

Enhancing Vocational Skills: Interactive Media Training

Interactive software is out there and its not just for kids. One of the most useful applications for multimedia (videos and CD-ROM) is skill enhancement and training. Instructional CDs and videos have, in recent times, become a valuable tool to professionals who need their employees to be trained in specialized fields and practices. They are also excellent resources for those who wish to hone their own job skills or perhaps update their current knowledge. For these purposes, there are several companies that specialize in providing these educational materials and they range from all types of professions to generalized self-improvement.



Technical Training

One of the most demanding areas for skill training and assessment is the technical field. Here are just a few of the many products out there that are geared towards the mechanically and technically inclined professions.

Automation Studio (www.ttaweb.com) is a technical and interactive CD package, which trains individuals in circuit design and automation technology. The software package is designed so users are able to outline, simulate, and animate their own circuits while using various methods of electrical controls, including hydraulics and pneumatics. This is a tool that can be utilized by engineers, teachers and students alike. Automation Studio is available in multiple languages as well (English, Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese, and Portuguese).

Aircraft Systems Review (www.nolly.com/asrv.html) provides videos that can be used in order to train pilots on unfamiliar aircraft or allows those in the aviation field to refresh their current systems knowledge. The videos incorporate one-on-one instruction with visual explanations and procedures, which are viewed from a pilot's perspective. These videos are also "generic" in the sense that they can be used universally despite an individual trainee's airline affiliation.

TPC Training Systems (www.tpctraining.com) offer an extensive video and interactive CD library. They specialize in machine and mechanical training and have been responsible for training over 3 million employees with their products. Their training videos cover topics such as: Reading blueprints, schematics, and symbols; electronics and digital electronics education; engine mechanics, hydraulics, and even heavy machinery use. TCP also offers training CDs that cover Process instrumentation, mechanics maintenance, and air conditioning/refrigeration systems. These CDs are user friendly and incorporate full program narration, detailed graphics, and several quizzes, automated tests, and sections where the user can interact with the software.



Medical Training

Medical training is another area in which interactive and self-training products are in wide use. Medical practitioners and students going into those fields are able to sharpen their skills by using visual tools that allow them to view details and solve simulated problems.

The University of Washington has a series of interactive CDs called the TUTOR series (www.labmed.washington.edu/tutor/products). These CDs cover several different aspects of evaluating medical data and train individuals on how to interpret multiple results. ElectrophoresisTUTOR, for example, is an interactive computer program that teaches electrophoresis interpretations of proteins in various body fluids. The CD, by using illustrations, charts, and tables, is useful for instructing initial students or evaluating competency levels. Another example in this series is PhlebotomyTUTOR. This program simply trains individuals in the appropriate methods and techniques of taking blood from a patient.

PedsLink (www.pedslink.com), a resource for pediatric healthcare, produces a series of training videos geared towards home health clinicians and nurses who are in charge of providing care for infants and children with various illnesses. Videos, such as *Home Phototherapy for Infants*, use hands on training that take the care provider step-by-step through treatment methods and assessments, and use specific procedural demonstrations. The films cover multiple topics that can be reviewed as many times as necessary.



General Skill Training

There are also several multimedia tools to train individuals in universal skills. These are videos and CDs that can be valuable to anyone going into any field or business.

Glencoe Online (www.glencoe.com) is a source of several tools for non-college related, post-secondary education. One of which is *The Job Interview* CD-ROM. This is an interactive guide that trains job seekers in all aspects of the interviewing process. The CD also provides information on commonly asked interview questions and gives advice on how one should respond. The CD utilizes video clips depicting job interview scenarios, narration, tips, and questions in order to reinforce concepts that are vital to having a successful interview.

BrainwareMedia (www.Brainware-tm.com) offers several videos and CDs for business and managerial training. Many of these, though, can be useful to everyone. *The Art of Communication* is an interactive CD-ROM that allows individuals to improve their communication skills and their ability to effectively get their message across. *The Art of Communication* features advice, interactive role playing using common, everyday situations and self-assessment exercises that allow the user to figure out how they communicate. This is ideal for any individual who is faced with giving presentations, public speaking, or just communicating with people in general.

Finally, Brainware also offers a training video on how to train using videos! *How to Train with Video* takes you step by step through the process of selecting the appropriate videos for any purpose. It also gives ideas on interesting and insightful ways of incorporating videos into everyday instruction or training programs. The video describes how to motivate people into learning on their own with interactive training, as well.

There are several options out there for post-secondary, vocational, and skills training. Utilizing audio/visual technology in order to stimulate trainees, or yourself even, can be, not only a more exciting way of learning, but also a more effective way. Learning as you go enables you to work at your own pace and review material as you see fit. Interactive CD training may also provide simple lectures or textbooks. As technology advances, multimedia applications may just become a standard in all areas of job training and general skills education.