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Dear Editor,

It's very nice to have an industry buzzword for the approach described by Harry Calhoun ("Work-embedded E-Learning: Wherever You Are, Whenever You Need It," July/August *Intercom*). In 1990, I was working at Boston Edison—an electric utility (they're now NStar). I was responsible for the online help and the Web-based training our customer service reps received. At that time, there was only mainframe online help available to us as a work-embedded strategy, since our reps wouldn't be getting PCs installed until at least 1991. So we went to the IS organization—which was very old-school at that time—and we begged



and pleaded...and they finally agreed to link our mainframe authoring tool into the legacy systems our reps worked on. This meant the reps could see context-sensitive help for the specific screen and field they were working on because the systems were hooked together. We even built minixamples of hypothetical customer situations into it.

Ours was a fairly low-level example of work-embedded e-learning, but it was the start of something great. I left Edison in 1994 to open my own virtual training practice, but I still keep in touch with employees I worked with. Even after all this time has passed, customer service reps with long tenures remember the training we created for them during that time and talk about it. It isn't very often I get the satisfaction of knowing—years later—the impact I had on a client or project. This article reminded me that those of us working as training managers, instructional designers, technical writers, and graphic artists make a difference in the quality of someone's work-life. It's great to be reminded of why we do what it is we do!

Bonni Rogers
Member

Dear Editor,

The term "Work-embedded E-Learning" is a bit of a mouthful. It took me a while to figure out that it means what I call "demo movies." Or am I wrong about that?

Which tools do people use to create the content? I've created some short demo movies with Adobe *Captivate*, but nothing that amounts to a forty-five-minute course. I've considered creating a longer suite of movies that would take users through entire projects made up of many tasks. But I've never had the time to tackle the project.

In my limited experience, developing this type of material takes much more time than creating regular online documentation. But I hope it's worth it. Many software users hate reading online help. Personally, I really enjoy developing this type of content, despite the extra work. But I don't enjoy sitting through online courses—I'd rather find the answer myself. So, it doesn't serve all users.

Maura Gudaitis
Member

Dear Editor,

A few years ago, I was a writer on various small development teams, somewhat like the Scrum teams mentioned in Christine Sigman's article ("Adapting to Scrum: Challenges and Strategies," July/August *Intercom*). This design and development model tended to energize the entire team, and everyone felt more purposeful and excited about what they were doing. It certainly is tricky to manage all the challenges though—especially when engineering has a tendency to race ahead and forgets to communicate with tech comm. Someone always needs to lead and keep an eye on the process. Maybe a true Scrum model manages that better.

I liked this article very much. The challenge/response format was very effective and I recognized some familiar scenarios. It's inspiring me to do more reading on the subject.

Ann Whitley
Senior Member

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