

For years, Training Media Review has reviewed training products—the good, the bad, the ugly. And for years, TMR has wanted to recognize those few outstanding products that rise above the competition.

Well, the time is now. And it was worth the wait. Trainers face a more daunting array of products than ever before. To help you in the difficult process of deciding on a short list for your learning solution, *TMR* presents 10 products guaranteed to enhance learning within your organization. Three earn the designation "Best to Buy."

The reviewers and judges are all working professionals in training and allied fields. They've evaluated products that span a range of media and topics. *TMR* selected the three highest-rated products in three media categories—Online, Software, and Video—and in a general category, Most Innovative. A separate panel of judges then evaluated the contenders in each category. I was responsible for the Editor's Choice category and considered a broad range of products.

The winners in each category have passed through a double screen of astute and knowledgeable professionals. You'll find that even our final selections aren't spared the occasional criticism. You'll also see how some products fall into different categories.

The judges' comments still abide by *TMR*'s mission to provide honest, independent, hands-on reviews. Yes, the judges capture the essence of these outstanding products, but for those of you who seek an in-depth analysis, full reviews of all of the finalists can be found on the *TMR* Website

< → tmreview.com.

The media-based categories are self-explanatory. "Most Innovative" recognizes a product that departs from the norms of its medium and topic to teach an audience something worthwhile and immediately applicable in the modern organization.

"Editor's Choice" turned out to be the recognition of a body of work rather than a one-time success. In this category, I'd hoped to avoid the norm of the Academy Awards, which tends to recognize "practitioners" far past their prime. Instead, I chose to acknowledge the work of a married couple. I hope, and believe, they have their best work in front of them!

Bill Ellet is principal and editor of Training Media Review.

Training
Media
Review
Selects the
Best
Learning
Products
of 2003

## The Products

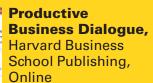
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Virtual Leader, SimuLearn, Norwalk, Connecticut, Online

ExperienceCSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), ExperiencePoint, Online







**Strategy CoPilot,** Imparta, London, Software

MindManager X5 Pro, Mindjet, Software





**DialogCoach,**Allen Interactions,
Software



**The Angry Eye,** Trainer's Toolchest, Video/DVD

**Leadership and Self-Deception,**CRM Learning,
Video/DVD





The New Business of Paradigms by Joel Barker,
StarThrower
Distribution,
Video/DVD

Patterns,
Quality Media
Resources,
Video/DVD



# The Judges



Bill Ellet is principal and editor of Training Media Review; wellet@tmreview.com.

**Darin E. Hartley** is director of solutions development for Intrepid Learning Solutions and Lguide Research and Consulting; dhartley@intrepidls.com.





Cindy Huggett is learning and development manager for Kinetic Systems; chugget@kineticsgroup.com.

**Patti Shank** is managing partner and chief reality-check officer for Learning Peaks, an instructional technology consultancy; patti@learningpeaks.com.





**Thomas Toth** is a Macromedia MX 2004 Certified Developer and instructional technologist; ttoth@rainbow.com.

### ONLINEBEST2BUYBES

**Reviewed by Darin Hartley** 

#### <u>eWinnerTheWinnerThe</u>WinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerThe



Product Name: Virtual Leader Product Designers: Clark Aldrich, Pierre-Henri Thiault Pricing: US\$499 per named user, with group discounts and academic pricing available Contact information: 866.847.6660, sales@simulearn.net ◄ www.simulearn.net

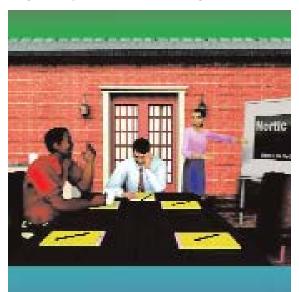
Company Name: SimuLearn Headquarters: Norwalk, Connecticut Number of Employees: 12 Years in Business: 2 Target Market: Business and higher-education Bestseller: Virtual Leader (off-the-shelf version) In the Works: Call center and solutions sales versions of Virtual Leader In the Details: The story of the development of Virtual Leader was the core of the book, Simulations and the Future of

Learning.

