The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is the largest cultural and sporting organisation in Ireland with a network of more than 2,300 clubs and in excess of 500,000 members.
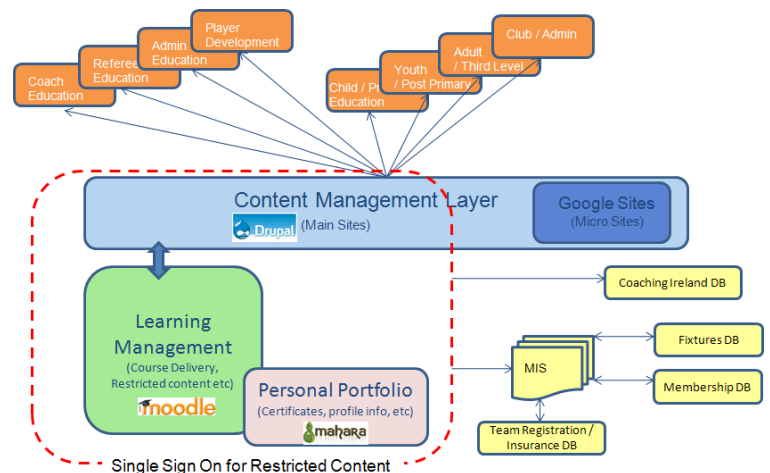
It is celebrated as one of the great amateur sporting associations in the world. The GAA is a volunteer led, community based organisation that promotes Gaelic games (such as hurling and Gaelic football), culture and lifelong participation. It is part of the Irish consciousness and plays an influential role in Irish society that extends far beyond these basic aims.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Given the organisation's size and scope of influence there are many key roles that require continuous support and development, from coaches to referees to administrators and of course the players. In essence these groups are Communities of Practice with shared concerns and passions and learn through their interaction with each other.

LEARNING PORTAL

In order to reach and support this dispersed membership, the GAA took the decision to implement an education portal which would provide role based learning opportunities, accreditation as well as information and resources which would be publicly available. In 2011 they awarded the contract to Enovation Solutions following an open tender competition. Enovation were a perfect fit to the GAA requirements given their experience in the education sector and their proven expertise in implementing complex solutions comprising integrated open source products and interfaces to third party systems.

Integrated Solution

Enovation's proposal was to implement the solution using a fully integrated set of proven open source tools.

The Learning **Portal** was implemented using the Drupal content management system. This gave the GAA an opportunity to customise the look and feel of the learning portal leading to a more engaging user experience than could be achieved using a LMS on its own.

The **learning management** aspects of the learning portal were implemented using Moodle. Moodle manages courses and learning material delivery and learner assessment. To allow members to store accreditation an **ePortfolio** was also integrated into the learning portal. The technology used to do this was Mahara.

Implementation

As this was the first foray by the GAA into a complex eLearning project of this nature, Enovation applied its' agile software development methodology to drive an iterative analysis and prototyping phase to arrive at the final project scope. Once this phase was complete and the technical specification agreed the project development was initiated. Enovation implemented a workflow and notification process within a new Moodle block that handled the interactions with certification bodies and ensured all the correct authorisations were in place before new courses were opened for enrolment.

The learning portal is to have publicly available training elements with a strong emphasis on multi-media content. With in excess of 500,000 members the user base was potentially huge. Enovation have put in place a streaming server alongside a high availability hosting infrastructure with failover capability to a separate data centre.

Go Live

Following the successful completion of user acceptance test the GAA are planning a soft launch of the portal in late 2012.