



How To Simplify Your Corporate Learning Program with LMS Cloud Connector

Talent management solutions integrator Intelladon partners with Citrix to simplify and enhance Learning Management and Online Training systems



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A Short History

When Citrix® published APIs for GoToTraining® in late 2011, one of the first organizations to recognize the potential value of building integrations between learning management systems (LMS) and GoToTraining was Intelladon, a leading provider and integrator of an array of talent management and learning solutions.

Intelladon had a unique and innovative idea for the creation of a solution that would minimize the impact and cost of developing LMS integrations by designing a cloud-based approach. That approach leveraged the AICC and SCORM standards to provide a mechanism for the transfer of information between an LMS and an online collaboration tool, such as GoToTraining. Since virtually all business-class LMSs are AICC and/or SCORM compliant, Intelladon's design allowed them to develop a solution that integrates GoToTraining with virtually any LMS on the market.

When Intelladon first presented their concept of what was called "Cloud Connector" to Citrix, the value of their approach was immediately recognized. Citrix and Intelladon then joined forces to help bring Cloud Connector to the marketplace. Today, Citrix and Intelladon jointly market and sell the Cloud Connector solution to customers who desire effective integration of their learning management environment – with the GoToTraining virtual classroom environment – without the cost and effort of developing and maintaining traditional LMS integrations.

Cox eLearning Consultants evaluated Intelladon Cloud Connector, and developed this assessment of its features and functionality. In short, Cloud Connector:

is LMS-agnostic, meaning that it is compatible with virtually every LMS on the market today.

is versatile, because it can "live" wherever a client wants it to live, whether that is on the client's on-premise servers, or at an off-site or other location.

supports all of Citrix's GoTo products, including GoToMeeting®, GoToTraining™, and GoToWebinar®. However, this review refers to Cloud Connector linking to GoToTraining.

The Connector in the Cloud

Many organizations use a learning management system (LMS) for both their training and career development activities. And many organizations also use online collaboration and remote access tools. Until now, never would the two systems meet. Until now, the integration of these two systems was cumbersome and lacked the vital tracking functions desired from a comprehensive learning environment.

Particularly with medium- to large-sized groups who participate in online meetings and training, administrators often perform duplicate data entry to track the participant information in the online collaboration tool and in the more traditional learning environment provided by an LMS. This resulted in time-consuming, error-prone and repetitive transcription of the training data into the LMS.

Now, there is a way to eliminate the work duplication – by having the systems communicate with each other.

"Intelladon and Citrix have developed an integration platform that expedites the processes for everyone," says Dan Cox, CEO of Cox eLearning Consultants, LLC, the leading marketing and consulting firm for corporate learning. "Cloud Connector from Intelladon, in partnership with Citrix, eliminates the need to interface directly with the LMS vendor because it is LMS-agnostic and seamlessly works with virtually every LMS."



Cox further states, “An organization’s workflow can be configured to the exact need, providing a customized solution, and learning session data from one system is automatically captured and stored within the other system.”

Initiating an online training session has always been as easy as clicking a button, but before the Cloud Connector integration was created, the training session had to be launched in the LMS separately, so that the GoToTraining information on participation, attendee details and attentiveness could be sent to the LMS. This clunky solution allowed businesses and trainers to track specific session analytics, such as which learners participated, where they were located, and whether they were actively engaged, but some data had to be manually re-entered from one system into the other. Cloud Connector eliminates the manual uploading and entry, as well as the necessity to launch the session in both GoToTraining and the LMS. Cloud Connector allows the two systems to talk to each other.

Once Cloud Connector is set up between an LMS and GoToTraining, data is automatically synchronized between the two systems. Cloud Connector will capture the live event data from GoToTraining, without having to specifically manage or enter the data separately in the LMS. Similarly, the LMS-specific data such as a learner’s full name, title, and location are matched with the details from GoToTraining. The reporting function within Cloud Connector draws data from both systems (see Reporting section). Currently, Cloud Connector can accommodate and record data for up to 200 attendees per session, but expanded attendee capacity is planned in the next version.

