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### **Great Talkers are Great Doers**

Few organizations can afford the luxury of learning from live subject matter experts or in traditional classrooms. Common reasons cited are widely dispersed workforce and poor budget allocations. Given these challenges, it is surprising that this easy-to-use-and-produce learning tool, while extremely powerful, remains largely underused.

#### **Voicing the need!**

With rapid technological advancements flooding the training market most learning professionals assume that successful training is essentially about using the more complex and most expensive tools and applications. Only recently are organizations realizing that simple and easy to develop learning tools such as the recorded human voice, offer equally huge 'training' potential.

How can learning professionals format human voice into effective training programs? Is it possible for any employee to record his voice for training? Should these voices be in the form of a dialogue or monologues? Here we attempt to answer these questions apart from establishing the benefits of using the recorded human voice as a learning tool.

#### **Voice power**

The recorded human voice has been used for religious discourses, foreign language tuitions, nursery rhymes, aerobic exercises and the list is endless. It however, has a taken a while for learning professionals to realize that they can use this powerful tool for training as well.

#### **Advantages galore**

The best part about these recordings is that the organization need not invest in a studio or professional recording equipment. The only production requirement is some inexpensive black-box technology. This technology ensures better voice quality when programs are recorded over telephone lines or during computer-based audio editing. These programs can either be recorded on-site and thanks to improved telecommunications, over the telephone.

As a producer of voice-based training programs, experts suggest a few must-haves. Elementary production skills include having a sense of how effective conversation flows, knowing the difference between conversations designed to educate and entertain, being well-informed and patient. Other than that, the only requirement is a bit of editing, which does not call for any professional help.

Editing is essential to check for length and relevancy of content, level of difficulty and completeness. It also eliminates the "uhs" and "ers". The conversation then sounds more natural and to-the-point and can be delivered on audio tapes or CDs. In fact, courtesy technological advancements and selecting delivery platforms is the least of a trainer's concerns. These programs can be downloaded with ease using desktops, laptops, CDs and now even the iPod.



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### **Charm 'n' appeal**

What attracts interested audiences to this medium is the convenience of listening to a conversation on a topic of interest, by an expert in the field anytime, anywhere. Interested individuals are found listening to such recorded conversations while driving, traveling, or even while exercising!

Another appealing feature is the seemingly informal learning set-up that this medium creates. It is as informal as overhearing an expert speak about an interesting topic or narrate an interesting incident. The final conversations sound more like stories than lessons. These stories can intentionally be designed to cover a range of training topics and management issues

Senior managers and C-level executives can use this learning tool to improve their 'visibility' in the organization. By taking on the role of a talk show host or narrating their own success stories they can better relate to their workforce. Moreover, sharing success stories especially during major business initiatives inspires better employee involvement and performance.

While this medium can prove effective in a gamut of industries, the customer service industry can benefit significantly by combining the recorded human voice with simulations.

### **Instant success**

Call centers have a tough time keeping turnover rates low. While effective training has a positive impact on retention, not all call centers are equipped to cater to the 'just in time' demands of continually changing workforce. In addition it is their responsibility to constantly review and update learning content to expand expertise.

Addressing these tasks cannot be anything but a time consuming and expensive affair. "Not necessarily," say a group of trainers who used dialogue simulation software to reduce training time for new hires by nearly 20 percent. Better still, their call centers now boast of improved productivity along with greater retention amongst new call centre professionals.

As 'learning by doing' is the most effective form of training, simulations rank high.

What betters that ranking is the dialogue simulation software that taps into the fundamental communication mechanism between people to make training more compelling. Experts believe that this combination promises the benefits of a live human coach along with cost-effective and consistent results than traditional training techniques.

### **The downside**

A major production challenge is keeping content fresh and conversations interesting. That aside, organizations also experience problems while adopting this tool. While it is natural for a trainer to test the tool before implementation, most use a faulty testing procedure that includes evaluating a single program or lesson to judge the entire series.



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Experts know better and warn that forming opinions based on a test of a single program or lesson rather than the entire series leads to false and contradictory results. The ideal test is to conduct a well-structured listener survey and collect feedback only after an individual has heard a series of programs.

It is easy to drown the human voice in a cacophony of sophisticated e-learning strategies and complex instructional technologies. However, organizations that realize the learning potential of the recorded human voice have a simple, inexpensive and easy to produce learning tool at hand.