The concept behind SimuLearn's Virtual Leader is a fascinating one: Put a leader inside a simulated work environment to practice the tenets of three-to-one leadership. But it's in the implementation of that concept that this program earns its marks. The manner in which Virtual Leader's computer-generated, 3-D employees talk, react, and display their support or disagreement is not only an impressive feat of design, but also an engaging approach to leadership training.

Computer simulations can be intimidating to first-time users, but SimuLearn has provided excellent background materials that bring learners up to speed quickly. There's also a well-written guide that describes the theories behind the content. All in all, Virtual Leader's production quality is superb, as is the value of its content.

With that said, SimuLearn hasn't forgotten to address the importance of proper feedback. After each portion of the simulation, the learner is given a summary of how he or she used the key tenets of three-to-one leadership to manage the expectations of the meeting.





Specific feedback throughout the course should aid in retention. But there's also plenty of indirect feedback through dialogue between characters.

Simulation-based learning will grow in its adoption and sophistication as the tools to produce it become more common. Virtual Leader offers a promising glimpse into this genre, and, if the courseware is used per the recommendations, it should provide the learner with opportunities to practice in a safe and fun environment. Although the offerings

from finalists ExperiencePoint and Harvard Business School Publishing are excellent products, it's SimuLearn's intriguing, innovative approach to leadership training that nudges it to the front of the pack.

### T2BUYBEST2BUYBEST2BU

#### The FinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheEinalistsThe

At first glance, ExperienceCSR appears to be a traditional Web-based, page-turning course. There's an overview and a quick start that familiarize users with the principles of corporate social responsibility, and an animation to show the steps in the CSR framework.

The interface is clean and easy to use. Graphics are well done and appropriate. No complaints thus far, but nothing that elevates it above sound course design. Where ExperienceCSR really takes off is in its Experience and Reflect portions.

In Experience, learners use an interactive business simulation to manage the implementation of a CSR initiative inside a company with a fixed budget and timeline. Positive and negative feedback are given throughout, and complex interaction prevents users from guessing their way through.

In Reflect, learners get a detailed analysis of the decisions that they made in the Experience simulation. Results are then mapped to recommended practices associated with CSR project implementation. Both sections work together seamlessly and actually encourage repeat use. All in all, this is a considered course that can help any individual who is working on a CSR initiative.

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Productive Business Dialogue is a case-based e-learning course that provides a vast amount of information for the learner in a short amount of time. Users employ the case method to learn about principles based on work from Peter Senge and other experts.

The layout is remarkably straightforward. Learners work their way through a case in bite-sized chunks of 10 minutes or less. Within each chunk, they listen to employees

### PRODUCTIVE BUSINESS DIALOGUE



interacting with each other, read internal emails, and then make decisions based on what they've read and on their knowledge of the employees. When a learner makes a deci-

> sion on the tack to take with his or her employees, the direction of the course changes appropriately.

> Although the technology associated with this course may not be as high end as some others (specifically, its use of still graphics instead of animations), the content is well structured, and the documentation and resources are outstanding.

Product Name: Experience CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)
Product Designers: James
Chisholm (lead designer); Bart
Kalnay, Paul Rezar (assistant designers); Dr. Mimi Marrocco, Anne
Kemp, Ron Knowles (SMEs)
Pricing: US\$300 for 12-month access account. Volume and academic discounts available.
Contact information: 416.369.9888, ext. 21; greg.warman@experiencepoint.com

◄ experiencepoint.com

Company Name: ExperiencePoint Headquarters: Toronto, Canada Number of Employees: 7 full time, plus contractors
Years in Business: 8
Target Market: Business learners (working professionals and business school students)
Bestseller: ExperienceChange Company Tagline or Motto: "The Future of Business Learning"
In the Details: ExperienceCSR was developed in cooperation with St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto.

Product Name: Productive
Business Dialogue
Product Designers: Michelle
Barton, Sara Cummins
Pricing: US\$195 per user.
Volume discounts available.
Contact information: 617.783.7439,
corp\_acct\_manager@hbsp.
harvard.edu

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Company Name: Harvard Business School Publishing Headquarters: Watertown, Massachusetts **Number of Employees: 250** Years in Business: 9 Target Market: Corporations Bestseller (e-learning): Harvard ManageMentor In the Works: Harvard Manage-Mentor PLUS, Version 2 **Company Tagline or Motto:** "Improving the Practice of Management Worldwide" In the Details: Productive Business Dialogue and its companion program, Managing Difficult Conversations, are based on the research and writings of Chris

Argyris and Peter Senge.

