

# TECH TRAINING

## The Effective Use of Training Tools in a Comprehensive Training Strategy



by Carol Verret

Incorporating online training resources should be considered in the overall training strategy for any organization, from corporate to the property level. Thought should be given to an overall training strategy with outcomes designed to align with the skill sets required vs. a patchwork of random seminars or video tapes.

Online modules are not designed to replace live seminars or hands-on training but provide an opportunity to supplement those and in many positions significantly shortening the ramp-up time of a new employee. These are also cost-effective ways to reinforce and enhance the skill sets of existing employees. You can provide training opportunities at the participant's desktop without incurring travel expenses or time away from the office.

With the plethora of options in online sites and tools, how do you decide which ones are appropriate for a given position and which modality to choose? The first thing to remember is that adults learn very differently from children. There must be a benefit to the learner, the what's-in-it-for-me (WIIFM) factor, in order for the learner to engage in the content presented.

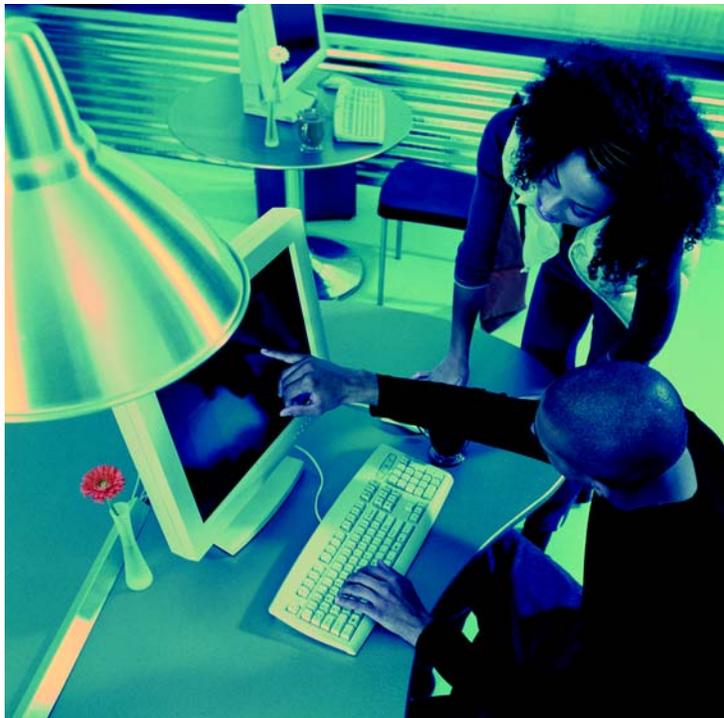
Either the supervisor or the module itself should delineate the objectives in terms of skill sets to be transmitted and include a benchmarking feature to measure the success of the participant in acquiring the skills. The benchmarking can be specific quizzes or an evaluation of what the participant was able to take away from the time invested.

The following are various options and circumstances where they can best be utilized:

**Online training sites:** There are quite a few of these that deal with specific skills and hotel departments. For example, there are those that deal primarily with front desk skills, such as front desk sales and customer service, and those that deal with food and beverage skills, such as responsible service of alcohol. Some are hospitality specific and deal with general training in areas like customer service. These are usually reasonably priced. Check around for those whose content is most aligned with your operation and culture.

**Proprietary online training sites:** Building your own online training site is less expensive than you may think especially if you run many employees through other training programs on a pay-as-you-go basis. It allows you to add or modify content as circumstances change. The biggest expense is in the set up and databasing. The subsequent addition of modules is a relatively small expense. This may be more cost effective in the long run compared to outsourcing to commercial sites. Having designed and built these in consultation with several organizations, management is always pleased with their input into the specific content, instant access to the benchmarking and the ability to modify and add content.

**Webcasts:** These can be public or proprietary and allow the group a level of participation not found in other online modalities. Webcasts can be open to the public or proprietary for specific organizations. These are ideal for small groups or sales meetings and allow the presentation of PowerPoint presentations or spreadsheets and communication between participants and the presenter in the form of voice or chat capabilities.



**Mystery shopping sites:** The results are posted online and allow the participant who was shopped to access their own recording as well as the functionality for management to listen or access results quickly. These are most effective when connected with an online or personal seminar training program so that you are benchmarking the skills presented in the training.

When considering online modules it is recommended that the average duration be no more than 30 to 45 minutes. It is about as long an attention span as can be sustained by an individual when sitting in front of a computer. Webcasts are most effective in durations of one to two hours maximum given live interaction.

Look for creativity in the design of online modules; it holds interest better than static material with an audio component. When I taught in a school of hospitality and tourism in Australia, the core modules were online and animated which held interest longer and tested better.

If you are not currently using online training in your training program, you are missing an opportunity to provide a valuable and cost-effective adjunct to your existing program in a way that many of your employees can relate—the Internet.

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