

Westlaw® CARSWELL USER SUCCESS STORY

TWEN® The West Education Network

“I would definitely recommend TWEN® The West Education Network for the ease with which you can post materials, the discussion forums, and the ability to revise the course as you go along. These are all very useful features.”

– Professor Lorne Sossin, Associate Professor & Associate Dean,
Faculty of Law, University of Toronto



BUSINESS PROFILE

INDUSTRY

Legal, Academic

CLIENT

Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

THE CHALLENGE

- > Integrating new technologies into the learning environment
- > Maintaining independence from external influences on teaching practices

THE SOLUTION

- > West's TWEN® (The West Education Network)

KEY BENEFITS

- > No cost to the students
- > Flexibility in modifying course content
- > Discussion forums that encourage student participation in discussing issues introduced in the classroom
- > Allows vendor-independent access to content



TWEN® The West Education Network provides a technology boost to universities

The University of Toronto's Faculty of Law is dedicated to being one of the world's great law schools—an institution where the ideals of scholarly excellence, humanity and societal leadership are celebrated and embraced. One of the ways that the faculty maintains its leadership is by adopting technology to assist in the teaching and learning processes.

Two years ago, the University of Toronto launched a pilot project to introduce TWEN® The West Education Network into the Faculty of Law. The program is based on a voluntary phase-in of the courseware, with each professor deciding whether he or she will use the web-based solution as an online extension to his or her courses.

The faculty used several criteria to select TWEN® as the courseware of choice for the professors. Primary among them were zero cost to the student and a non-partisan approach to content that would not limit the university to only one vendor's information resources.

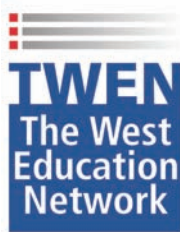
“We were interested in integrating technology into the classroom and when Carswell approached us to collaborate on a pilot of TWEN®, it seemed like a good fit,” says Professor Lorne Sossin, Associate Professor & Associate Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto. “After an initial information session with Carswell, a number of faculty indicated their willingness to try TWEN®. Since there was no cost to the students, we decided to see how it developed in some monitored settings.”

“We also emphasize to the students that it is non-partisan, so if for example Westlaw® CARSWELL doesn't have a case that I want to post and a competitor does, I can post the competitor's product. We don't want to have our curricular goals harnessed to the commercial interests of a for-profit provider and TWEN® gives us the freedom to avoid this problem,” says professor Sossin.

TWEN® is an online extension of the law school classroom. Using TWEN®, law faculty can create and manage courses online, access and post course materials, create assignments that students can receive and submit, participate in class forum discussions, check on important dates, and much more. All they need is Internet access and a Westlaw® CARSWELL password.

Versatility in tailoring courses

TWEN® offers professors a lot of flexibility in quickly updating course materials. “Having a living syllabus so that you can change the course requirements and course materials over the span of the course is important,” says Professor Sossin. “We make good use of that feature. The law changes, new cases and articles come to the attention of students and faculty. TWEN® allows you not to have yourself



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Professor Sossin also has a lot of flexibility using the calendar feature. “I use the calendar a fair bit to let students know when we’re going to have a make-up class or a guest speaker,” he says. This feature is further enhanced by the automatic notification capabilities in TWEN® that can instantly update students on any changes to the calendar, syllabus or other course related information.

Discussion forums add value to classroom instruction

Another feature of TWEN® that Professor Sossin rates highly is the discussion forum. This allows students and professors to continue important discussions after class hours without needing to schedule a multitude of individual meetings.

“I use the discussion forum quite a bit. It’s a great tool to add to classroom participation,” says Professor Sossin. “It’s especially helpful when you either don’t have enough time for class discussion or there are some people who just feel intimidated to speak in class.” It also helps cut down the amount of email that would normally shoot back and forth between professor and students.

“Rather than have 50 students all email me the same question and me having to respond to them all individually, I can post one student’s question, with permission of course; post the answer to it; and then everyone has the benefit of it,” he adds.

In a recent example, students in his Public Law, Social Regulation in Poverty, Legal Process course were introduced to the issues around the financing of litigation. “Afterwards, I asked them to consider the extent to which the market distorts justice priorities so they could explore some of the bigger picture reflections with a little time to digest the material in class rather than five minutes after they’ve heard it. So I use the forum both to enhance the discussion and as a Q&A venue.”

Students get a further indirect benefit in that by participating in the forum they know that they are not missing any important information. “It just gives them more confidence that they’re in the loop, that they’re not missing out on anything. I think it works to enhance their confidence and also to enrich the discussion,” says Professor Sossin.

An adjunct to more traditional methods of delivering course material

Professor Sossin sees TWEN® as an adjunct to, not a replacement for, more traditional ways of providing students with course information. Though it is conceivable that at some point in the future TWEN® may become the standard for all courses taught at the Law Faculty, professor Sossin believes that a voluntary approach to adoption works best. Some professors still use casebooks to deliver course material to students, and in courses that use TWEN®, students have the option of going to the library and signing out CDs that contain course documents if they prefer.

“I’d love to see our way to a paperless world of course materials ultimately, but I think it will be a very incremental journey towards that,” says Sossin. “We’re not 100% there, but we are 80% there in terms of the underlying technology for such a scenario being immediately available to the students.”

For more information visit www.lawschool.westlaw.com