

Electronic Education Report



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Digital Conversion Requires Planning by Publishers

Publishers looking to make the transition from legacy classroom products to digital materials need to plan in one-year, three-year and five-year timeframes, Shah Karim, CEO of Saferock Education (Maywood, N.J.), told EER.

Saferock Education helps publishers convert legacy material to digital, providing planning, project management, and software to bring content to computers, interactive whiteboards, tablets, smartphones and e-readers. Saferock creates interactive content for IWB, online, and mobile. They can take assessments from K-12 publishers and online platform vendors and convert them for online or interactive use by schools and districts. Saferock also prepares custom and state-specific editions of textbooks and supplementary materials.

In the one-year timeframe, Karim said content providers looking to make the digital transformation should explore and understand where the market is going with pilot projects. Place some small bets; confirm what you will need to scale up, Karim said.

For the three-year timeframe, the most interesting to Karim, publishers should be enabling teachers to control content that the teachers will make available to students via interactive whiteboards or projectors. Saferock has worked on prototypes for teachers using iPads, iPhones and is beginning work on Androids.

The focus in three-year planning is to help teachers be more effective in managing the classroom, Karim said. He sees three areas where this is particularly applicable: intervention, early childhood, and inquiry-based programs where there is significant project and group work.

While the five-year timeframe is long for publishers to bet on now, Karim said they should assume everything will be connected and plan

fully digital products for the five-year framework. The assumption is classrooms will have whiteboards or projectors and student will have devices. Although it is early to create for five years from now, Karim said publishers can't ignore the need to prepare.

Two things to target in working with schools are greater teacher effectiveness and greater student achievement; do those or someone else will take business away, Karim said. Looking forward, Karim sees teachers mixing and matching content from publishers and showing students the best examples of content presentation from around the world.

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Saferock has launched a StudySmart! system intended to make publishers' content more effective and engaging and to support hybrid teaching and blended learning. The system runs on iPad and Android devices and consists of two components, one to help the teacher manage the classroom and digital content more effectively, and the other to help students study, do homework, and monitor their own progress.

Saferock Partners

Saferock's roots are in providing enterprise systems to big box retailers. The company entered the education space during the No Child Left Behind era, seeing an interest in state-specific textbooks and filling a need to automate production processes from manuscript to what gets delivered.

Saferock has worked with some of the largest publishers, including Pearson (London and New York) on its top-selling enVision math program. Using its proprietary Rapid Produc-

tion system, Saferock automated the production of thousands of state correlations for the teacher guides which covered multiple math strands in K-6 over 30 states.

Currently, Saferock is part of a 10-week pilot on personalized learning for middle school math in Indianapolis with a McGraw-Hill (New York) Power of U program. Power of U combines McGraw-Hill content and formative assessment tool, Acuity, with the learning management components of ActivProgress, Promethean's (Alpharetta, Ga.) collaboration platform used to support personalized instruction.

Content for Power of U was enlivened with interactive digital manipulatives created by Saferock, which also prepared whole group instruction lessons to work with Notebook software and interactive whiteboards from SMART Technologies (Calgary, Alberta, Canada).

TAKEAWAY

Publishers urgently need to cross the digital divide and transition business focus from a legacy print emphasis to digital.

Planning in one, three, and five-year frames help guide both internal and external stakeholders at these publishers. Undertaking short-term proofs of concept now is critical to confirming which products have the greatest efficacy, usability, technology fit, and financial viability; these key performance factors can identify product winners early on and thus lead to success in business transition.

Saferock partners with publishers to successfully cross the digital divide - safely and with low risk - while protecting assets and stakeholders.

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