Elluminate and Wimba
Join Blackboard

Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

On July 7, 2010, Blackboard, Elluminate and Wimba announced that Elluminate and Wimba would merge with Blackboard. To share more detail on what this means for you, we wanted to provide some answers to some of the questions we expect you may have about what you can expect from us in the short term and in the long run.

In addition to this document, we'll be updating you with more news as we go. The best source for additional information will be on the Blackboard corporate Web site at http://www.Blackboard.com/collaborate, which will be updated regularly.

If you have additional questions for us, you can submit them on our Web site or by emailing them to collaborateleadership@blackboard.com.

General Questions

Why did Blackboard decide to pursue the synchronous learning and collaboration market?

First, we've heard directly from our clients that these solutions are of growing importance to them. This is especially true during the current economic context. The various products in this space, both education-focused and not, provide educators with much needed flexibility in how they deliver instruction and support trends in mobility for all roles. For learners, they reduce the increasing logistical pressures and extend the benefits of the learner community.

Second, our strategic outlook is bullish for the growth of this technology. While this product category is famous for delivering live online courses, the underlying platforms are agile. They improve *educational collaboration* – whatever the number or roles of the participants. Whether class meetings, team meetings, or one-on-one meetings, we believe the numbers and the impact will grow.

Third, we believe this is an area in which we can execute well and add significant value quickly. Often, these solutions are accessed through a learning management system, and key parts of Elluminate and Wimba's offerings are already integrated with all major LMS products, including our own. Our familiarity with supporting their integrations into our products has helped us understand how to do so more broadly, both to extend the online teaching and learning experience we already provide, and to support a range of online collaborations beyond the classroom and across the institution.

And at a higher level, all of the above point to a great fit with the mission that drives us: increasing the impact of education by transforming the experience of education. When we looked at collaboration, we saw an opportunity to make some pretty profound impact if allied with the best technologies and people in the space.

Why acquire both Elluminate and Wimba?

First, we saw a great cultural and people fit. Just as was true with ANGEL last year, a critical factor for us as we strive to get better is how well any new step we take helps us build a client-first culture. These two organizations are well known for strong products, great client experiences and committed people who care about improving education. They also share our commitment to open API's. That's a recipe that excites us and motivates our own people who share this passion for making a difference in teaching and learning with technology.

Combining with these two organizations also presented the opportunity to ally ourselves with the resources (both human and technological) needed to make the kind of impact we think is possible in synchronous learning and collaboration, starting with the Blackboard client community which has already chosen to use both Elluminate and Wimba in good numbers. So by joining up with both organizations, we ensure that new investments we make in this area benefit our whole community, not just a portion of it, as well as align the various solutions with our future roadmap.

And looking beyond our walls, we saw opportunity for this unique blend of resources to create impact for the broader community of institutions (which we intend to continue supporting) using all manner of learning management systems, as well as to the broader set of collaborations, within and across institutions, that hold such promise for education.

What solutions do Elluminate and Wimba currently offer?

Elluminate and Wimba currently offer advanced virtual classroom technology that allows education institutions to hold synchronous live courses over the Web, including audio, video, white board and social learning capabilities. The technologies are used to supplement traditional courses, to support full distance learning courses, and a variety of other interactions including virtual office hours, team meetings, professional development, student projects and mentoring and tutoring opportunities.

Will you continue to support integrations with competing LMS products?

The answer is YES. Our aim is to support learning and collaboration wherever it may occur, and wherever these products are used today. Both Elluminate and Wimba provide toolkits for integrating with open source and commercial learning management products, which we'll continue.

What if I'm currently considering between these solutions for my institution? What if I just selected or deployed one?

Because our clients have already chosen both products in good numbers, we wanted to invest in both. And we'll ensure that both align with our future product roadmap going forward. So you can move forward with confidence that whatever decision you make today, you'll be well supported and well positioned for the future.

How will the new company operate?

We're bringing together these three organizations to create a new division within Blackboard that will be called Blackboard Collaborate. Ray Henderson, Blackboard's leader who oversees the company's overall teaching and learning strategy, will provide executive level oversight and technology guidance to the new platform group, which will be led by Elluminate's Maurice Heiblum, who will assume the role of President, Blackboard Collaborate. The broader leadership team will be drawn from the collective management teams of Elluminate and Wimba. We'll share additional details after closing.

When will the acquisitions become official?

