



Training Canada's Coaches to Win

Canadian Sport Institute empowers coaches with modern learning experiences from D2L

How do you train the next generation of elite coaches, when education has to fit around their busy professional schedules? The Canadian Sport Institute (CSI) has worked with D2L to build a flexible, user-friendly learning platform that makes CSI's advanced courses accessible for coaches across Canada.

Company

CSI provides world-leading Olympic and Paralympic training environments to elite athletes and coaches across Alberta. With the support of its partners, CSI's team of experts delivers sport science and medicine, coaching, and life services to power podium performances and help Canada win more medals. These institutes have supported athletes who have won 143 gold medals (and 421 medals in total) at the World Championships and the Olympic and Paralympic Games since 1994.

AT A GLANCE

Client: Canadian Sport Institute

Employees: 70

Learners: 1,200

Industry: Professional Associations

CHALLENGE

- Deliver courses remotely
- Provide learning opportunities that could fit into busy professional schedules
- Simplify delivery and management of course materials and assignments
- Enhance information security for leading-edge Canadian sports science research

SOLUTION

- ePortfolio
- ePortfolio mobile app
- YouSeeU (video streaming)

RESULT

- Cuts travel costs by enabling instructors to teach via streaming video links
- Reduces attrition by helping students learn at their own pace, anywhere in the world
- Simplifies collaboration with other institutions in developing innovative online courses
- Improves security by storing content in a single repository in a Canadian data center



The Challenge

ELITE COACHING MAXIMIZES ATHLETES' POTENTIAL

One of CSI's most important roles is to train and mentor coaches and instructors at all levels across more than 60 sports. For example, it runs the National Coaching Certificate Program, which engages with more than 50,000 coaches every year. And for coaches who want to take the next step, it also provides the Advanced Coaching Diploma (ACD)—the highest qualification for coaching in Canada.

Jason Sjostrom, director of coaching at CSI, explains: "Elite athletes need elite coaching, so we aim to give national and regional coaches access to the best resources that Canadian sports science has to offer. The ACD isn't a traditional learning program—it's a competency-based program, where we're looking for coaches to demonstrate how they bring their coaching philosophy to life."

EVOLVING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

As the ACD curriculum evolves, CSI's systems and processes must evolve with it. In particular, they must be flexible enough to align with the needs of both instructors and coaches—most of whom need to fit their engagement with the program around their many other professional coaching duties.

"We have instructors and students who live a long way from Calgary, and even the local ones are often away, working at events or training camps in other countries," says Sjostrom. "If we can't make the learning experience easy to fit in with their busy professional lives, we're going to lose a lot of good coaches from the program—so flexibility is key."

SHARING AND SECURING SENSITIVE COACHING DATA

The ACD's nontraditional methods also raise unusual requirements around student assessment and evaluation.

"Our primary focus isn't tests and written assignments—it's asking students to demonstrate their coaching philosophy and how they put it into practice as they work with their athletes," notes Sjostrom. "We needed a better way for them to capture those experiences and share them with their fellow students and mentors—for example, by making and sharing videos."

Finally, the Institute needs to ensure that its learning platforms protect highly sensitive data about coaches, athletes, and training practices to preserve Canada's competitive advantage in international competition.

"Confidence in our technology partners is absolutely key to make sure we are the best possible stewards of our coaches' and athletes' data," says Sjostrom.

“D2L gives access to coaches who otherwise wouldn’t be able to participate,” says Sjostrom. “Putting an extra 15 to 20 hours a week into our diploma is a big effort—and if coaches needed to be on-site all the time, it would become almost impossible.”

Jason Sjostrom, director of coaching at CSI

The Solution

From a technology perspective, CSI had been supporting the ACD program with a variety of decentralized tools. Students and instructors would use Dropbox or Google Drive to share documents and videos, and Adobe Connect for web conferencing to support remote learning. It was a pragmatic approach that solved many day-to-day problems, but the Institute wanted to find a more secure and integrated platform.

“We decided to work with D2L to reduce the number of moving parts in our processes,” explains Sjostrom. “D2L had all the services we were looking for—it’s a versatile platform that enables us to do everything we want.”

He adds: “The ePortfolio app is a huge attraction for us, helping instructors distribute course materials and students upload their videos and other content in a coherent way. Whether they’re using audio and video files or PowerPoints and Word documents, the platform gives users lots of different ways to communicate and share knowledge.”

FLEXIBLE REMOTE LEARNING TO ALIGN WITH BUSY SCHEDULES

CSI also uses the D2L platform’s integrated webinar features.

“The D2L solution makes it easy to set up learning sessions with students and instructors regardless of their location, and record them so that people who aren’t able to attend can watch later,” says Sjostrom.

The Institute has also integrated the platform with a video streaming service from YouSeeU, a specialist in soft skills development. This allows instructors to stream video content from wherever they happen to be working, not only to students at CSI’s main campus, but also to other CSI centers across the country.

SUPPORT AND SECURITY

From CSI’s perspective, choosing a Canadian company as a technology partner was another key advantage. This not only increased the organization’s confidence in the level of support that D2L could provide, but helped address security concerns, since D2L’s servers are all located in Canadian data centers.

“The support from D2L has been outstanding,” says Sjostrom. “We signed up at the end of March and we were fully operational in May, so the turnaround time to get the platform rolled out to our users was fantastic.”



The Results

ACCESSIBILITY IS KEY

According to Sjostrom, the D2L platform's accessibility has been key to the success of CSI's solution.

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In previous years, if a coach in another province wanted to earn the diploma, it might have taken four years instead of two. With the D2L platform, this friction is greatly reduced, making it possible for coaches to complete the course in a more reasonable time frame.

"In my program, there is a freestyle ski coach based out of Toronto; he was in Australia for four and a half weeks and was able to stay on top of the program," says Sjostrom.

EXCEPTIONAL EASE OF USE

The D2L platform's ease of use also plays an important role in encouraging user adoption. Coaches of all ages and aptitudes with technology participate in the ACD, so a user-friendly interface is vital.

"I needed to craft a 15-minute presentation at the midpoint of the course, and I found ePortfolio intuitive and easy to use," says Phyllis Sadoway, one of Canada's greatest-ever ringette coaches, who used D2L's platform to study for her ACD. "It's also great to be able to share comments and receive feedback."

SUPPORTING FUTURE SUCCESS

Looking to the future, CSI is planning to make the D2L platform an integral part of its onboarding process for the next cohort of ACD students. It will also play a key role in collaborations with other educational institutions, such as a standalone leadership workshop that CSI is developing with Queen's University in Ontario.

"The coaches we're training work with athletes who are on the pathway to compete at the Olympics, and this initiative plays a vital role in supporting our mission of powering podium performances and helping Canada win more medals," says Sjostrom.