### SOFTWAREBEST2BU

**Reviewed by Thomas Toth** 

#### <u>eWinnerTheWinnerThe</u>WinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerThe



Product Name: Strategy CoPilot Product Designer: Imparta Pricing: Online strategy tutorials US\$250

Strategy CoPilot (five hours of simulation including tutorials) \$570

Strategy CoPilot Professional (additional three phases of simulation—approximately six hours) \$1200

**Contact information**: 0044 20 7610 8806, mark@imparta.com

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Company Name: Imparta Headquarters: London Number of Employees: 30 Years in Business: 5 Target Market: Sales effectiveness, executive education, and custom design

**Bestseller:** Creating Client Value—Sales Effectiveness Simulation, and associated workshops

In the Works: Online versions of all simulations; business acumen online course; Japanese, Chinese translation of products

Company Tagline or Motto: "Capability Building" In the Details: Imparta has quadrupled revenues in the past three years.

From the moment I received Strategy CoPilot, I was impressed. Packaged in a silver attaché case—the contents of which included the CD-ROM, a quick-start sheet, and a headset—everything looked like it was there for a purpose. But it didn't take long to realize that the breadth of this program's content is huge. Imparta has taken an "everything but the kitchen sink approach" that really blew me away. And, yet, nothing is unnecessary. Everything about it serves to teach users how to make astute, strategic business decisions.

Strategy CoPilot effectively organizes its extensive content in useable chunks through a

tabbed binder interface, with categories such as Theory, Feedback, and Application. Such organization is essential in helping the user navigate this complex and detailed simulation.

Outside influences, internal conflict, personal baggage, and market analysis are all incorporated into the user experience. During the simulation, users have the option to choose how much

coaching they wish to receive from the in-program assistant. Yet, learners have complete control of where they are, who they talk to, and all of the decisions regarding the simulation.

The interactions, visuals, audio, and animations are high quality and lend a polish to this program that others should emulate. Much attention is paid to interface details, so that users always understand what is going on and that they remain in control.

Strategy CoPilot is a top-shelf e-learning program. It will serve as a fine coach for building strategic business skills and as a refresher tool when the real world starts to play out like the in-program simulation.



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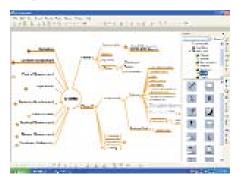
#### TheFinalistsTheFin

MindManager is a visual brainstorming software package that's easy, precise, and, dare it be said? fun to use. It allows the user to graphically design and expand upon ideas in logical, graphical ways.

Users begin by centering their initial idea on the screen. Then, with the aid of Mind-Manager, they can draw out leader lines and create shapes, places, and graphics that mark a visual representation of their expanding thoughts.

Although this software works well on its own, the defining feature of today's best-ofshow software is how well it works with, and inside of, other software and technology. This is where MindManager shines. Users can export documents into a range of formats. Whether it's a PDF, a graphic file, or a PowerPoint presentation, MindManager works flawlessly. An add-in module lets users synchronize a map with MS Outlook, which provides the capability to use a map in creating a to-do list, categorizing and prioritizing tasks, setting reminders, and tracking progress. Brainstorming ideas turn into action items. And that alone moves this software from good to great.

MindManager is a utility that all professionals should be using. It's a fantastic package for anyone who has "outgrown" his or her personal whiteboard.



DialogCoach consists of a developer's tool and front end for creating and delivering interactive, voice-driven learning. It's an innovative piece of software that has the potential to enhance the user's learning experience. Yet, this version just misses at being a complete success. "Almost there" is a good way to sum up its performance.

Instead of relying on voice recognition software (as in previous versions), the learner now reviews his or her own verbal interaction



based on preprogrammed "expert" responses. Why not true voice recognition and evaluation? One could assume it's because voice recognition technology hasn't advanced enough. But what about changes in word order or phrasing? The learner may become frustrated with the possibility of saying something similar and the resulting uncertainty of whether his or her response is correct.

