New Training Tools

Watch To Learn To Use

Before you go nuts on buying software, here are two video programs that demonstrate some of the basics.

Project management

Template Techniques has introduced a video-based training course called PC Planning Principles, intended for people who want to know how to use project-management software effectively.

The 68-minute video uses drama, computer graphics, and animation to show users a time- and cost-effective method of learning planning techniques. Topics include

■ critical path methods;
■ communicating with planning graphics;
■ project modeling;
■ using the project model for decision-making;
■ pitfalls to avoid in the planning process.

Four exercises are integrated in the course to ensure active participation in the learning process. After watching 10 to 20 minutes of the video, the viewer completes an exercise from a workbook and then restarts the video to find the solutions. The course takes about two hours.

The price for the video and the workbook is $495. For more information, contact **Template Techniques, Inc.**, 16747 Squyres Road, Suite 102, Spring, TX 77379; 800/648-3475 (in Texas, 713/251-3886).
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Business

Applied Learning has released "Using Business Software," a group of interactive videodisc instruction courses that provide introductions to major types of business software.

PC Word Processing examines the features of word-processing packages that are used to format, edit, combine, and print documents.

Users learn how to select the features that would be most effective in solving their business-related problems. The course uses two videodisc sides and requires two to four hours to complete.

PC Data Bases provides an overview of the design, creation, and use of databases in a business environment. Users learn the advantages of databases and discover how to identify the correct features for entering, manipulating, and generating information. The course contains one disc side and lasts one-and-a-half to three hours.

With **PC Spreadsheets**, users find out what features they can use to design a spreadsheet, create formulas, and manage files. The course uses two videodisc sides and requires two to four hours to complete.

You may rent all three courses for $80 to $180 (depending on rental volume) per disc side per month. For more information, contact **Applied Learning**, 1751 West Diehl Road, Naperville, IL 60540-9075; 312/369-3000.
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Decisions, Decisions

What should you do in this situation? What solution best fits that problem? Buy? Sell? Is the roast beef good today, or should you stick with the egg salad? Here are two software packages that can guide you toward good decisions.

To do or not to do

That is the question for managers who are faced with decisions concerning money; training administrators bump into that question all the time. Action Management Associates has introduced Decision Engine, designed for situations in which weighted criteria are used to

evaluate and select alternatives based on ratings. When you need to decide on the cost merits of a new program, purchase, or problem, the software crunches the numbers for you.

Decision Engine organizes your information into tables that contain criteria, objectives, values, alternatives, and ratings. You can evaluate multiple alternatives against up to 99 criteria, and the criteria can be subjective or objective, required or desirable, and grouped into categories.

The software converts values into ratings, calculates scores, analyzes alternatives, charts results, and generates a comprehensive report, which can be printed or written to a file on your disk for inclusion in another document. Most functions for the program require only a keystroke; online, context-sensitive help is available for any program feature.

Decision Engine requires an IBM PC or compatible with 512K RAM, an 80-column monitor, and version 2.10 or later of IBM PC/DOS or Microsoft MS/DOS. A hard disk is strongly recommended. The program comes with a user's guide and sample files, and costs $79. For more information, contact **Action Management Associates, Inc.**, 12201 Merit Drive, Suite 950, Dallas, TX 75251; 214/386-5611.
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The decision lies not in your stars . . .

But it may lie with your team. Profrontation has released Chalkboard, an interactive software program designed for group problem-solving or as a supplement to your training programs.

The program has four components:
■ "Probe" contains descriptions of successful team problem-solving methods and techniques, as well as principles of creative thinking.

■ "Team" creates customized profiles that provide insight into team members' various approaches to problems and their interactions with others. The profiles can help determine the problem-solving techniques and environments that are most compatible with the issues involved and the team's structure;

■ "Chalk" contains an outline of Profrontation's Pro-Power Brainstorming Process; it is designed to accept inputs from the group, compile the information, and compute results that reflect the team's evaluation of problem factors.

■ "Cause" provides a way to resolve problems or issues using Pro-Power's cause-and-effect techniques; the format allows the team to identify a problem, determine common factors, assign causes, rank their order of significance, and explore solutions.

