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IMCBT

By Lisa Spurlin

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Increasingly, employers are recognizing that many critical skills cannot be effectively taught in the classroom and need to be reinforced and enhanced in the job setting.

Interactive multimedia computer-based training (IMCBT) has become the buzz term in training and business circles. Many people have heard of it, but few can define it if asked.

What is it?

Interactive. This term applies to any type of program or training that requires the learner to do more than just sit and watch or listen. The theory behind interactivity is that the individual will learn faster and retain more information than is possible through passive or non-participatory education.

Multimedia. In its purest sense, multimedia refers to any product that uses more than one medium to convey information. So by definition, a program that uses text and graphics is a multimedia product. Today, the term connotes the use of audio and video.

Computer-based Training (CBT). CBT refers to any training whose primary delivery mechanism is a computer. Facilitated discussion or exercises (i.e. with another application, with a piece of equipment, interacting with other individuals, etc.) can accompany CBT. The term used to describe the software for the CBT is courseware.

When should a company consider using IMCBT?

In 1997, instructors in live classrooms delivered almost 80% of all training. By the year 2000, computers will deliver over 50% of all training worldwide. In fact, over 50% of U.S. businesses have already incorporated some type of computer-based training. Interactive training has grown at a dramatic rate as more and more organizations see the benefits this technology can bring.

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Limited manpower and financial resources, along with the growing demands of rapidly changing markets, have forced trainers to consider alternative methods of training.

Many companies need to provide some sort of training or instruction to their workers and/or customers. In fact, over 50% of U.S. businesses have already incorporated some type of computer-based training. This is especially true for technology-based firms. These companies have several options for providing needed training: they can send people to school, hold in-house training classes, provide manuals and self-study guides, and/or use IMCBT.

Interactive training has grown at a dramatic rate as more and more organizations see the benefits these technologies can bring. If you are a company who is considering implementing IMCBT, there are several questions that need to be answered.

- * What are IMCBT advantages?
- * What are IMCBT disadvantages?
- * How do you make the decision to use IMCBT?

This white paper will help you to answer these questions and explain the advantages and disadvantages of using IMCBT as a training option. You will then be able to determine when and where your company should implement IMCBT for training personnel and/or customers.

IMCBT Advantages

Interactive multimedia computer-based training has advantages over traditional classroom training:

- * better than reading a manual,
- * cost-effective,
- * practical,
- * standard,
- * better knowledge retention,
- * presents a no-risk situation.

Can be better than reading the manual...

Manuals are usually more effective as a reference tool than as a learning. Self-study guides can be considered dull and boring. Many working people do not have the motivation or skills to sit down and teach themselves by reading a manual or self-study guide. On the other hand, IMCBT attracts the student's interest and can even be enjoyable to use. It would certainly work better than simply learning from a manual.

IMCBT can simulate many work situations, giving the worker practice in real-time, and that progress can be monitored and improvements measured and documented through the software. IMCBT helps transform workers unskilled in a given area to those who are proficient in that task.

Cost-effective...

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Training can be expensive, and the major consideration in training is cost. The main concern a business has when it is deciding to invest in something, is the return on investment (ROI). Interactive multimedia computer-based training will give a business an average of over 100% ROI.

After the initial development cost, IMCBT will save a company a considerable amount in training expenses, as it can be used over and over again.

As the number of people being trained increases, IMCBT decreases the cost of training. This includes situations where many people must be trained, as well as cases where companies have a high turnover of personnel. Utilizing innovative and more efficient methods of training and education can have a significant, positive impact on businesses and individuals. Companies can take better advantage of their computer investment by using them as learning centers.

Practical...

When the people to be trained are widely dispersed, travel time and costs to send them to a class is

prohibitive, and sending trainers to them is not practical. IMCBT allows the worker to study as this or her own convenience, without the necessity of scheduling times for classes. IMCBT programs dramatically increase comprehension and retention of information by appealing to more of the student's senses through the use of multimedia presentations. IMCBT not only provides better results than classroom sessions, but can also take up to 30% less time to complete.

Standardized...

