

## **Stop Wasting Your Time and Money on Classroom Training!**

**By Paul Heacock**

Did the headline get your attention? I hope so. It is my belief that while much of the time and resources spent on classroom training is appropriate, a significant portion of it is wasted and ineffective. Don't default to classroom training.

Classroom training is being wasted when it is used to teach employees how to navigate software and to follow step-by-step processes using the company's application software. Companies are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars pushing system navigation and step-by-step content into people's heads – people who can't remember it all – and many of these people will leave the company in a relatively short time frame.

I know of companies that put employees through six weeks of classroom training on how to use their application software. Then they expect the employee to remember and apply what they were taught many weeks prior. It just doesn't happen. The employee then interrupts someone else, calls the help desk, looks it up in a manual, or, in some cases, just guesses.

The problem stems from a number of causes:

- There is too much information to be absorbed – the volume is overwhelming
- The information is changing constantly
- Not everything can be memorized
- People forget what they don't use

Fortunately there is a better way. For less than what was being wasted on this type of classroom training, many companies are creating an ongoing performance support system – or what some call a Knowledge Delivery System (KDS). The KDS allows them to reduce the classroom training time by 50% or more since they have the navigation and step-by-step procedures available at the desk top – filtered and focused to provide just what the employees need based on where they are in the software and what they are wanting to do.

Sprint is one of these companies. The March 2003 issue of Training magazine includes an article on Sprint's University of Excellence (UE) and the UE's use of a KDS they call the UE Guide. The following is an excerpt from the article.

*The UE redesigned the curriculum, reduced training by three weeks and introduced a UE Guide solution for on-the-job performance support. UE Guide is a Web-based help system for Sprint-specific software that is accessed through a shortcut on an employee's desktop. Organized and developed around the tasks required by the software application it supports, the tool also generates context-sensitive information about whatever task the employee is trying to accomplish when the UE Guide icon is activated.*

*The eight ARRs (Accounts Receivable Representatives) who took part in the pilot program using UE Guides collected more than \$800,000 in their first three weeks on the job—time that had previously been spent in class—and produced 72 percent more in average daily revenue per employee than the existing representatives, all of which resulted in a significant positive effect on bottom-line results. In terms of ROI, the reduced training time provided a 300 percent net benefit, and increased productivity for the pilot-group representatives resulted in a net annualized benefit of 1,616 percent.*

*"We've been extremely pleased with the results of the performance solution developed by UE," says Sandra Castillo-Jackson, director of accounts receivable operations within the Local Telecommunications Division. In short, revamping the training curriculum for CMG's (Consumer Markets Group) ARRs and incorporating the UE Guide application have directly affected all three of Sprint's corporate goals: We've seen measurable evidence of increased customer satisfaction, increased revenue, and a feeling of empowerment among the ARRs. We couldn't have asked for more than that."*

By various estimates, 80% of critical job related learning happens on the job. Classroom training should provide a structure for navigation and process-based learning, but not deliver it. A just-in-time KDS increases speed to competency and speed to change.

Break the old assumptions and defaults. Don't default to classroom training for software navigation and step-by-step processes. There is a more cost effective and performance enhancing method – consider a KDS.

Please contact me if you would like a free copy of our ROI calculator that will help you determine what you are currently spending on classroom training that might be better suited to an ongoing KDS.

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