The software requires an IBM PC or compatible and comes with printed outline materials. The cost is $75. For more information, contact **Profrontation**, Box 862, Addison, IL 60101; 312/833-2039.
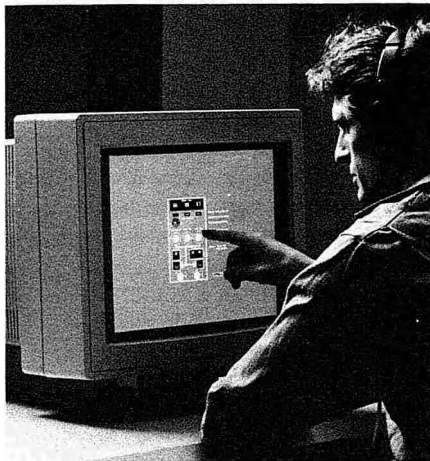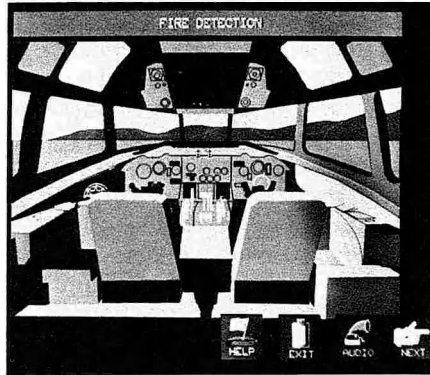*Circle No. 183 on Reader Service Card.*

Earning Wings

We all hope that the people who fly the nation's airlines have been trained properly, mostly because their on-the-job is our in-the-air. But often, a pilot can be only as good as his or her tools, so we also must hope that the ground crew has been trained equally well.

Control Data, which has created many training systems for the aviation industry, and McDonnell Douglas have developed a computer-based, MD-80-series maintenance training program that provides individualized instruction for experienced ramp and transit mechanics.

The course addresses all aspects of MD-80 aircraft maintenance, in-

cluding avionics, airframe, electrical, and power-plant activities. It also covers the minimum equipment list/component deviation list (MEL/CDL) and maintenance manuals for the MD-80.

The training is mastery-based—review and testing procedures built into the course are intended to ensure proficiency in one area before the trainee moves on to the next lesson.

The course can be delivered either on Control Data's stand-alone Aviation Training Station II or as a part of an aviation training network, which links up to 30 stations in a local area network. It can be installed at home base or at any air-carrier outstation. Control Data also can tailor the system to individual aircraft configurations to accommodate, for instance, different electronic flight-instrument system (EFIS) presentations.

The cost for the system ranges from $10,000 to $250,000, depending on the number of stations required, types of customization, and so forth. For more information, contact **Control Data, Inc.**, 8800 Queen Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55431; 612/921-6380.
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Gravity: What a Concept

Gravity is here to stay, and its laws haven't changed much since that apple clonked Newton on the head.

PCB Piezotronics has gone beyond the apple with its new instrumented test structure, called Instructure. Used with a modified computer, oscilloscope, or analyzer, it demonstrates the nature, function, structure, and behavior of both people and things. By performing typical human tasks, trainees sense, test, and modify behavior to improve the ways structures function, feel, look, sound, and interact.

Instructure combines a test fixture, manual shaker, structural model, and gravimetric calibrator in one package. Trainees see cause-and-effect relationships as the structure's
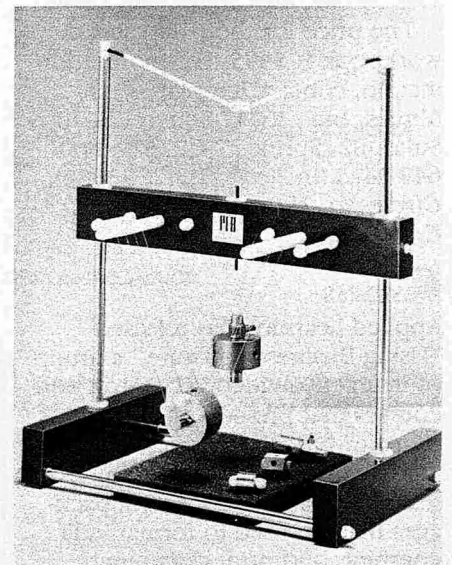
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motions (according to gravity and other forces) are transformed into electrical signals for analysis—it's a good way to see how Newton's laws of motion affect rigid bodies, and the display on the oscilloscope shows trainees how their interaction with structures can be improved.

The price for the entire package is $3,800, but if you have an oscilloscope or analyzer, you may purchase Instructure for $985; a sophisticated version (with a quartz force sensor, quartz accelerometer, and multi-channel signal conditioner) is available for $1,985. For more information, contact **PCB Piezotronics, Inc.**, 3425 Walden Avenue, Depew, NY 14043; 716/684-0001.
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Publications

Here are a few new publications that may fit some of your training needs.

