CourseAvenue

The Best e-Learning Software and Services

Statement of Qualifications

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INTRODUCTION

CourseAvenue is the recognized leader and offers the most advanced software <u>and</u> services available to develop, convert, and remediate e-Learning courses that comply with the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 508). Driven by over 21 years of experience and embracing the most innovative practices in e-Learning, CourseAvenue provides software and services to some of the world's leading Fortune 500 companies, Middle Market businesses, non-profit organizations, and a variety of US Government agencies.

ABOUT COURSEAVENUE

CourseAvenue was formed on March 24, 2003. Its founders have software and professional services experience dating back over 21 years, including significant experience in the learning management systems and on-line learning areas.

Since 2003, CourseAvenue has provided expert direction and guidance to our clients in a wide range of situations where learning strategy and execution are critical for success. We specialize in delivering reliable solutions designed to enable organizational initiatives and drive business results.

Our professional <u>services</u> include:

- Helping our clients analyze their business needs and develop an effective training strategy;

- Helping our clients choose and implement an effective and affordable learning management system (LMS);

- Helping our clients design and implement a process – including the technology – to develop custom e-Learning courses.

- Helping our clients develop, convert, and remediate e-Learning courses, including courses that comply with the requirements of both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508.

CourseAvenue also owns three <u>software</u> applications that it licenses to its clients to create e-Learning courses (CourseAvenue Studio©), to serve as an LMS (CourseAvenue Deliver©), and to analyze assessment data to improve existing e-Learning courses (CourseAvenue Analyze©).

Beginning in 2006, CourseAvenue invested nearly three years to redesign its e-Learning course development software – CourseAvenue Studio© -- to incorporate the requirements of the ADA and Section 508. As a result of that redesign effort, ***<u>CourseAvenue Studio is the only commercially available e-Learning course development software that allows users to automatically create e-Learning courses that meet the accessibility and usability requirements of the ADA and Section 508 without the need to create separate versions of the course – one for disabled individuals and a second for everyone else – and without the course</u>***

developer having to engage in extensive revisions or possess advanced computer programming skills.

CourseAvenue's team of learning professionals includes software developers, instructional designers, multi-media developers, project managers, learning / performance consultants, and a dedicated, in-house customer support team. Appendix A includes brief biographies of CourseAvenue's executive team.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSEAVENUE SOFTWARE PLATFORM

CourseAvenue owns three distinct software packages which it licenses to its clients. Table 1 lists and briefly describes each of these packages.
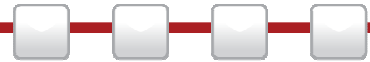
Table 1: Overview of the CourseAvenue Software Platform		
Brand Name	Summary	Purpose/Use
CourseAvenue Studio©	Web-based e-Learning course development software	Licensed to a client and used by the client to develop e-Learning courses
CourseAvenue Analyze©	Web-based e-Learning course analysis software	Licensed to a client and used by the client to collect data relating to the e-Learning courses it develops using CourseAvenue Studio
CourseAvenue Deliver©	Web-based e-Learning learning management system	Licensed to a client and used by the client to manage the e-Learning courses it develops using CourseAvenue Studio

DETAILED DESCRIPTION –
COURSEAVENUE STUDIO WITH ACCESSIBILITY PLAYER©

CourseAvenue has built Section 508 compliance into our e-Learning course authoring software. ***What this means is that an e-Learning course developed with CourseAvenue Studio will automatically be both accessible and usable within the meaning of Section 508.*** This is in sharp contrast to other e-Learning tools that loosely interpret Section 508 and push the burden of Section 508 compliance away from the software and onto the course developer. Some tools attempt to achieve compliance by forcing the developer to create one or more alternate versions of a course for students with disabilities. This is not the intent of Section 508, which was designed – like all civil rights legislation – to provide "***equal*** access for all."

CourseAvenue's platform enables both programmers and non-programmers to rapidly develop and manage Section 508 compliant e-Learning. By ***starting*** with a framework that is ***both*** accessible ***and*** usable within the meaning of Section 508, our clients can quickly produce a single e-Learning course that serves all audiences, whether disabled or not. Appendix B contains detailed information about the Section 508 capabilities and functionality of our CourseAvenue Studio.

More importantly, CourseAvenue Studio is also certified by an independent third-party validation firm (Criterion 508 Solutions, Inc.). CourseAvenue Studio is the ***only*** technology that has been certified in this way. We continue to work with Section 508

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Coordinators throughout the US Government to review the e-Learning courses we develop and to confirm that those courses are **both** accessible **and** useable within the meaning of Section 508. We are extremely thankful to many people throughout the US Government for their assistance.

CourseAvenue Studio is a revolutionary software solution. It is a Web-based, collaborative, course development platform. It allows your organization's subject matter experts (SMEs), content developers, and other professionals to collaborate on-line simultaneously to develop e-Learning courses. This simultaneous course development environment dramatically reduces the time and costs needed to develop and publish e-Learning courses. Our on-line environment also allows your content reviewers to log directly into CourseAvenue Studio to review the courses under development throughout the development process.

