

Training 101

The Medium Is the Message

Today everyone is raving about the new training technologies such as interactive video, satellite-delivered learning, and all kinds of computer-based training. Seems like we've all but left behind two old standbys, silent video and slides. Lest we forget, here's a reminder of what these two media have to offer.

Using Silent Video for Training

Contributed by Jim Cook, educational development coordinator with GPU Nuclear Corporation, P.O. Box 388, Forked River, NJ 08731.

Producing and using videotapes without soundtracks—silent video—allows both the instructor and the trainee to control the pace of the instruction. Almost anyone with a camera and a recorder deck can produce these tapes. But if you're the kind of trainer who starts up the video deck and leaves the room until the show is over, you're not going to like this training medium. Try the next one. If you're trying very hard to use video media as a means to communicate your learning objectives effectively, read on.

Create a classic

Video without a soundtrack may sound really tacky, but it works! Using "silent movies" for training smacks of the Charlie Chaplin and Keystone Kops era—what many might consider a giant step backward in learning technology.

But think again. Silent video allows you to create accurate color pictures of hands-on tasks, and you can do it at varying paces, depending on the needs of the particular group you're addressing. Not only can you vary the pace, but you can rerun the scenes, freeze-frame them, or skip them. And you can do all of this without distracting narrators who insist on telling your trainees one thing when you really want them to observe something else.

Is it live or Memorex?

Using videotape to show trainees how to do tasks requires that someone explain what the trainees are seeing; a narrator on the tape usually does this. But this is strictly one-way communication. Trainees have to wait until the tape ends to ask questions, and it's difficult for them to take notes because the tape continues whether they are ready or not. By the time the tape is over, trainees often forget their questions, and they may have overlooked key pieces of material because the tape went too quickly.

On the other hand, videotapes that are mediated by *live* instructors allow a highly interactive learning process. Instructors can interact with the trainees and control the pace of instruction. The trainees also can control the rate of delivery for their best interests. Trainees can request to return to unclear points, the tape can be stopped while trainees take some notes, and trainees can ask questions at any point during the presentation. Also, with the tape in a "paused" position, the trainer can point out important features or details to support the learning objectives.

Getting started

Producing silent video requires a minimum of equipment and just a little "feel" for what and how to shoot. As far as equipment, almost any portable camera and recording deck will do, but it's important to be sure your taping area has enough light.

As far as shooting technique is concerned, there are a few things you'll want to keep in mind:

- Let the subject that is being taped do the moving. Don't pan and tilt the camera. Excessive camera movement is distracting to your viewers.
- Let the camera lens be the trainees' eyes. Shoot the video from their perspective; not someone else's. This means that the person who is

the subject might have to work in a somewhat awkward position. What is most important, though, is that the trainees see the equipment being worked on as they will see it when they do it.

■ Using a willing subject. Be sure that the person who is to be the subject for the demonstration is willing to be videotaped. Some people simply don't want to be in the movies. They become very nervous and uncoordinated and will be uncooperative. Someone who may be less of an expert at the operation but is willing to be a subject will probably help you produce a better product. It may take a little longer, but this is worth the extra time.

■ Practice the sequence first. Before you roll any tape, have the subject go through the entire sequence of the operation to be recorded. It is important for the camera operator to see the entire operation. During this time, you can make adjustments to the subject's technique to ensure that the camera will be able to see the important manipulations. This is also the time to identify places where you might have to stop and restart the taping because the subject has to work from a different angle or location.

■ Pace is important. Have the subject work at a pace that is slower than normal. The normal pace for a procedure usually is much faster than you may realize, and trainees will have a hard time following the action. Coach the subject in performing the task slowly during the "dry runs" in the above step. Have the subject make slow and deliberate movements; he or she can exaggerate them if that will make the demonstration clearer.

■ Time can be compressed. Continuous or repetitive actions don't have to be taped all the way through the action. For example, if the subject is tightening a pipe flange with 10 bolts in it, you only have to show the subject tightening one or two of them.

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Training 101

This is not entertainment

My experience with using silent video to support certain technical skills training has been very positive. Trainees quickly realize that the tape is not for entertainment. They feel involved in the lesson because of the pauses on the tape and the instructor's questions. They also begin to interact with the tape by asking the instructor to repeat certain segments for clarity or further explanation. Trainees like having some control over the pace of instruction. The entire lesson becomes highly interactive among the instructor, the videotape, and the trainees.

It is a given that video as a teaching aid is hard to beat when used properly. It can show trainees how to do almost anything with high fidelity and clarity. It may just be the next best thing to hands-on training. In fact, environmental conditions such as heat, cold, and airborne contaminants are good reasons for not learning a task on-site. Trainees eventually will have to perform the task in such an environment, but that's no place for them to *learn* how to do it.

Using Slides for More Effective Skills Training

Contributed by David Cantos, vice president of United States Trust Company, 45 Wall St., New York, NY 10005.

You've developed a check-processing program. It's good, but you'd like to add some visual impact.

Your organization is installing a new computer system that will change manual support activities. How can you visually represent the new work flow in your training program?

In these and other instances the answer to your visual needs may be

35mm slide presentations that you develop and produce.

Slide presentations allow trainers to produce professional visuals at a low cost and with great flexibility. When procedures, machines, or locales change, you only have to reshoot the obsolete visuals instead of the entire sequence.

You don't need an expert

Lacking an in-house audiovisual specialist shouldn't deter you from developing your own slide presentation. There is probably at least one competent amateur photographer in your organization.

Planning is the major ingredient in successful slide presentations. Complete a planning card for each visual you require; each card should contain a summary of that visual and what you plan to say when you present it. It should also indicate any production notes, such as whether the visual should be a long shot or a close up. After you complete all the cards, line them up in sequence to develop your story. You can move, add, or delete cards to complete your presentation. Once they are numbered, the cards become your shooting schedule.

Most people like shots that simulate action. Show documents being moved, information being added, machine operations in various stages of activities, and CRT screens changing.

You usually can shoot an 80-slide presentation in two to three hours. Once the slides are back from the lab, you'll need another three hours to organize your presentation. Finally, add title or blank transition slides where necessary. Now you're ready to make your presentation!

"Training 101" is edited by Adrienne L. Gall. Send your short articles for consideration to: Training 101, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.