Expert systems

Auerbach Publishers has launched *Expert Systems: Planning/Implementation/Integration*, a 72-page quarterly magazine for MIS managers who want to know how to select, install, and use expert systems in their companies.

The articles cover actual implementations, new tools, and steps taken by leading designers for building expert systems. The contributors to the magazine are practitioners from many industries, including manufacturing, health-care, finance, insurance, and aerospace.

The cost for four issues is $98. For more information, contact **Auerbach Publishers**, a division of Warren, Gorham & Lamont, Inc., 1 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10119; 212/971-5000.
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Penning personnel policies

The HIRE (Human Incentive and Resource Education) Institute recently released *The Personnel Manager's Encyclopedia of Prewritten Personnel Policies* (say *that* three times fast). The two-volume set contains more than 200 sample policies that may be copied word for word or adapted to match your specialized policy objectives. The set covers more than 65 critical policy areas, from absenteeism to worker's comp, and guides supervisors in the resolution of problems concerning unjust dismissal, privacy, EEO, and so forth. You also get three different tones for your policy: conservative, middle-of-the-road, and progressive.

The set includes instructions on how to develop and produce a policy manual. It also provides questionnaires, checklists, sample presentations, and memos, making it easy for you to pinpoint policy objectives, win management support, and select the right policies for your organization.

The Personnel Manager's Encyclopedia of Prewritten Personnel Policies is available for $89.95. For more information, contact **The HIRE Institute**, 1730 North Lynn Street, Arlington, VA 22209; 703/841-8150.
Circle No. 187 on Reader Service Card.

Better writing

Sure, you know how to provide the best, and get the best, from your workforce, but write a memo, a report, a proposal? You'd rather go in for root-canal work. Olivia Stockard, author of *The Complete Business Writing Kit*, says that you shouldn't be so apprehensive, that in fact you know more about good writing than you want to admit. Because you read a lot (because you read the *Journal* thoroughly, we'd like to think), you know what good writing looks like, what sorts of sentences read well, what sorts of para-

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graphs are meaningless. You may not be conscious of your knowledge, but it's there.

Your only problem, probably, is style—you've learned the wrong rules for communicating effectively to the business reader. *The Complete Business Writing Kit* gives you 10 self-instructional lessons designed to combine your latent writing knowledge with a business-oriented style. It covers everything from the basic principles of readability to voice and vocabulary to organization and logic. It even includes a chapter on using graphics.

The 256-page paperback is available for $32.95. For more information, contact **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012; 212/850-6497. *Circle No. 188 on Reader Service Card*.

Desktop dealings

You're a trainer with a desktop publishing system, and the stuff you produce—presentations, newsletters, and so forth—is OK, but let's face it, you're not a designer.

ITC has begun publishing its first issue of *ITC Desktop: A Practical Guide to the Power of Business Communications*, to help businesses enhance the look and sophistication of their business communications. The magazine provides regular sections and feature stories concerning

■ how to select attractive and effective design elements using the tools you have;

■ how to make the most of your technology and when to upgrade;

■ reviews of new computer-graphics technology;

■ desktop-publishing case studies;

■ new ideas in typefaces and layouts.

Just as interesting as the information it provides is the magazine itself. Its New York office has no full-time employees—all the editorial, production, and commercial operations take place in remote locations, with everyone communicating by

computer. The first time words go onto paper is when the contents of the magazine have been transmitted to the printing facility.

The cover price for the bimonthly *ITC Desktop* is $5; a six-issue subscription in $24. For more information, contact **International Typeface Corp.**, 2 Hammarskjold Plaza, New York, NY 10017; 212/371-0699. *Circle No. 189 on Reader Service Card*.

A Big Nameplate

At your next stand-up presentation, make sure everyone remembers who you are and exactly what you're talking about. The Presenter is a lightweight, portable display center into which you can slip mini-billboards—your name, the name of your session, the different topics you want to cover, or what have you. Behind the graphic-display panel (which is canted at a 45-degree angle) is a fluorescent light, in case you need backlighting. The unit also contains a pocket for your brochures, a business-card holder, and a drop slot for others' business cards.

The Presenter is made of styrene and is completely collapsible—it even has a black carrying case that may be hung in an airline's suit-bag closet.

The cost for the Presenter is $1,200. For more information, contact **ADV Marketing Group, Inc.**, 408 Elm Street, Stamford, CT 06902; 203/356-9621. *Circle No. 190 on Reader Service Card*.

"New Training Tools" is compiled and written by Eric R. Blume. Send items of interest to Tools, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.