DialogCoach would be a good product for companies that are creating sales or support training materials, in which a scripted or structured conversation is necessary. But until the technology for accurate voice recognition and, more important, evaluation, is readily available, this product and others like it won't live up to their potential. **Product Name:** MindManager X5 Pro

Product Designers: Michael Jetter, Bettina Jetter Pricing: US\$299 Contact information: 415.925.3120,

◄ mindjet.com

Company Name: Mindjet Headquarters: Larkspur, California

hobart.swan@mindjet.com

Number of Employees: 80 Years in Business: 3 years in United States (Mindjet founded 1998)

Target Market: Fortune 1000
Bestseller: MindManager
In the Works: Just released
first XML-enabled edition of
its business mapping software.
In January 2004, Mindjet will
release the Tablet PC and mobile editions of this new XML
edition.

Company Tagline or Motto:
"MindManager: A Visual Tool for
Brainstorming and Planning"
In the Details: Mindjet cofounder Michael Jetter wrote
the original MindManager code
in 1994, while being treated for
leukemia in the isolation ward
of a German cancer hospital.

Product Name: DialogCoach
Product Designer:
Jon Anderson
Contact information:
800.204.2635, sales@alleni.com

www.dialogcoach.com

Company Name: Allen
Interactions
Headquarters: Minneapolis,
Minnesota
Number of Employees: 36
Years in Business: 10
Target Market: Fortune 1000
Company Tagline or Motto:
"Learning. For a Change"
In the Details: The founder and

CEO of Allen Interactions created the e-learning authoring tool, Authorware.

### **EOBEST2BUYBEST2**

**Reviewed by Cindy Huggett** 

#### heWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerThe



**Product Name:** The Angry Eye **Product Designer: Elliott &** 

Elliott Inc.

Pricing: Video US\$295; DVD to be available in 2004. **Contact information:** 877.288.6657, info@ trainerstoolchest.com

্বা) trainerstoolchest.com

Company Name: Trainer's

**Toolchest** 

Headquarters: Buffalo Grove, Illinois

Number of Employees: 5 Years in Business: 3

Target Market: HR professionals, trainers, consultants, and educators in industry, government, education, and not-forprofit organizations

Bestseller: Brown Eyes, Blue Eyes: Linking Perceptions and Performance Facilitation Resource (a trainer's companion to The Angry Eye)

In the Works: Discussion guide for Linguistic Profiling, an ABC News production identifying a new form of racism

**Company Tagline or Motto:** "Building Training Solutions" In the Details: Woman-owned. small business with more than 36 years of experience in the training industry

Provocative, real, and full of emotion. Those words describe The Angry Eye, a documentary of Jane Elliott's famous diversity exercise. This powerful activity has participants experience discrimination firsthand and causes viewers to feel as if they're in the middle of the action.

The diversity lesson begins as a group of participants approach a registration table.

Elliott is rude to the blueeyed participants and puts collars on them. Then the participants are separated into two rooms based on their eye color. The blueeyed room has only three chairs for 12 participants, while the brown-eyed room has plenty of chairs for all.

Before the groups are joined together, Elliott instructs the brown-eyes to treat the blue-eyes as inferior. When the blue-eyes enter the main room, they're forced to sit in the middle, as if they're on display for all to see. Posters on the walls belittle the blue-eyes with such phrases as, "If I have but one life, let me live it as a brown."

As the blue-eyes read the posters aloud, Elliott talks about racism and the inexcusable treatment of people who are different. Even though some of the blue-eyes break down in



Viewers can't watch this video without having some kind of emotional reaction. Its powerful message sinks deep. Because of that, only experienced facilitators should run this program and sponsoring organizations should be aware of the risk involved.

Such an unsettling, emotional video requires strong supporting materials. In this case, they're excellent. The Angry Eye is a fantastic diversity training program, and it deserves recognition as this year's best.



### BUYBEST2BEST2BUY

#### TheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalistsTheFinalists<u>TheEinalistsThe</u>E

CRM Learning's *Leadership and Self-Deception* presents an interesting concept in an unusual style—a story as metaphor. It's an innovative departure from the typical bulleted lists and educational narratives that are often seen in video training programs.

Viewers learn the true story of Ignaz Semmelweis, a doctor at Vienna General Hospital in the mid-1800s. Through trial and error, Dr. Semmelweis discovered the benefits of hand washing. As a surgeon who performed autopsies and delivered babies, he finally realized there was a connection between the two, and that his own hands were spreading disease from the morgue to the pregnant women. The moral of the story is that we often overlook the real cause of a problem: ourselves.