Since different teachers and trainers have different styles of instruction, all personnel may not receive the same training. IMCBT assures standardization of the training and content presented. Everyone sees the same information and is exposed to identical learning environments. The reliability of instruction, quality of information, and presentation of materials is consistent from user to user and session to session. IMCBT is active and the student must participate.

Better knowledge retention...

IMCBT programs provide a multi-sensory learning environment that maximizes the way people retain information. Studies have shown that people remember 20% of what they see and 40% of what they see and hear. Interactive multimedia computer-based training allows people to remember 70% of what they see, hear, and do.

No-risk situations...

IMCBT can simulate many work, laboratory or field environments that may be inaccessible for on-site training demonstrations. Students can safely practice and master skills, allowing their progress to be monitored and improvements measured and documented before applying them in a potentially hazardous situation. For example, new workers in a manufacturing plant can master the skills to operate machinery before they assume their work duties.

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IMCBT Disadvantages

Many companies find it difficult to keep their employees abreast of the latest technologies and techniques. A more serious problem is the fact that many employees -- from the blue-collar worker to the professional -- lack the basic skills they should have learned in high school.

These are some of the drawbacks to using IMCBT:

- * Need access to a computer
- * Must understand and know how to use a computer
- * Personnel resistance
- * Must be well-done

Need access to a computer...

Students must have access to computers at home, at work, or at some training location within the company to use IMCBT. Sometimes computer access is possible.

Must understand and know how to use a computer...

To use an IMCBT, it is assumed that the personnel being trained are somewhat computer literate. They must know how to use a keyboard and a mouse. Some people must be trained, at a minimum, basic computer skills prior to using an IMCBT program.

Personnel resistance...

Some people have phobias concerning the use of computers, while others balk at any type of computer function. They may feel it is too impersonal or that the computer is "out to get them". Some people may simply "freeze up" when confronted with learning on a computer.

Must be well-done...

The IMCBT must be designed and written in a quality manner for the students to keep interest and learn. A good IMCBT program will not contain too many graphics, videos, or colors. It should be pleasing to the eye and easy to see. A poorly designed IMCBT can result in boredom or even confuse the person who is supposed to learn the material. A person can learn more from a poor teacher than from a poorly designed IMCBT program.

Types of IMCBT Programs

- * Software Training
- * Medical Certifications
- * Equipment Training
- * Simulations
- * Service Training

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- * Adult Education
- * Safety Training
- * Sales Training
- * Orientation
- * Internet Training
- * Product Training
- * Quality Training
- * K–12 Learning
- * Military Training
- * Foreign Languages
- * Employment Policies
- * Sexual Harassment Policies
- * Basic Employment Skills

How do you make the decision?

Businesses make most sound decisions based on potential return on investment (ROI). It is assumed that the company has already determined that training their personnel and/or customers is a value-added activity. Now, the question is whether or not IMCBT is the best route to take.

Criteria for deciding to use IMCBT include:

- * Cost and practicality of sending learners to a class

- * Availability of computers and computer literacy

- * CBT development cost versus the number being trained

An effective decision can be made once these issues have been weighed.

Conclusion...

Every company needs to have well-trained personnel who will be able to do their jobs effectively and add value to the company's output. In today's age of information, knowledge is power. The more knowledge you and your employees have, the more powerful and successful your company will be.

While traditional, stand-up classroom training will not disappear, alone it simply cannot provide adequate solutions to the training and education problems of today. Computer-based training does not cook breakfast, cure baldness or do windows. It is not the best solution for all human performance issues and needs. Employed appropriately, however, multimedia training can yield significant, positive results: less time and cost, better learning and performance, and improved competitive edge.

Companies should consider using an interactive multimedia computer-based training when it is cost effective, practical, and when standardized education is needed. PCs must be available, students cannot resist using a computer, and the IMCBT must be well designed to provide the desired effect. In

all, IMCBT can help to transform workers and customers unskilled in a given area to those who are proficient in those tasks.

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I would like to offer your company a FREE, no-obligation evaluation of your current training system. I can show you how to improve training and save your company money. If you do not have a training system in place, I can show you how IMCBT can benefit your business. Please contact me at info@i-netovation.com for more information.

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