All in-session details are tracked on the Citrix side, managing that data live, and recording certain details within the LMS. Although other integrations exist between learning management systems and online collaboration tools, most learning management systems do not track live activity within a session, except as a historical (back-end) data load, performed after an event is completed. Cloud Connector eliminates that manual step, capturing all of the real-time data from the session. Cloud Connector captures all of the information on each participant and each session held in GoToTraining – everything from attendee details, to the questions a participant asked, and how each participant voted in a poll. This functionality allows the session instructor to identify engaged learners from unengaged learners, to monitor areas of comprehension and confusion, and also allows non-participating managers to remotely monitor session performance.

Depending on the types of learning content and instructional sessions currently used at an organization, Cloud Connector can integrate with them and enhance their functionality. Even for instructor-led training, Cloud Connector can record and report on session details in a more robust manner.

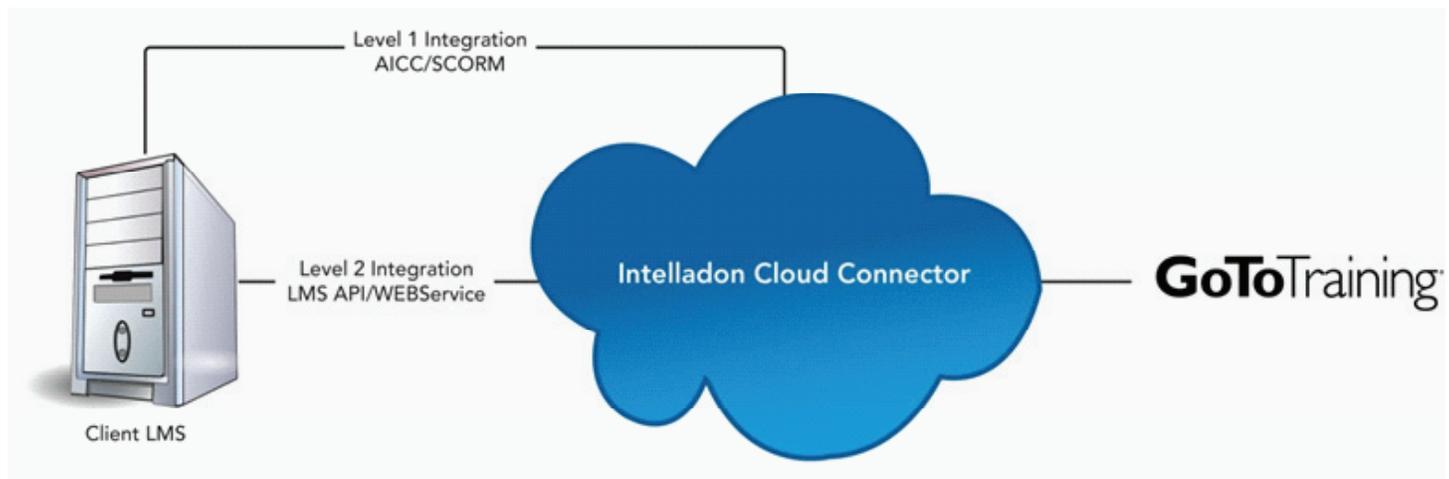
Level 1 and Level 2 Integration

There are two levels of Cloud Connector commercially available, referred to as Level 1 and Level 2. Since Cloud Connector is LMS-agnostic, it is easily configurable, and is compatible with virtually every LMS on the market.

Cloud Connector acts as an intermediary system, collecting data from both the LMS and GoToTraining. Because the data from each system is mapped to the other system, a streamlined compilation of those details is produced, without the manual re-entering of data from one system to the other.

“In effect, Cloud Connector acts as a ‘super LMS,’ in that it provides its own tracking and reporting back to the regular LMS and to GoToTraining,” Cox says.

Figure 1. Intelladon Cloud Connector Integration Levels



Cloud Connector acts as an intermediary system, collecting data from both the LMS and GoToTraining.

Level 1 Integration

Level 1 integration is self-contained, virtually a plug-and-play, out-of-the-box platform. Set up takes less than three hours, and affords some customization through the addition of an organization’s branding and logo. Overall it is very quick to implement, and no coordination or interaction with the LMS vendor is needed.