We expect the acquisitions to close shortly, and they have already been unanimously approved by the directors of each company. Until the official closing, each company will continue to operate independently, and your experiences with Elluminate and Wimba will continue without interruption.

Client Support & Service Questions

How will support and service for current products be affected?

Elluminate and Wimba both have outstanding reputations for client support and service, recognition we admire and want to continue. So our focus will be on maintaining the experience that those teams provide to clients both today and in the long run as these groups come together. As a combined company we will maintain all existing service level commitments from Elluminate and Wimba.

What will happen to my Elluminate/Wimba customer service relationships?

Continuity of experience is at the top of our collective priority list so we don't plan to make any changes to the roles and number of positions serving the client communities within the various customer service organizations today. Over time, we'll work to bring together the talents of these organizations to better serve you, and we'll be in touch if we expect any changes to your primary contact.

Product Questions

What's the long-term outlook for the existing products?

Both products will continue to be shipped and supported without change for the foreseeable future. Our first and biggest priority in the near term will be sustaining the positive experience clients enjoy on both platforms. We'll also be starting a conversation with the newly convened team of leaders that built these solutions, in close collaboration with the various client communities, about understanding existing commitments and shaping directions for future innovation within and quite beyond the LMS context. Our belief as we enter the discussion is that there is a complimentary arrangement of these products for the markets we intend to serve. We understand the need for future planning so expect that we'll share our plans with dispatch and clarity starting with a first round of roadmap announcements at the Educause event in Anaheim, California in the U.S. in October.

Will Elluminate and Wimba clients continue to receive support on existing products?

We understand the investment you've made in implementing, training your community for and supporting your existing product. We will continue servicing and supporting Elluminate and Wimba solutions as they have been. At the same time, we'll begin thinking about future innovations in synchronous learning and collaboration in education that can bring more value to the work you do. As we bring the talents, technologies and experience of these organizations together we'll make sure to share our future plans and our progress – which we hope to inform with your input – starting with some announcements at Educause in Anaheim in California in the U.S. in October.

How does this impact my pricing for Elluminate or Wimba solutions?

We'll honor all existing contracts for Elluminate and Wimba clients. We'll also honor all renewal agreement terms that have been extended. To the extent that there are material differences in overall pricing approach moving forward, we expect over time to adopt a consistent philosophy across the solutions.

Elluminate and Wimba have both placed a lot of emphasis on the accessibility of their solutions, how does this combination impact that focus?

Accessibility is also a big focus of Blackboard's. In fact, the latest release of our teaching and learning platform, Blackboard Learn Release 9.1, was recently recognized by the National Federation of the Blind with Gold Accessibility certification. So this is another area in which we share commitment and see a great collective opportunity to innovate.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

About Elluminate

The Company

Elluminate is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta in Canada, and has approximately 140 full and part-time employees in the United States, Canada, Latin America and Europe.

Products and Services

Elluminate provides Web, audio, video, and social networking solutions optimized for teaching, learning, and collaboration. The company's solutions unify enterprise technologies like video and web conferencing, phone, instant messaging, learning management systems, and even social networks to ensure that learning and collaboration happen in a better, faster, and more efficient way. Elluminate's approach facilitates instant communication, continuous collaboration, and learning that is accessible, personal, and meaningful.

Additional information about Elluminate products and services are available at www.Elluminate.com.

About Wimba

The Company

Wimba is headquartered in New York and has approximately 100 full and part-time employees in the United States and Europe.

Products and Services

Wimba® is a leading provider of collaborative solutions used by thousands of educators around the world to engage students, support business needs and save time and money. The Wimba Collaboration Suite -- awarded the 2009 "Best Education Solution" and 2010 "Best Collaboration Solution" CODiE awards by SIIA -- offers students, teachers and administrators an engaging and comprehensive collaboration environment for instruction, meetings and help. By combining academic features, ease of use and interactive technologies, the Wimba solution goes well beyond web conferencing and sets a new standard for collaboration. www.wimba.com

About Blackboard

The Company

Blackboard is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia and has approximately 1,300 employees worldwide.

Products and Services

Blackboard is a global leader in enterprise technology and innovative solutions that improve the experience of millions of students and learners around the world every day. Blackboard's solutions allow thousands of higher education, K-12, professional, corporate, and government organizations to extend teaching and learning online, facilitate campus commerce and security, and communicate more effectively with their communities.

Additional resources about Blackboard products and services are available at www.Blackboard.com.