Here are a few important features of CourseAvenue Studio:

- Because Studio is Web-based, it allows anyone who has access to the Internet – regardless of where they work or who they work for – to collaborate simultaneously to create a course.

- Because Studio allows simultaneous collaboration, it reduces the time it takes to develop a course. It also reduces the time and frustration associated with "version control": sending a draft to one person, then incorporating their changes, then sending the draft to the next person, etc.

- Studio eliminates the need to buy and install software or software upgrades. Studio eliminates the frustration of buying and installing software and then discovering that it doesn't conform to your internal IT requirements.

- Because Studio is Web-based, it allows an organization to create an "inventory" of courses. This makes it easier to find a course – no more hunting through hard drives and network folders. This feature is attractive to all of our clients, even those who don't do much course development. And for clients that develop courses, Studio makes it much easier to cut and paste content from one course into a new one, which saves time and money.

- All of the courses Studio publishes conform to SCORM and AICC standards, including both SCORM 1.2 and 2004.

- Studio is easy to use and powerful. It's essentially PowerPoint, with the strength to embed graphics, audio, and video in any course. Studio also has the power to include assessments and knowledge checks throughout a course.

- Studio also offers a built-in multi-lingual support option.

CourseAvenue's collaborative environment includes the use of teams, roles, and permissions. All editors and reviewers for a course can view any change to a course in "real time." All team members are able to log into the software at any time from any

location to edit or review the courses under development. The development platform also includes an integrated forum, CourseAvenue Community. Contributors to a course have easy access to this forum which allows for communication that is tied directly to a course being developed. This eliminates the need for multiple e-mail strings and allows for easy access and verification of changes in the future.

CourseAvenue Studio also contains media libraries that allow for easy uploading and access to all media assets used within any of your courses. The library allows for simple re-use of assets in multiple courses across your organization. CourseAvenue's media library saves time and increases efficiency.

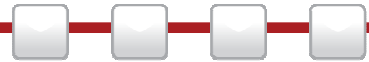## THE CURRENT STATE OF SECTION 508 COMPLIANT E-LEARNING

The US government has encountered significant obstacles to developing and maintaining e-Learning courses that are fully compliant with Section 508 **and** useable by and effective for their students. Analyses performed by various agencies indicate that developed courses frequently fail the initial Section 508 compliance testing. The statistics vary from one agency to the next, but in some agencies 100% of the developed courses fail the initial Section 508 compliance review. This high rejection rate causes various manual revisions that inevitably delay course delivery and greatly increase the costs associated with course development.

Studies have found a number of issues. Many of the current course development processes rely on commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software. These products utilize what is termed a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) to attempt to produce a course that complies with Section 508. Unfortunately, VPATs vary widely and tend to interpret the requirements of Section 508 loosely. As a result, courses developed using COTS software also vary widely.

In some cases, COTS software achieves "compliance" by permitting a developer to create alternate course delivery methods. Although this approach might technically comply with Section 508, in practical terms, it causes course development to be manual, and very time-consuming and expensive.

Many times the VPAT simply states that Section 508 compliance is "developer dependent." Although this is understandable in certain limited situations, if every element of a course is "developer dependent," then each developer has no choice but to attempt to comply with Section 508 based on the developer's unique interpretation of Section 508. The result? Chaos, with developers producing any number of varied and generally poorly compliant courses.

These conditions lead to a variety of issues. For one, an agency receives many different interpretations of Section 508 and ends up having to validate and maintain all of them. This places a significant burden on the agency to test, manage, and maintain its library of e-Learning courses. Because compliance is "hand crafted" by each developer, the development process is error-prone. This produces the high non-

compliance rate during the Section 508 validation process and significant delays and costs during the remediation of the failed courses.

Another issue is that, in many cases, multiple versions of a course are created. A "plain text" or "simple" version of the course is created to attempt to achieve compliance, and a second version is created for those students who are not disabled. Of course, this is not the spirit of Section 508 and leads to enormous cost increases in the development and maintenance of the courses.

COURSEAVENUE STUDIO WITH ACCESSIBILITY PLAYER©

CourseAvenue Studio is a superior alternative. ***CourseAvenue Studio with Accessibility Player is the only e-Learning development software certified as 100% Section 508 compliant by an independent third-party auditor.*** Not only does CourseAvenue provide our clients with a VPAT, we also provide our clients with the final, independent, third-party Section 508 Audit and Certification Report that forms the basis of that VPAT. This third-party Section 508 audit report is issued by Criterion 508 Solutions, Inc. A VPAT is simply a three-page summary, or score card, of Section 508 compliance audit results. However, most vendors never conduct expert Section 508 auditing on their products before they complete their VPAT. This leads to questionable VPAT results.