Level 1 utilizes AICC/SCORM, and allows the creation, launch, and tracking of learning sessions through a link from the LMS or GoToTraining. This level uses AICC/SCORM and GoToTraining APIs only. An API (Application Programming Interface) is a specification that allows software components to communicate with each other.

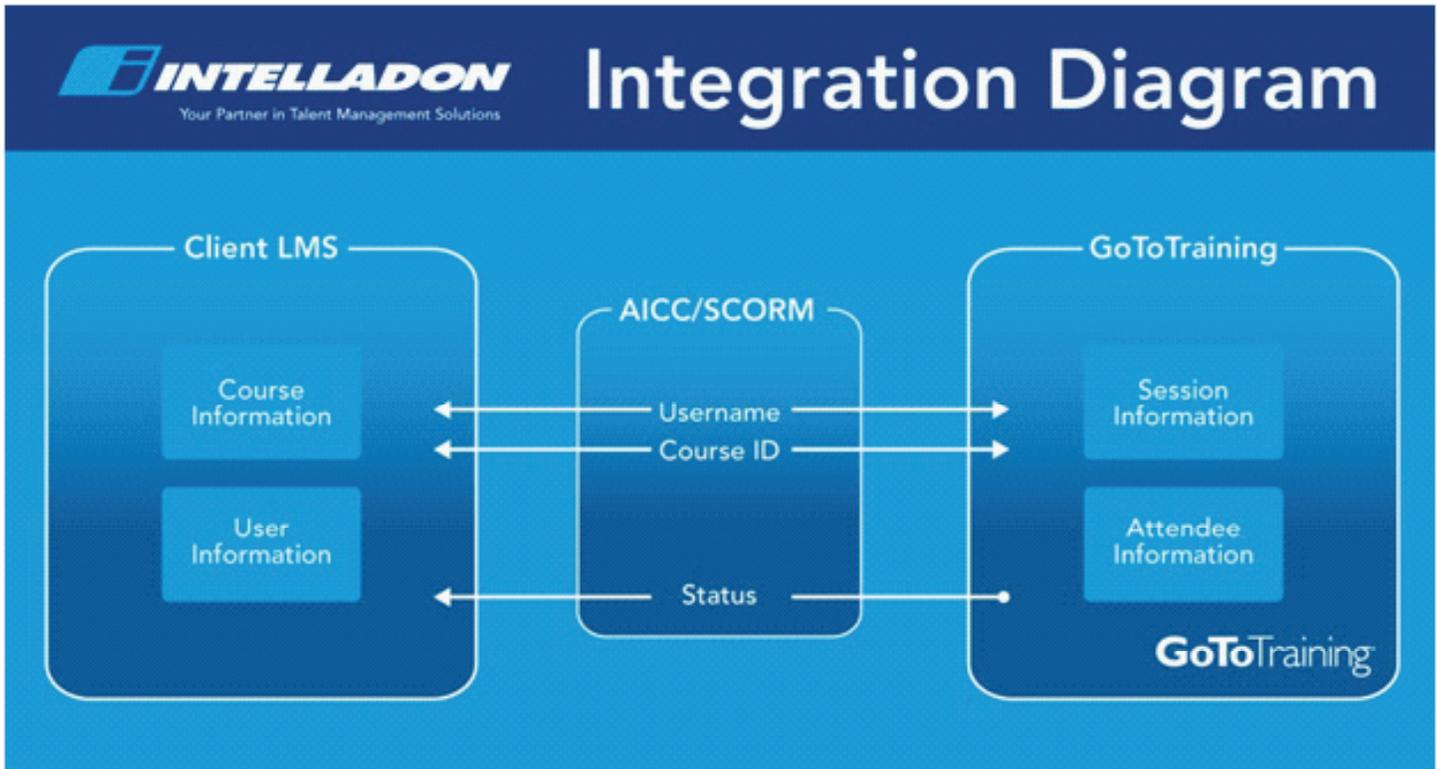
Establishing events within Level 1 proved to be extremely easy. Learning session attendees could be segmented geographically, by training topic, date, or other criteria. Learners from a specific geographic area (Australia, for example) could be segmented so that only they could attend a specific session. A virtual event can be created in the LMS, with all the native LMS functionality, and Cloud Connector then populates the GoToTraining scheduler, prompting the administrator to complete those event details. The entire event appears in the Sessions tab, with complete details automatically populated (see Figure 4).



