



## **Akcio – Share!**

### 1. What's Akcio?

Akcio is a tool designed to be used both in Knowledge Sharing and Collaborative Learning. Akcio can be seen as a Community Information and Participation System (CIPS) designed to be used by people who need to search and share knowledge on the web and within their communities or as a tool for Online Collaborative Learning (OCL), like organizing a Virtual Campus or Just in Time Learning initiatives.

### 2. What do you mean by OCL?

OCL stands for On-line Collaborative Learning. It's a participatory approach to the use of computers in distance education. On-line collaborative learning is based on the model that new knowledge emerges when members of a group actively interact by sharing experiences. The key idea is to put group collaboration at the core of the learning process. It's a step further from the concept of learner-centred approach.

### 3. What's a CIPS?

A computer system that combines a number of technologies to create an information providing system for communities that would allow them to provide feedback on the information they want and how they want it organized.

A CIPS tightly coordinates a suite of computer programs which provide a number of services such as a specialized search engine, a computer conferencing area, email services, e-library facilities and radio netcasting.

### 4. Briefly describe the components of the CIPS

At the core of the system is a search engine designed especially for communities. A community search engine is designed to search only the web sites of a particular community. That community can be geographic or interest-based, such as people interested in particular health care issues or all web sites of the municipalities of a region. The strength of such a search engine is that it can focus searches on a particular subset of the web and search that subset more deeply.

The search engine is at the core of the system but a complete CIPS also needs a way for participants to communicate their information needs by posing questions to the community which uses the web sites and the organizers of the sites. The key idea is that the real source of information and knowledge in a community is not the static information sitting in sites but the members of the community. Those people have more knowledge and information than can ever be packaged into websites. The task is to marry the information in the web sites constantly with the people who interact with it.

5. Are CIPS just a theory?

This is a new way of looking at the world wide web. It is a new way, but it already has one pilot application which is operating successfully. SoliComm.net - the Solidarity Communication Network is a CIPS designed especially for the world's union movement.

It is operated by the Training Centre of the International Labour Organization in Turin, Italy. It searches over 300 labour websites while providing its community members with free email, conferencing, e-library and web site hosting services. It has proven that the CIPS concept is not only an innovative way of looking at the interaction of people and the world wide web but that the concept is workable. Beside that, SoliComm makes use of both the CIPS and OCL functionalities of Akcio.

6. OK, but I'm a teacher in my University (or training institution) and I want to know what Akcio can give me more than other tools such as Blackboard or Moodle.

The average conferencing tool available out there implements the concept of "Forums" as it was conceived almost 15 years ago. Looks like there is very little research activity towards new asynchronous discussion tools. Akcio has been built on the lessons learned from the few pioneer experiences in this field, and is now trying to turn asynchronous, computer-aided communication into something more than a chat.

For this it implements statistics, student tracking and knowledge building tools. So, Akcio is a small project, but trying to implement innovative approaches in the field of computer supported communication. Beside that, Akcio is distributed under the most free of all licenses: the GNU Affero GPL version 3, which basically means zero license cost for you and your organization.

7. Why should I care about freedom? My institution can pay for licenses.

You're right. Money can buy the right to *use* a particular collaboration software. This is basically what happens with Facebook and whole Web 2.0 "movement": you pay for the services by giving someone else access to your personal and sometime sensible data.

But Akcio offers you something much more valuable than the simple right to *use* it. Akcio gives you the possibility to participate in its design and development process (the Akcio Process), and -if your institution has money to spend- it can be actively involved in the setting of the goals of the process. So we're not talking about the right to use, but also about the right to modify and re-shape according to your needs. And all this without being an expert in IT.

8. Who's behind all this?

Akcio is developed by Akcio International, a no profit NGO composed by educators and technicians with many years of experience in the field. The Akcio Process of development has involved the top experts in the field of OCL and Knowledge Sharing. And in the future it may also involve YOU.