CourseAvenue provides our clients with Criterion's final Section 508 audit report, which details their accessibility auditing processes, methodologies, and results. We also provide a Section 508 Compliance Certification from Criterion which guarantees the results of their Section 508 auditing for one year for unaltered files. This means that our clients don't just have a VPAT to ensure the Section 508 compliance of our e-Learning software, but extensive documentation to demonstrate how the information used in the VPAT was generated. Our clients also have access to Criterion's Section 508 experts, who are the only Section 508 consultants willing to guarantee the results of their audit work.

When CourseAvenue Studio is compared side-by-side with any other development software, there is only one conclusion: CourseAvenue offers the market's only Section 508 compliant development software backed with extensive audit documentation by an independent third-party auditor which specializes in Section 508 accessibility. CourseAvenue Studio has been shown to deliver the following consistent benefits to our Section 508 clients:

1. ***Shorter development time and increased e-Learning:*** A solution that starts with a Section 508 validated framework will significantly reduce development time and produce more consistent, easier to maintain, and less "developer dependent" e-Learning. By reducing the time and cost needed to develop each course, CourseAvenue Studio allows an agency to produce more courses of better quality that comply with Section 508.

2. ***Streamlined Section 508 validation process:*** Each agency is still required to execute its Section 508 compliance process; however, CourseAvenue Studio makes this process much more efficient by making the "starting point" for course development validated as compliant. Although a given course might have exceptions and unique validation needs, by providing a consistent and compliant "starting point," CourseAvenue Studio allows an agency to reduce the time associated with its Section 508 validation ***by 80% or more***.

3. ***Elimination of redundant e-Learning titles:*** The current practice of achieving compliance by producing content in multiple formats can ***more than double*** an agency's course development and maintenance costs. This places a burden on the content owners, learner population, and LMS administrators who need to manage the multiple titles for a single course. By using CourseAvenue Studio, an agency can reduce these costs ***by as much as 300%***.

APPENDIX A
Abbreviated Biographies – CourseAvenue Executive Team

Joe Gorup

Joe Gorup is the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of CourseAvenue. Joe is an experienced e-Learning technology expert with a focus on the integration of adaptive technologies -- screen readers, voice command software, etc. – with e-Learning courses and course development software. Joe has led and participated in numerous interactive sessions throughout the US on the topic of "Section 508 Compliance and e-Learning," most recently as a co-presenter at the US Government Section 508 Coordinator meeting (Gettysburg, November, 2009) and with the US Department of Education for the Washington, D.C., chapter of the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD). Joe serves as a member of the Board of Directors of The Spectrios Institute for Visual Rehabilitation in Wheaton, Illinois. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Systems Analysis from Miami University (Ohio).

Eric Pierce

Eric Pierce serves as the Chief Operating Officer of CourseAvenue. Before joining CourseAvenue, Eric was a Partner with KPMG, LLP. During his 12 years at KPMG, he served in two roles. First, he consulted with and served Fortune 1000 companies throughout the country on a variety of tax and business operational issues. Second, he led and managed several different business units within the KPMG organization, including three new business units Eric started and grew, and three under-performing business units Eric restructured and returned to profitable growth. Prior to joining KPMG, Eric practiced law for eight years. His legal experience included legislative and lobbying activities, business and transactional negotiation and planning, and litigation and dispute resolution. Eric received his Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia, and his law degree from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor).

Jeff Groch

Jeff Groch is also a Co-Founder of CourseAvenue. Jeff serves as the company's Senior Account Executive. His background includes extensive sales, product management, and operational experience with leading technology companies including WebVision, CompuWare, Uniface, Computer Associates, and Pansophic Systems. Jeff holds Bachelor of Science degrees in both Business Administration and Economics from National-Lewis University (Chicago, Illinois).

APPENDIX B
CourseAvenue Studio with Accessibility Player

High-contrast color schemes used in the course skin

Audio transcript window displays the text for the audio of any narrated

Color-differentiated In-text hyperlinks; keyboard and screen reader accessible

Keyboard accessibility of all navigation controls

Accessible media controls

Video delivery of learning with accessible controls and closed-captioning support – built in.

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Section 508 Compliance Features	Extended Usability Features
Keyboard accessibility of all navigation controls	Control layout designed and maximize ease of use with adaptive technologies
Audio transcript window displays the text for the audio of any narrated page	Accessible course menu available to the learner at all times via the Menu button
In-text hyperlinks (URLs, media links, glossary terms) are differentiated from one another and are keyboard and screen reader accessible	Form controls (push buttons, radio buttons, checkboxes) are identified by adaptive technology and behave in a manner consistent with standard compliant HTML pages
Accessible media controls	Keyboard shortcuts defined for most buttons to enhance keyboard use.
Accessible alternate text field available for media items	Non-visual screen reader "hints" to enhance the comprehension of pages and questions, without affecting the visual look of the pages
High-contrast color schemes used in the course skin	Rich user interface provides visually pleasing aesthetics to sighted students while remaining completely accessible to non-visual students.
Secondary windows for course tools, help files and glossary terms are fully accessible	Screen reader focus provides logical, predictable progress through a course for those students using a screen reader
Technology allows for one course for all audiences complying with Section 508 "equivalent facilitation" provision	Glossary links bring learner directly to specific glossary term