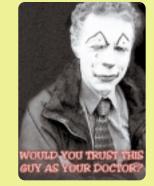# RATINGS
formerly Media Reviews

Video

Clown
Reviewed by Bill Ellet for *Training Media Review*

I'm not sure what it is about the topic of diversity that inspires creativity and provokes course designers to avoid the safe, conventional formulas common with other training topics. Consider *Blue Eyed,* Jane Elliot's tough classroom simulation of discrimination that brings participants to tears; or *Village of 100,* a demographic profile that reveals the world's real minorities; or *Patient Diversity*, a frank look at how difference can affect health care.

Joining that group is *Clown*, a video from Coastal Training Technologies. The program wasn't made as a training video. It first appeared as a short film on HBO and has been successfully adapted for training. The plot is easy to summarize. We meet three "Clown Americans" who suffer prejudice and discrimination because they're minorities. Their faces are elaborately made up like those of circus clowns, with sweeping eyebrows, white face paint, and painted lips. The categories of prejudice are analogous to prejudice based on race, language, ethnicity, religion, and disability.

WOULD YOU TRUST THIS GUY AS YOUR DOCTOR?

The show manages to be poignant, moving, and funny at once. It could have tried to play the topic for laughs, but instead it goes for a harder, thought-provoking approach. Served in measured doses, the humor keeps the show from becoming grim. For example, *Clown* mines a running joke reminiscent of Harpo Marx and his honking horn. As you'll recall, Harpo didn't speak and used his horn to communicate. In this show, a Harpo-like character suggests the plight of immigrants who don't speak English and incur the wrath of native speakers.

Clown doesn't spoon-feed viewers with lessons on diversity. Instead it tells a story. If it's true that adults remember stories better than they do lists of points, then the format should be effective. But there's no question that a story program puts the burden on the trainer to make the teaching explicit.

You can preview the film online ◄**www.coastal.com/coasta-IACB/showdetl.cfm?&DID=7&Product_ID=11367.** You'll need to have a fast Internet connection, unless you have a lot of time on your hands and like to watch herky-jerky video.

Recommendation

Clown is an artfully produced film. It can provoke shame and sorrow, yet it can also make you laugh. One of its best assets is that your audience won't see it as yet another training video with bullet points and upbeat synthesizer music. They'll be surprised, and they'll watch, closely. You, the trainer, have a responsibility to use the thoughts and feelings provoked by the film to help build a better workplace. Exactly the position a trainer wants to be in.

Online

Situational Leadership
Reviewed by Richard Lowell for *Training Media Review*

The folks at Element K have managed to put together an e-learning-based leadership course that not only provides all the bells and whistles, but also presents sound fundamentals in an easy-to-follow, media-rich format that won't leave users dozing off.

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard developed the model of Situational Leadership used in the Element K course. According to the model, various leadership styles are applied depending on the readiness level of the people the leader is attempting to influence to accept leadership.

Situational Leadership is based on the interplay among
- the amount of guidance and direction a leader gives
- the amount or depth of relationship support or behavior a leader provides
- the readiness level that followers exhibit in performing a specific task or achieving an objective.

Situational Leadership was designed to help all levels of leader-managers to become more effective in their daily interactions with others.

Element K captures the essence of the course in a format that stimulates active learning. Lessons are precisely chunked to aid retention and keep the learning interesting and varied. Real interactive exercises (not just page turning or scrolling) keep learners focused.

Element K has endeavored to provide a structure to Situational Leadership founded on adult learning theory. It's this structure—invisible to participants—that moves the course easily from lesson to lesson, providing real insight into leadership; each teaching point is clearly announced and precisely defined; each point is related to an overall course objective. Real-life examples are modeled, tested, and checked for understanding by the learner before proceeding.

Concepts are summarized and linked to the overall objectives, giving learners a clear understanding of how they're navigating the course and the level of their under-

standing. In short, Element K utilizes most of the practices recommended for computer-based learning, including those that are seldom followed. The screens are well laid out and easy to read. Color schemes are designed for easy navigation, having good contrast, effective use of text, graphics, and interactive instruction.

From a technical perspective, Element K has done an excellent job constructing computer-based training that's easy to use and takes little technical know-how on the part of the user. The technology behind the Website, the course itself, and all interactions are intuitive to the computer phobic and invisible to knowledgeable cyber surfers. All of which makes the course that much more accessible and worthwhile.

As with any media-rich Web content, bandwidth is important. Video is the real bandwidth consumer. The Flash version of the course loads quicker but still requires a substantial wait period to load at 50Kbps. Once loaded, though, the streaming video is clear without phase lag. Sound quality is excellent. To access the course effectively, update your Macromedia Shockwave player (a free download for Microsoft Windows-based systems) to the current version. Element K tech support is outstanding, as befits a company that traces its heritage back to one of the first computer learning companies (Logical Operations and Ziff-Davis Education).

The company demonstrates in Situational Leadership just what it espouses on its Website: It's "…passionate about knowledge and committed to sparking the potential that drives productivity."

Recommendation

Use it! Situational Leadership is well worth the price of admission, and Element K provides superb support to self-motivated e-learners. A good stand-alone product, its greatest

Clown

★★★1/2	Holds viewer interest
★★★1/2	Acting/Presenting
★★★1/2	Production quality
★★★1/2	Value of content
★★★	Instructional value
★★★★	Value for the money

Situational Leadership

★★★1/2	Holds user interest
★★★★	Production quality
★★★★	Ease of navigation
★★★1/2	Interactivity
★★★★	Value of content
★★★★	Instructional value
★★★1/2	Value for the money
★★★1/2	Overall rating

value is as a technological centerpiece for a blended learning environment. Its media-rich presentation, great interaction, and well-documented techniques make it perfect homework for corporate management training programs and executive leadership seminars.

Course Details

Clown, video, 2002, 13 minutes, Coastal Training Technologies: 800.725.3418, www.coastal.com. Purchase: US$595. Other material: leader guide, employee handbook (10), PowerPoint slides.

Situational Leadership, online, 2002, 4 hours, Element K: 800.434.3466; www.elementk.com. Purchase: US$250 one user per year. Note: Element K pricing is library-based. Prices are based on standard "evergreen" libraries only. Term and volume discounts apply.

Bill Ellet *is editor and principal of* Training Media Review*; wellet@tmreview.com.* **Richard Lowell** *is the general manager, training services, for FMSC Group; richard.lowell@fmscgroup.com.*

Product evaluations are provided by Training Media Review *and do not imply endorsement by* T+D *or ASTD. For more information, contact* TMR *at 877.532.1838; www.tmreview.com.*