Level 2 Integration

Level 2 integration is more robust, with additional features such as support for synchronous live events, a calendar function, and session management tools. Level 2 integration again uses AICC/SCORM and GoToTraining APIs, but also requires APIs from the LMS vendor. This allows the automatic transfer of data between the two systems.

Figure 2. Diagram of Interaction among a Client LMS, GoToTraining, and Intelladon Cloud Connector



The set-up and installation process is still fast at Level 2, with most integrations being completed in less than a day. Because Level 2 accommodates more data at the LMS level, more time is required to map the data between the systems.

As expected, Level 2 goes beyond what Level 1 provides and taps into the native functionality of an LMS, gathering information and synchronizing it against a GoToTraining account. All data can be seen within Cloud Connector, without looking up specific data or running reports in one system and then comparing that information to data in the other system.

Creating and managing sessions in Level 2 is very easy; the user interface is simple to learn and quite intuitive. Additional features are available in Level 2, such as single-point calendaring, tracking poll results from a live session, and other activities that might include additional support and services from the LMS.

Cloud Connector can interact with any LMS that supports AICC or SCORM, including both SCORM version 1.2 and 2004. While it was developed with SCORM 2004 compatibility, Intelladon recently expanded functionality to specifically accommodate SCORM 1.2. Most of the data needed for tracking can easily accommodate either version; the integration delivers the interoperability that is most desired in distance learning solutions.

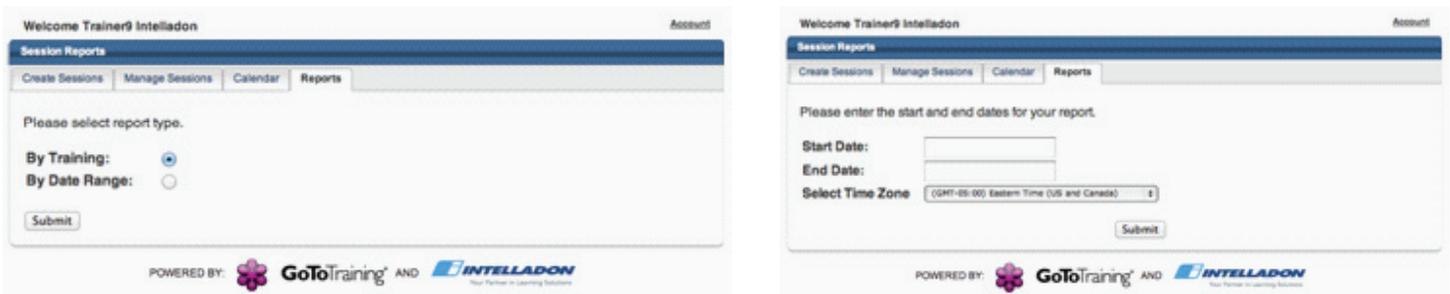
Unique Features

Cloud Connector features several unique attributes that set it apart from other integration systems. These include robust reporting, a sync feature, and enhanced session management.

Robust Reporting

Cloud Connector's reporting functionality is one of its most robust features. While it is possible to customize reporting to suit an organization's specific needs, the standard reporting within the tool is quite strong. Level 2 treats the LMS like "native" functionality; that is, the LMS operates within Cloud Connector the same way that it would operate on its own, as a stand-alone system. Level 2 utilizes the native LMS reporting while drawing data from both the LMS and GoToTraining. Specific data can be mapped across systems to build even more comprehensive reports, eliminating the need to manually re-enter data from one system into the other. Plus, reports can be accessed from either the LMS or GoToTraining; the integration and compiled reports are available from either system.

