

"HOW CAN WE TRAIN TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY WHILE IMPROVING QUALITY AT THE SAME TIME?"

# A/V SYSTEMS STREAMLINE BANK TRAINING

BY TONY DiPRIMIO

Once upon a time (as any good story should begin), all that a new bank employee needed in order to learn a new job was to sit beside an experienced employee and observe. It was assumed that in this way, perhaps by osmosis, the novice would learn his or her job. But, as in many stories, plots change — and so do training methods.

The increasingly complex picture of today's job market merits a better training method than the old "sit by Nellie" technique, for Nellie herself has evolved into a technician who performs a variety of functions too subtle and complex to be learned from mere observation.

Perhaps the major reason for the failure of the old method is that the knowledge it gives a new worker is limited by Nellie's own understanding of her job. If Nellie herself has any misconceptions, these will be passed, like germs, to the new employee who, in turn, will transmit these to someone else. Furthermore, the effective-

ness of the new employee's education is directly proportionate to Nellie's ability to convey an understanding of her job.

These factors convinced the Training and Development Division of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia that it was time for a change. A new training approach was needed. . . .

The bank is currently undergoing a period of dynamic change aimed at improving its operation. The focus of the training department in this venture is clearly on one question: *How can we train to increase productivity while improving quality at the same time?*

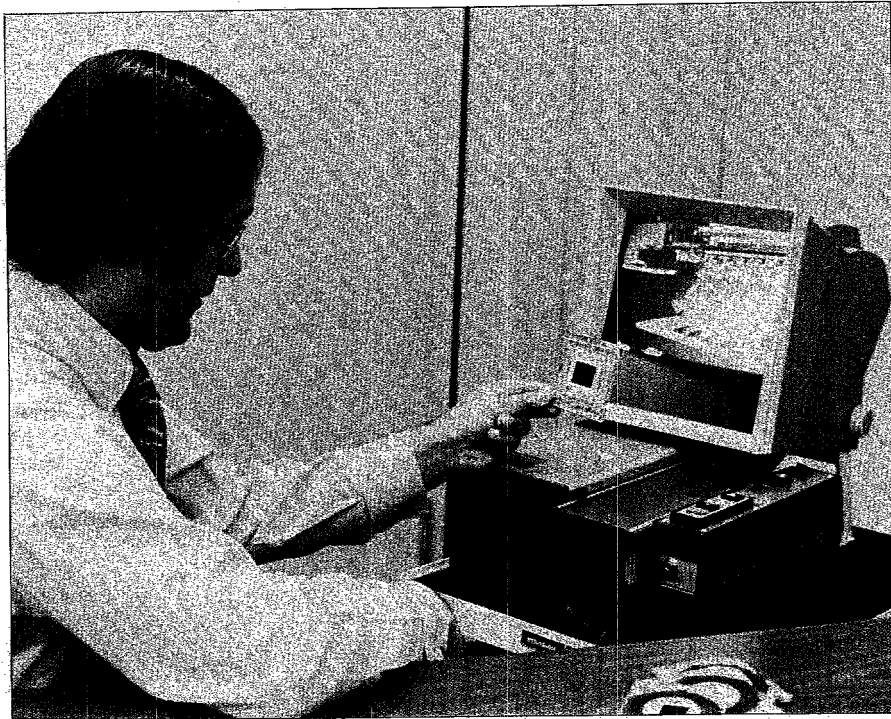
For a starter, the training team, consisting of myself, Joe Pinto, Mary Gaskill, Mark Watson, Chris Finley and Maryann File, enlisted the help of the bank's Graphics Division to develop audio/visual programs which will enable a trainee to learn at his or her own pace.

## Self-Pacing Aspect

Trainees watch a slide sequence on a small screen and listen to an explanation of a given procedure through headphones. Each slide,

mounted on a small plastic frame, is surrounded by a rerecordable audio disc. Instructions are presented one at a time and new employees can replay the audio or even go back to previous slides to review the explanation. This self-pacing aspect of the program is very important . . . it makes the trainee responsible for his or her own training. The trainee can proceed at his or her own pace, depending on the familiarity with the information being presented.

The training programs at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia are developed with 3M Company's sound-on-slide equipment, because this format is extremely well-suited to the needs of a changing organization like the bank. As changes in a process occur, the format allows us to rerecord individual audio segments or reshoot pictures without having to revise the entire program. The unique slide/sound track design also enables the employee to use only the portion of a program that it needs. For instance, a trainee viewing a program involving several trays of slides can easily ignore the trays



A member of the Training Department reviews a program for new employees. The sound-on-slide system also uses sound frames that hold both the slide and a rerecordable sound disc (foreground).

covering subject matter already understood.

