

MEDIA REVIEWS

Reviewed by Patricia Zakian Tith for *Training Media Review*

The *Global Country* and the *Global Business Navigator* series, developed by AcrossFrontiers International, provide useful and informative content for anyone working across cultural borders. *Global Country*, targeted to expatriates and short-term assignees, has detailed information on living in a specific country. *Global Business Navigator* is targeted to international professionals and travelers doing business in a specific country. It doesn't have information on living in the country.

Both series are available covering a variety of countries, with more releases planned. Each module in *GC* takes about seven and a half hours; each in *GBN* takes about half that time.

The company's first products were available only on CD-ROM for PCs. Now a new browser-based format enables users to access products via a company intranet, an extranet, or the Internet. And thanks to this reviewer's tenacity, the programs are now also Macintosh compatible.

Hardware requirements include a minimum screen resolution of 800 by 600 pixels, a minimum of 16-bit (64K) colors, a minimum of 5 MB of free space on the hard drive, a sound card, and a 4X CD-ROM drive.

Acceptable browsers include Netscape version 4.76 or higher and Explorer version 5 or higher. Cookies must be enabled. You need Quicktime 4.1 or higher, which will be provided free upon request. Installation isn't an issue; the program opens automatically after you load the CD-ROM. Once you purchase the program and register it, you can update the content via a password on the company Website.

The programs give users operational information they can apply immediately. Each in *GC* covers topics on a country's culture (demographics, values, customs, history, government); daily life (housing, education, childcare, shopping, banking); transition to a new culture (managing expectations, adapting behavior); business (negotiating, decision making, meetings, management styles, risk-taking philosophy, work relationships); etiquette; and travel tips. Each program includes a resource database with essential living information. Users can study program content in any order and in sessions of any length.

This isn't a training series. *GC* and *GBN* are excellent

sources of information for someone going either to live and work in a country or making an international business trip. The programs are a combination of tourist guidebook (shopping, restaurants, and sightseeing) and a handbook of practical information on how to do business—brought to life with pictures or video.

The information has just enough detail to make the content useful and valuable, and it doesn't stereotype cultures—important because societies worldwide are evolving quickly. Difficult issues are addressed directly, giving viewers a realistic picture of life and business.

The absence of a U.S. stamp on the materials could be regarded as an effective global marketing strategy, but the cultural starting point appears to be American. The narra-

Global Country and Global Navigator Series

★★★★	Ease of installation
★★★	Holds user interest
★★★★	Production quality
★	Degree of interactivity
★	Quality of interactivity
★★★★1/2	Value of content
NA	Instructional value
★★★★1/2	Value for the money
★★★★	Documentation
★★★★1/2	Overall rating

tors are British because, according to AcrossFrontiers, it's a global company and needs to use a variety of spoken English. I didn't find that explanation convincing. The only significant variation I noticed was a male speaker and a female speaker with British accents, and an occasional American English speaker.

At the end of certain sections, there are token attempts at interactivity, such as multiple-choice quizzes, but users simply take in information passively. You can exit the program and start again where you left off.

The programs make good use of photographs from all over the world; some appear in different sections, but the repetition isn't a serious problem. If you view the entire series, you'll also meet the same actors.

RATINGS KEY

★★★★
★★★★1/2
★★★
★★1/2


Outstanding
Very good
Good
Above average

★★
★1/2
★

Average
Below average
Poor

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For the most part, the programs keep viewers' attention. In future revisions, the use of more videos would make overall viewing more interesting and less static. Production quality is good, and navigation is intuitive and simple. Thus, there's no compelling reason to go through the tutorial. Because there's much information to absorb, the ability to print out the text of each section is a welcome feature. Additional information, references, and Websites are often embedded in the text.

 WWW.LEARNINGCIRCUITS.ORG to access TMR's reviews of e-learning materials, including e-courses, authoring software, learning management systems, and more.

Recommendation

Whether you're going to be living and working in another country or doing business abroad temporarily, Across-Frontier's products offer an abundance of relevant information. The software and Web programs are easy and pleasant to use and priced for the corporate market, although they're more resources for individuals than training programs. The weakness of both programs low degree of enough interactivity.

Details

Global Country Series: Brazil, Japan, Mexico, Germany, Singapore, and the U.K., software, 2000, 7.5 hours per course, AcrossFrontiers International:

212.370.4915, www.acrossfrontiers.com. Purchase US\$750 per course.

Global Business Navigator: Brazil, Japan, Mexico, Germany, Singapore, and the U.K., online, 2001, 3.5 hours, AcrossFrontiers International: 212.370.4915, www.acrossfrontiers.com. Purchase US\$399 per person.

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