The Simple Benefits of Asynchronous Web-based Training (Aug 06)

August 18, 2006
Carley Polifka

Organizations have been shying away from their training comfort zone of instructor-led courses and embracing Web-based training (WBT), particularly the asynchronous kind. Using a form of Web-based training, whether it is synchronous or asynchronous, allows the organization to train larger groups, as well as have a consistent and cohesive course outline.

"The main difference is that the asynchronous perspective or delivery just allows the students to proceed at their own pace, which is sometimes a good thing and sometimes a bad thing, primarily depending on how self-motivated and self-directed someone is, and how much the student is willing to take responsibility for their own learning," said Margaret Martinez, CEO of The Training Place. "In contrast, asynchronous is more directive, more able to be of an online classroom kind of perspective."

Because of its simple structure and the independent trainee-driven course pace, asynchronous WBT has become one of the most common e-learning methods. Individuals can complete training anywhere, providing they have the necessary computer access. This can remove the added pressures associated with instructor-led class scheduling and meeting work deadlines.
Using asynchronous training allows the people taking the courses to walk away from the program when their workload is too heavy and then return when there is more time to focus on the training. It is also a valuable training-delivery option for people who have a hard time working in groups or are easily distracted. The responsibility for training shifts to the trainees, however, and often they must balance work and training considerations without support. "Asynchronous enables an organization to have a controlled environment where students or individuals can learn, especially those who learn best on their own," Martinez explained.

With asynchronous training an organization can specifically design the way the program is run, implement just the right amount of detailed information and examples, and add the extra training tidbits that can engage trainees. Asynchronous training also provides message boards and blogs where students can post questions. This encourages greater peer-to-peer interaction.

"Essentially, moving from the traditional classroom setup to online really kind of opens up the black hole of understanding about the impact and emotions on learning, where the trainer is totally in control of the learning situation, to online, where that control is minimized to some extent or fully," Martinez said. "It really forces us to be more understanding about the psychological and social aspects. Some people need more extrinsic control. Many people are more intrinsically motivated, more dependent on guidance and structure. All of those issues are now part of the analysis. Some people need more collaboration, some people need more structure. These are the issues that have to be addressed through analysis. In the classroom environment they were less important."

Training Prism, ©2006 Media Tec Publishing