenanting, quotas, tool branding etc.). • Encourage and support commercial service providers in adopting the tool. This includes the founders as well as any other organization or individual who in interested in becoming a service provider. Building the tool as a server-based authoring tool is a key part in enabling commercial service provision to grow when we move towards maturity.
VIS1	Responsive content, single version output, suitable for multi-device delivery	By responsive content, we mean web based learning content, which adapts according to the available screen size and device capabilities as opposed to: • Producing native apps (for tablets and smartphones) • Developing multiple versions of a single content module
VIS2	Freely available	Anyone can download and use the framework or tool and use is within the terms allowed by the GPL v3.0. This includes using the code for their purposes and for providing chargeable services to clients. It specifically excludes the ability to license or sell the code or include it in a piece of software, which is then sold / licensed and distributed.
VIS2, VIS3	In-house development, breadth of target audience	There are several parts of the vision statement, which stipulate the breadth of our intended target audience (albeit, this is implied and could be clearer). Some examples of this audience are: • Learning designers (or the L&D team at large) in a private or public sector organization. • Commercial content companies who own and sell access to generic libraries of content. • Subject matter experts (SMEs; individuals or organizations) wishing to create (and potentially sell) their content. • Bespoke e-Learning producers, i.e. companies, which develop e-learning materials for their clients. • College tutors or teachers wishing to create content for their lessons. (Colleges, schools, universities, too, for that matter)

		• Freelance e-Learning developers.
		We have considered how Adapt Learning can benefit each of these user types (and vice versa) and will publish documentation and instructions for each user type in due course.
		Overall, our ambition is to make the Adapt Learning open source project a 'place', which benefits the industry at large and enables all involved to collaborate and move e-learning on.
VIS3	Global take-up, multi-language	We believe to lead the market means doing so globally and as part of this we aim to rise to the challenges that an international audience brings. This includes building language capabilities, time zone support and underlying hosting infrastructure considerations (such as infrastructure scalability and CDN delivery) into the architecture.
VIS3	Mass adoption, GPL	The project has been set up with mass adoption in mind. By mass adoption, we mean adoption by as many end users (even over developers), as possible. We believe the real benefit to the Learning industry is to enable as many people as possible to produce high-quality, responsive design learning content very cost effectively.
		As part of this, we have chosen the GPL license as this encourages adoption by end users rather than developers building proprietary extensions. We care about the principle of not having to pay for the code. However, we do encourage service provision, as mentioned above, which may come later down the line, i.e. when the project has proven to be successful and worth adopting.
VIS3, VIS4	Low barrier to entry, difference between end users and developers	As mentioned above, we understand there is a key difference between these two user types and we aim to cater for these major differences. The key aspects, we believe will allow us to meet the needs of both types are: • Good documentation, instructions and examples/demos. Considering and designing to enable either major user type to have a success within 5 minutes from looking at the project. This should include a free (but limited in terms of resources) hosted environment. • Building a server-side tool, which forces us to create a user interface, avoids installation issues on locked down computer environments. As part of this, we have to ensure that there is a free service available, even if this has limited resources for each person signing up.
VIS4, VIS1	Intuitive and easy to use for non-technical end users	In order to produce a market leading authoring tool, the user interface must be intuitive and designed for non-technical end users. It should be a positive experience to work with the tool and we will engage directly with our target audience in developing and improving the interface and functionality. We commit to listening out for and logging pain points / frustrations and endeavor to improve the system where possible.
VIS5	Typical environment,	We are mindful of developments in the marketplace and will adapt to

	mindful of best practice and systems in the marketplace	them. Our governance structure (steering group membership in particular) has been designed to give the project a well-informed and well-balanced view of up to date developments in the marketplace. Unlike many other open source projects, Adapt Learning is not just technology led but has best practice in Learning, User Interface and Product Design built into its DNA. It also caters for service provision and commercial open source business models.
		The architecture is pluggable, extendible and will facilitate system integration. Where possible, we will make integration with other leading and relevant systems as easy as possible.