Packaged along with the video is a comprehensive facilitator kit that includes leader scripts, a PowerPoint presentation, master participant handouts, and classroom activities, including case studies and assessment surveys. All of the materials are top-notch and of outstanding quality.

Storytelling is one of the best ways to learn, and participants will certainly benefit from the unique format offered in *Leadership* and *Self-Deception*'s leadership program.

No.

In Joel Barker's *The New Business of Paradigms*, viewers learn about paradigms as problem-solving systems. Barker cites research in Thomas Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, to support his approach and adapts Kuhn's findings to the business world. It is Barker's belief that paradigms are common and useful but that they can hinder growth when organizations refuse to accept the oft-mentioned paradigm shifts.



Aside from the video's outstanding production quality and interesting content, what sets it apart are its adaptability and flexibility. Options abound in this program. There are actually two videos included—the 26-minute *Classic Edition* and an 18-minute 21st Century Edition. The supporting materi-

als for both are some of the most thorough I've ever seen. The complete fieldbook includes video clips that can be used to spur group discussion, reproducible worksheets for participant activities, video transcripts for the facilitator, multiple program design ideas, and participant reminder cards. The fieldbook also offers delivery options, so that just about any facilitator can pick up this package and use it effectively.

Product Name: Leadership and Self-Deception Product Designers: CRM

Learning and the Arbinger Institute

Pricing: US\$995, \$275 for rental Contact information:

800.421.0833, lisa@crmlearning.

<া crmlearning.com

**Company Name:** CRM Learning **Headquarters:** Carlsbad,

California

Number of Employees: 40 Years in Business: 33 Target Market: Training and HR professionals Bestseller: The Abilene

Bestseller: The Abile Paradox

In the Works: New programs on communication skills and change management

In the Details: CRM Learning started as CRM Films, a division of the magazine *Psychology Today*.

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Product Name: The New Business of Paradigms by Joel Barker Pricing: US\$895. Industry

Pricing: US\$895. Industry discounts may apply.

Contact Information: 800.242.3220, info@starthrow-

er.com

<া starthrower.com

Company Name: Star Thrower

Distribution

Headquarters: Saint Paul,

Minnesota

**Number of Employees:** 16 full time, 2 part time

Years in Business: 7
Target Market: Any organization looking to help people institute real change. Clients range from colleges and school districts to manufacturing, large corporations, and

government.

Bestsellers: Cele

Bestsellers: Celebrate What's Right With the World With Dewitt Jones and The New Business of Paradigms by Joel Barker

**Company Motto:** "Helping You Create Your Future"

### MOST INNOVATIVE

**Reviewed by Patti Shank** 

#### <u>eWinnerTheWinnerThe</u>WinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerThe



Leadership and Self-Deception
CRM Learning
Video

Consider the opening words of CRM Learning's *Leadership and Self-Deception:* 

In our work and personal lives, we spend much of our time attempting to solve problems.... Whether we are ultimately successful solving these problems depends in large degree upon how, and where, we are willing to look for solutions.

Leadership and Self-Deception opens your eyes to what is often the most significant barrier to solving problems in our personal lives and at work: the mistaken notion that we are not part of the problem. The program calls this phenomenon self-deception—not being able to see how we contribute to any given problem.

Self-deception, though common, blinds us to real solutions and locks us into the

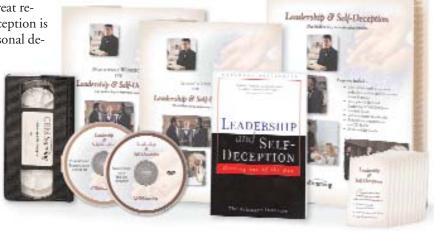
same behaviors with the same not-so-great results. This perception is critical for personal development,

and I haven't

seen it dealt with in such a straightforward fashion before. Most leadership programs are prescriptive. Most challenges, however, are messy, and the prescriptions provided are too narrow. *Leadership and Self-Deception* challenges participants to think differently and apply that thinking in a variety of situations.

Such an approach isn't without certain challenges. The content is thorny, and requires sensitivity and strong participant rapport. Finding a facilitator who can deliver it as a co-participant is essential.

