

New Training Tools

Tools Update

Still out of sight.... Despite the hullabaloo about videoconferencing, most people do business the old-fashioned way—face to face. Experts continue to predict a large market for videoconferencing systems, but in the more distant future than they first thought. The reason is money.

It's a sort of catch-22. Videoconferencing systems tend to be expensive—about \$30,000 for the average setup. Consequently, relatively few businesses can afford them. But until the market grows, the technology will remain costly.

The companies that use videoconferencing say it cuts down on the expenses of convening employees from different sites for meetings and training. But for the most part, videoconferencing is more of a special event than an office fixture.

Industry analysts say that once videoconferencing systems get smaller and cost less, they'll proliferate the way computers have. Several companies are racing to produce desktop versions that don't need special rooms, cameras, or other equipment.

Once a streamlined system hits the market for under \$1,000, it'll take its place in the office alongside the PC, telephone, and fax machine.

Stay tuned.

Quality for All

In a world of electronic tools, people still like to take pen to paper—even when applying innovative business concepts such as quality.

Employees at all levels can become involved in their organization's quality efforts by using *Everyone's Problem Solving Handbook*, by

Michael R. Kelly, former quality specialist at Florida Power & Light.

The handbook is a primer and workbook on quality tools and techniques. It shows how to use bar charts, cause-and-effect diagrams, flowcharts, and histograms in conjunction with problem solving to improve the quality of work. The book also presents five case studies that illustrate the successful use of quality improvement methods.

The step-by-step guide defines each tool, describes its use, provides a picture of the tool, and instructs you on how to apply it.

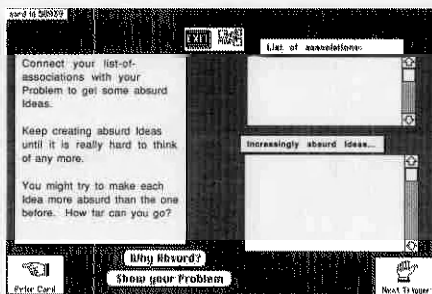
The 176-page, 8.5-by-11-inch spiral-bound handbook costs \$18.50. For more information, contact Quality Resources, White Plains, New York.

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Eureka!

What do an elephant and an oil well have in common? If nothing comes to mind, try MindLink, a software program designed to facilitate out-of-the-box thinking. The software will have you making odd-but-useful

"Up close and personal" is still the preference of most meeting planners, who can't afford videoconferencing systems—yet. Other items include tools for generating ideas and analyzing needs, as well as a new way to see Venice.



connections before you know it, according to the maker. MindLink helps you to loosen your grip on the censor in you, unleashing uninhibited ideas that lead to practical solutions to real problems.

New Training Tools

MindLink works on the premise that most solutions happen when you're not thinking about the problem at all. The MindLink process progresses through five stages: stating and understanding the problem, wishing for outcomes, generating ideas and options, developing solutions and action plans, and formatting solutions into strategies.

The program contains more than 40 idea triggers and the Gym, a warm-up creativity session. A typical exercise: "List several different ways to use a nickel." Or, "list several different situations in which you can't possibly use a nickel." You can create fresh exercises by substituting your choices for certain elements.

One nice thing about brainstorming with MindLink is that it doesn't pour cold water on your ideas, like some people you know. In fact, MindLink encourages you to be absurd, silly, and impractical—behaviors that breed truly innovative concepts.

The program also provides the

Lite Tools

Just for fun.... Sure, you're nice and polite at the office. You're pleasant to your co-workers, you do your work efficiently, and you never complain. You even smile when there's a crisis at 4:45 that has to be fixed *now*. But when you get home....

You throw off your everyday duds and put on "The Job that Ate My Brain" t-shirt. It says what you can't: "SEE the work pile up! HEAR your co-workers snarl! FEEL the

sweat down your back! SMELL your boss sneaking up behind you!"

Frighteningly illustrated in toxic blue and exorcist green, the \$16 alter-ego tee also comes in a \$28 sweatshirt. It's kind of a Jekyll and Hyde thing, without the wear and tear.

For more information, contact *Wireless* ("the catalog for fans and friends of public radio"), St. Paul, Minnesota.

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capability to produce a variety of reports—such as business plans and proposals—that can combine your wishes, ideas, and solutions into a cohesive whole.

Other features include time clocking, time management, password protection (so no one else can see your wacky notions), *The Innovator's Handbook*, free software upgrades for 18 months, and a bag of creativ-

ity toys to use with on-screen exercises or in the classroom.

MindLink works on IBM with Windows 3.0 and 4 MB memory (it also works with 2 MB, but the program runs more slowly) and any Macintosh with 1 MB that runs HyperCard.

A recent software review we saw gave MindLink a score of three "computers" out of a possible four. The cost of the complete package is

Total Quality Performance

ESF's "Total Training System" is a comprehensive training curriculum.

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"I never dreamed that designing my company's training programs could be so easy and successful (and fun!). ESF's *Developing Materials* Workshop is a no frills approach to developing any type of training program. Best of all, anyone can do it."
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Ray Sinkiewicz, Hydra-matic



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If you'd like to telephone a manufacturer, turn to the reader service page for phone numbers. But please be sure to say that you read about the product in *Training & Development!*

\$299. The company offers multiple-purchase discounts and on-site creativity training.

For more information on the software and accompanying materials, contact MindLink, North Pomfret, Vermont.

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Training for Sale

Allen-Bradley, a company that manufactures and sells industrial automation controls and systems, is putting its particular brand of needs analysis on the market. The service is a systematic study that addresses three critical issues that affect an organization's productivity goals: lack of employee skills and knowledge, environmental factors, and motivational issues.

As described by Allen-Bradley, a needs analysis defines the level and types of training that are best suited to an organization's employees. An analysis is appropriate when new technology is introduced, when new equipment is installed, and when new employees are hired. It may be particularly helpful for determining employee ability levels across departments and shifts.

Allen-Bradley's analysis may recommend a variety of options for a company's training needs—such as lecture/lab courses, CBT, refresher courses, or job aids. The service takes an approach that is performance-based rather than subject-matter-based. That is, the training is based on what employers want workers to accomplish, not on what they want workers to know.

The goal of the service is to recommend training that results in more productive employees, less unscheduled downtime, and greater cost savings.

For more information, contact Allen-Bradley, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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Gondolas Not Included

Venetian Merchants: The Imperial Game of Planning and Time Management is a new board game designed to help people develop their decision making and problem solving skills. It was created specifically for managers, project teams, and sales and service people.

The game's setting is the Venetian Trade Empire of the fifteenth century, a time when Venice was the leading seaport of the Western world and a great commercial center. While playing Venetian Merchants, players experience problems and opportunities from the Old World and improve their skills in dealing with the real world.

The typical Venetian merchant of the day was tough, hard-working, and determined. Just as it does now, success in fifteenth-century Venice required strategy, innovative thinking, and a recognition of obstacles and opportunities.

Here's how you play the game: From 9 to 24 players are divided into 3 to 6 teams. Teams are provided with background information and given 30 minutes to plan their initial strategies.

Players visit exotic ports to buy, sell, and trade goods. Along the way, they face the vagaries of weather, pirates, and disease. The setbacks force them to use and develop decision making and problem solving techniques to surmount the obstacles and try to win the game. Scoring is based on profitable sales.

For more information, contact W.F. Murray Associates, Elkhart, Indiana.

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"New Training Tools" is compiled and written by Haidee Allerton. Send items of interest to "Tools," Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.