

MEDIA REVIEWS

Camtasia

Reviewed by Heidi J. Larson for *Training Media Review*

Have you ever found yourself in one of these scenarios?

- You're teaching clerical workers a new version of a software program and you know that they'll have forgotten much of what you taught them a week after class.
- Despite providing a detailed FAQ page on the company Website, your help desk is overloaded with calls.
- You're teaching med school students how to differentiate between heart fibrillations and would like a comparison vehicle.

Chances are that the only heart fibrillations you ever see are Thursday nights on *ER*, but you've probably wished that you had some way to package your training, knowledge, and procedures as job aids and performance support resources. That's where TechSmith's Camtasia comes in. It enables you to take any AVI videos, including recorded computer-screen movements, and package them into RealMedia, QuickTime, and Windows Media movies. (TechSmith also has its own compression utility.)

Sorry, Mac users, Camtasia is only for PCs, although it works with an emulator program such as Virtual PC by Connectix. A comparable Mac program that has received good reviews is SnapZPro by Ambrosia Software, and there's always Apple's iMovie.

The way it works

Camtasia is a suite of three integrated programs. The first, Camtasia Recorder, lets you capture cursor movements, menu selections, pop-up windows, typing, and everything else you see on your screen. For instance, you can record the steps for searching an online database or using the Comments function in a Word document. You can record your audio instructions as you follow the steps, although if you flub the audio, you have to re-record the accompanying screen shots. Recorder will save that information into an AVI file.

TechSmith offers Dublt, the second program, for people who aren't at ease with a microphone and would like to keep the audio recording separate. First you record the screen-action video, ideally creating a script as you go, and then record the audio as you play back the video.

Once you've recorded your videos, you move into Camtasia Producer, which quickly edits, trims, and joins AVI clips into the finished product. Producer consists of a storyboard, an edit preview screen, a file directory, and a thumbnail pane. You can drag clips from the preview pane directly onto the storyboard. If they need trimming, you can operate first in the edit screen, where you can re-

move clips, reorder them, insert still frames such as title screens and graphics, and add transitions.

When all of your clips in the storybook are ready, you can forge ahead on your own or use the production wizard to create movies for a variety of audiences. You can encode using severe compression for 28.8kb modems or very little compression for CD playback.

There are multiple special effects available, such as highlighting the mouse pointer, zooming in on a section, and inserting watermarks and captions. You can even put sound to your mouse clicks and key presses. But watch out for file size. Camtasia videos get big fast. Unless you show your videos from a CD, your finished movies should be no more than five minutes long. Keep the recording windows to the minimum length needed to convey your message, move the cursor and mouse pointer smoothly and slowly, and use transitions sparingly.

Streaming servers work best for videos shown over the Internet. Unless you know your target audience well, give it a choice of viewing options. Macs and Netscape sometimes have a difficult time with Windows Media, so encode one of the movies in QuickTime or RealMedia. Have an accessible video for 56kb modems and a higher resolution for robust systems.

Remember the adage "Garbage in, garbage out," especially under high compression. Record in a quiet place using a decent microphone and sound card. Enunciate. Keep your video smooth. And organize your project before you start. Camtasia is a simple yet powerful product at a good price. It can create sophisticated projects. But if you don't have a good plan, you can spend hours re-recording, rewriting, and reproducing.

Check out the Blackboard Support page set up by the Los Rios Community College District in California

<http://ic.arc.losrios.cc.ca.us/~itc/Blackboard/pages/videodemos.htm>

Recommendation

Buy, buy, buy Camtasia if you'd like to create customized training, instruction, and resource materials inexpensively and in-house. Although it's not a super-slick, high-end product, it's effective and easy to use. You can begin producing your own videos within an hour.

Sell! 25 Essentials on Selling From Tom Peters

Reviewed by Diane Sidwell Jones for *Training Media Review*

Whether sales is officially in the department name or not, Tom Peters emphasizes, we're all involved in selling something—if not a product, then an idea or ourselves.



Throughout *Sell!*, Peters delivers a tour de force performance in front of a large crowd, weaving through tables and working the room, demonstrating his “walking around” style of management. He also touches on the 25 essentials.

For example, “Wire the home team’s organization and vendors’ organizations” reflects Peters’s passion for

breaking down corporate silos to reach the level where things are actually accomplished—usually three or four levels down, in his opinion. He further recognizes people on the front line by reminding us to “Send thank-you notes by the truckload.” Peters also sprinkles in a thread of “Brand Story” pointers. What brings all of the tenets to life is his enthusiasm for the subject and quick-witted business examples.

The reference guide is a bare-bones outline of the tenets. The PowerPoint presentation duplicates the text and follows Peters’s last tenet: “Keep your bloody PowerPoint slides simple!”

At the end, Peters appears in a brief interview, in which he summarizes his ideas and reinforces the importance of selling to promote professional growth and increased productivity.

Recommendation

At 15 minutes long, *Sell!* works well as a meeting opener. Viewers—especially disciples of Tom Peters—may find the program inspirational and energizing, but I hungered for more substance. I thought the reference guide would have recommendations for specific discussion questions or suggestions for additional group activities. Unfortunately, none of that information is provided.

Course Details

Camtasia, software, TechSmith: 800.517.3001, www.techsmith.com. Purchase US\$149.95 per user.

Sell! 25 Essentials on Selling from Tom Peters, video, 2002, 15 min., Enterprise Media: 800.423.6021, www.enterprisemedia.com. Purchase: US\$695. Other material: reference guide, PowerPoint slides.

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Camtasia

★★★★1/2	Ease of installation
★★	Presentation
★★★1/2	Production quality
★★★★	Ease of use
★★★★	Value of purpose
N/A	Value of content
★★★★★	Instructional value
★★★★1/2	Value for the money
★★★★1/2	Documentation
★★★★1/2	Overall rating


Sell! 25 Essentials on Selling from Tom Peters

★★★★	Holds viewer interest
★★★★	Acting/Presenting
★★★★	Diversity
★★★★	Production quality
★★★★	Value of content
★★	Instructional value
★★	Value for the money
★★	Overall rating

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RATINGS KEY

★★★★★	Outstanding
★★★★1/2	Very good
★★★★	Good
★★★1/2	Above average
★★	Average
★1/2	Below average
★	Poor