One of the most important advantages of the new training program is that the trainee becomes involved immediately in the job to be performed. For example, when programs covering the use of the computer terminal and the encoder were developed, they were designed for use in the actual work environment and in conjunction with the equipment being explained. The sound-on-slide equipment was put on a mobile cart and wheeled up to the terminal. The employee actually operated the terminal under the direction of the program.

#### Immediate Feedback

This "on-duty" training has been extremely effective, for the new employee begins immediately to work with the equipment and thus overcomes any apprehension that he or she may have regarding its use. From the program's inception, the new employee is able to process work under the guidance of the program. Another advantage of the programmed material is that it provides immediate feedback on trainee progress for the trainer monitoring the learning experience.

Instructional programs developed by the Training Department are currently being used in almost all of the largest departments of the bank. In the Protection Department, a new approach is being used. Utilizing the inductive case-study approach, the Training Department with assistance from the Protection Department created a program that identified situations in which guards are required to use force to maintain bank security. This program has been reviewed by several other banks and apparently is one of the first of its type to be developed. The sound-on-slide technique is also quite effective in presentations explaining complex subjects. For example, one program explains government marketable securities to bank employees and to individuals from commercial bank investment departments.

Feedback from line-department personnel in Check Operations indicates that the programs developed for them are a definite improvement over previous means of introducing new employees to the check-processing operation. They note that questionnaires filled out by new trainees indicate that this approach has been highly successful!

#### Important Element

It should be emphasized that the audio-visual program will supplement, not replace, the teacher-pupil method of training. The audio-visual approach is the new and better way of doing things, but the personal element is still important. The trainer who introduces the new employee to the training machine must create a learning atmosphere by helping the newcomer to feel comfortable with the machine.

Jim Duffy, manager of the U.S. Savings Bond Division, indicates that he is optimistic about the program's prospects. "Before, new employees learned by word-of-mouth, and there was a tendency to misinterpret the facts," he explains. Close cooperation with managers is necessary for the development of these programs.

Jim Duffy has also worked closely with the Training Division on a program describing the role of his department as the fiscal agent for the U.S. Treasury in marketing

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government securities such as government bills, notes and bonds. This program was extremely well-received by the U.S. Treasury.

Other department heads such as Capt. John Donaway of the Protection Department, have worked closely with the Training Division to produce programs, which have received recognition, not only within the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank, but from the U.S. Treasury as well as other sources. Captain Donaway collaborated closely with us in the production of the presentation on people management that outlines the bank's policy on the use of force to maintain security within the bank.

In a recent presentation before the Board of Directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, Jim Gaylord, vice president, Human Resources, outlined the roles of the Training Division and indicated the importance of training to support the goals and objectives of the bank. In connection with this, it should be noted that, aside from

developing training units for specific departments, we also produce programs aimed at the entire employee population.

For example, we recently developed and tested a program designed to generate an overall education-skills-experience inventory of every bank employee, to be stored in a central data bank. The goal of this project is to accumulate data which will identify qualified candidates for promotional opportunities.

The task involved the completion of an extensive coded form by approximately 1,000 employees. Our challenge was to devise a program which would show individuals how to fill out this form with a minimum number of errors. Obviously, we could have tried the old "sit by Nellie" approach by having trained employees sit down with their colleagues and "walk" them through the form. However, we felt this would be an extremely time-consuming process.

In lieu of this, we created a

sound-on-slide program explaining how to fill out the form. To gauge the effectiveness of this program, we selected a test group of five per cent of the employee population to complete the form with the aid of the audio-visual program. To give ourselves a concrete measuring stick of performance, we set an operational (or behavioral) objective: 90 per cent of the test group should fill out the form with 100 per cent accuracy, and the number of telephone calls from employees in the test group to seek additional information should not exceed 10 per cent of those being tested.

In our first test group, we encountered 15 per cent error, and 16 per cent called in for additional information. We analyzed the errors and revised both the form and the sound-on-slide program to perform within the best criteria. As I said earlier, this unique audio-visual format really lends itself to program revision.

By planning, testing and refining — and by setting operational goals — we were able to devise an effective training program for the entire employee group, using an efficient audio-visual medium.

The matter of setting operational or behavioral objectives should be underscored. For every program we develop, we meet with our client department and determine exactly what it is that the client wants to achieve through training. The objectives must be spelled out very specifically, in quantifiable terms, so that we can document success or failure in meeting them.

This is an excellent way to construct training programs. It provides the client department with a concrete method for assuring that its people attain a very specific training goal. It gives the training department a very specific target to aim for in developing programs, and a means for determining whether or not our aim was accurate. We've come a long way from the old "sit by Nellie" syndrome!

Tony DiPrimio is manager of the Training and Development Division, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia.

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