Leadership and Self-Deception offers a truly innovative approach to tapping the potential of something few training programs even consider: learners' view of their own role in the problems they face.



### BEST2BUYBEST2BUYBEST

#### TheFinalistsTheFin

Strategy CoPilot is a mini business school in a box or, to be more precise, a mini attaché case. It combines theory lessons, full-featured video simulations, and "check your understanding" exercises in a design that lets learners move back and forth between them with ease. The production value of the media is high, as is the training experience.

For instance, when trying to assess competitive advantage, the learner can jump into the simulation, get help when stuck, go back to the theory lessons, and then test his or her understanding of key points. The product provides many opportunities to assess and improve business strategy, conceptual understanding, and application. This well-designed simulation allows learners to test their knowledge in a realistic way. In fact, I actually felt apprehensive about the results of my decisions, though I quickly became comfortable making all manner of mistakes and getting help to correct them. (Better to make these inevitable mistakes without messing up a "real" business.)

This would be excellent training for new managers or anyone who needs to understand how business strategy is set or needs to understand the effect of strategy on operations. Combine the training with discussion and experiences that show how these concepts apply in your organization and there's a real opportunity to understand some fundamental business concepts.

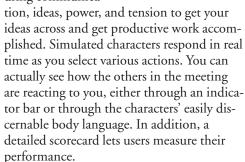


Virtual Leader allows users to practice the art of influencing others in a nonthreatening environment and to see the results of their actions. Virtual Leader incorporates the principles of three-to-one leadership—a leadership concept that centers on power, tension, and ideas, and is based on the asser-

irtual

tion that meetings are where leadership actions can be most influential.

First, you learn how these concepts influence getting work done. Next, the simulation drops you into a variety of meetings where you practice those skills. I've yet to experience another simulation that so effectively handles the idea of using communica-



SimuLearn has created a fascinating approach to leadership training that will certainly make you think.

Strategy CoPilot Imparta Software

Virtual Leader business skills suite SimuLearn Online

## TVREDIOR'S Reviewed by Bill Ellet CHOCE

#### <u>heWinnerTheWinnerTh</u>eWinnerThe WinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerTheWinnerT



**Product Name:** *Patterns* **Product Designers:** Robert and Pat Rosell

**Pricing:** Single programs, US\$525; complete three-part series, \$1187.50

Contact information: 800.800.5129, info@qmr.com

্বা) www.qmr.com

**Company Name:** Quality Media Resources

**Headquarters:** Bellevue, Washington

Number of Employees: 5 Years in Business: 12 Target Market: Any organiza-

tion interested in supporting respectful workplace relationships Bestsellers: You Can STOP Harassment and PATTERNS In the Works: Dialogue-Now You're Talking! (includes Communicating in a Diverse World; Dialogue for Cultural Understanding; Dialogue Between Genders; and Dialogue Among Generations (released Novem-

Company Tagline or Motto: "The Respectful Workplace Company"

ber, 2003)

In the Details: QMR is a small, family business (founded by Robert and Pat Rosell) with a client base of more than 15,000 organizations in 14 countries The training media market doesn't lack its fair share of mediocrity, and worse. And, yet, choosing one program of merit is hard because there are enough quality products out there to try the conscience of any judge.

Is the CPI 260 leadership assessment more deserving than Innerwork Solutions's Coaching Skills For Leaders? How about Harvard Business School Publishing E-Learning's unusual online take on business communication in Productive Business Dialogue? What about *Village of 100* from A Step Ahead Productions, a video that puts diversity in a global perspective that can shock the most

diehard denier?

Speaking of international issues, what about the online resource GlobeSmart, from Meridian Resources Associates, which educates us on doing business all over the world?

Those products, and many more, are worthy of recognition. Yet, I feel compelled to choose a product, a video/DVD, that stands for much more than a particular training production in a particular year. It represents a body of work that distinguishes the producer for persistence, high quality, and insight into human issues insidiously characterized as "soft skills."

I'm talking about *Patterns* from Robert and Pat Rosell at Quality Media Resources. This diversity program is a worthy successor to QMR's *Subtle Sexual Harassment*, *The Respectful Workplace*, *Millennium*, and *You Can* 

STOP Harassment. The Rosells and their ensemble of actors breathe life into the common formula of precept and vignette with skill in writing, acting, and filmmaking. We're fortunate to have artists who can teach.