Figure 3. Examples of Reporting Screens within Cloud Connector



For example, all the details from a learning session – such as learners' names and employee information – can be generated in a report, and either printed or exported to Microsoft Excel in either .csv or .xls format. All details from a session are generated in either Level 1 or Level 2 integration, and all system-specific reporting (within the LMS or GoToTraining) remains available.

Sync Feature

The advantages of combining systems that are used frequently are numerous, including the elimination of redundancy, lost time and errors. Cloud Connector also has a unique synchronization (sync) feature, which allows the data from one system (for example, the LMS) to be immediately captured within the other system, in real time.

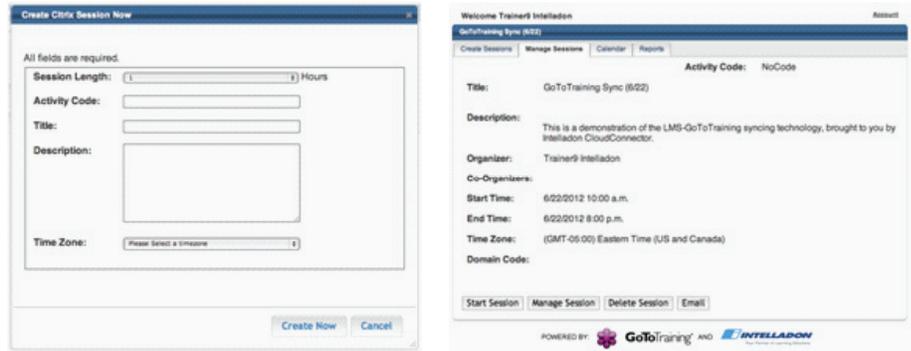
HR and training managers can continue the processes and activities they have always done, in one system or the other. There is no need to learn a new system, because the data they enter regularly in one system is automatically synchronized with the other system. A manager who normally logs into the LMS and manages the majority of activities from there can continue to do that. Everything from GoToTraining has been synchronized by Cloud Connector and is now available within the LMS.



Enhanced Session Management

The creation and management of learning sessions is also synchronized between the two systems, through Cloud Connector. This allows for learning sessions to be created in the LMS, for example, and details can later be accessed from within GoToTraining. At the moment a learning session is about to begin, the instructor can instantly know that 25 employees enrolled for the course (initially recorded by the LMS), but only 23 have signed into the session (now being documented by GoToTraining). Now action can be taken to contact those absent employees and prompt them to attend the session. The Training Manager no longer learns at day's end that those two employees forgot they had enrolled.

Figure 4. Examples of Creating and Managing Sessions Screens within Cloud Connector



Future Enhancements

Citrix and Intelladon have several enhancements in the works for the next version of Cloud Connector:

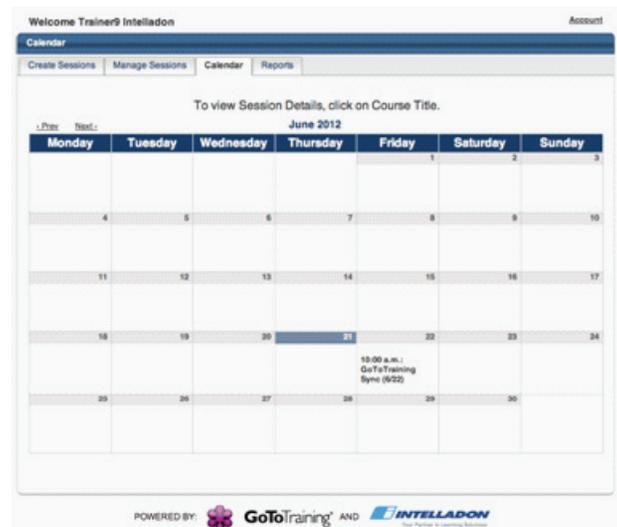
Cloud Connector can already accommodate and record data for up to 200 attendees per session, which is quite a high volume of data. But plans are underway already to expand attendee capacity to even larger volumes for GoToWebinar sessions.

A future merged report will provide a high-level view of the learning session in both the LMS and GoToTraining, including event and participant details.

Intelladon and Citrix continue to track Tin Cup – the successor to SCORM – to ensure that the latest industry compliance standards are met.

Compliance functionality is being added, in the form of dynamically registering a learner for a training session in the LMS, and automatically registering them at the same time within GoToTraining. Historically, GoToTraining would only record that learner's registration at the time when they logged into the specific GoToTraining session. This concurrent registration in both systems is particularly helpful for compliance reporting.

Figure 5. Example of Calendar Screen within Cloud Connector



Summary

Intelladon Cloud Connector eliminates the redundancy of entering data and offers robust features that neither an LMS nor many online collaboration tools can independently provide.

LMS-agnostic. Cloud Connector integrates with any learning management system. Additionally, an LMS vendor does not have to be involved in the installation and set up. Intelladon does it all.

Cost-effective. Some virtual collaboration providers charge large fees to integrate with other systems, then only provide a patch or upgrade, which can easily break connections. As an independent system that is specifically mapped to both the LMS and GoToTraining, Cloud Connector reliably communicates with other systems, substantially lowering the risk of broken connections, and at an affordable cost.

Easy to install and use. The Level 1 integration can be completed in only a few hours, and the Level 2 integration can be as fast as one day. Once it's up and running, Cloud Connector is very intuitive, and follows a logical progression through training management processes. Cloud Connector's ease-of-use is very much aligned with Citrix's value proposition of developing user-friendly, cost-effective products.

Flexible. Cloud Connector will adjust the workflow to match the client environment. Whether there are numerous administrators or only a few, the integration mirrors the situation. For example, entering sessions in an LMS tool can be quite cumbersome when a lot of administrators need to use the LMS, creating and managing numerous training sessions. Without Cloud Connector, the administrators have to do their job twice, entering data once in the LMS and once in GoToTraining, to ensure that all the data is captured and recorded properly. Instead, Cloud Connector manages that data for them, so data entry only occurs once. All the data from one system is immediately available in the other.

Reduced complexity. The reliance upon the LMS vendor's API is eliminated, reducing the complexity and cost of developing the integration with the LMS. This provides the ability to streamline the development and implementation of basic LMS integrations. In cases where customers want deeper integrations that incorporate functionality to support specific customer workflows or LMS customizations, Intelladon can then develop resources to meet those needs, rather than allocate time and effort delivering a basic integration.

Easy integrations. Cloud Connector ensures that integrations can be easily managed and updated when changes occur to either the LMS or GoToTraining.

Current Integrations

Although Intelladon Cloud Connector is very new to the marketplace, several integrations with learning management systems have already been completed, or are currently underway.

Completed



In Progress



To learn more about Cloud Connector, visit <http://www.intelladon.com/Cloud-Connector-Cox-Review.aspx>

About Intelladon Corporation



Intelladon (www.intelladon.com) provides end-to-end talent management solutions that help organizations empower and maximize their workforces. Intelladon offers talent and learning systems, custom content, competency mapping, content authoring tools and content libraries. A team of experts also supports clients through managed services including implementation, integration, rapid content conversion and maintenance.

About GoToTraining

GoToTraining

Online Training Made Easy™

Citrix GoToTraining is an easy-to-use online training service that allows users to move live instructor-led training programs to Internet-hosted sessions, for more efficient customer and employee training. Training sessions can accommodate up to 200 attendees from around the world on both Mac or PC platforms. To learn more, visit www.gototraining.com.

About Cox eLearning Consultants



Founded in 2005, Cox eLearning Consultants (www.coxec.com) is the leading marketing services and consulting firm for the industries of corporate training, elearning and human resources technologies. Its Contacts Database is the largest in the industry, and its services include Email Marketing, Telesales, Public Relations and Research. Cox eLearning Consultants is the company that eLearning and HR companies partner with most to complement and enhance their existing marketing initiatives.

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3848 MacGregor Common

Livermore, CA 94551

Tel : 925-373-6558

Fax : 866-240-3540

www.coxec.com

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, wavy bands of light blue and medium blue, creating a sense of movement and depth.