CREATING TECHNICAL TRAINING

A step-by-step guide for creating technical training.

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The Legal Stuff

Title...

Creating Technical Training

Description...

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Dedication

To Richard Newberry...

I would like to dedicate this book to a dear friend with whom I had the pleasure of working for several years. He was that whisper in your ear to take a second look. In fond remembrance of a true friend.

Foreword

An Introduction...

Creating technical training can be an intimidating task. Technology is constantly changing, the business climate is in a constant state of flux, resources are tight and, of course politics, these all adds up to challenging times for the technical trainer.

The intent of this book is to lead you past many of the pit-falls that populate the field of technical training. We will discuss and demonstrate the creation of technical training material for class room, distance learning and stand alone training. We will also discuss the many formats that are available in which to create training material such as: traditional books, web, and electronic file distribution to the latest eBook formats.

If you have had traditional training in the creation of training material you have probably discussed the various learning types: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. If you could separate your classes into only one type of learner, it would greatly simplify the creation of learning material and presentation. Unfortunately, that's not going to happen. It is up to you to make sure your training will work for all types of learners.

What approach are we taking?...

The approach that I will take in this book will be based on the premise that technical training is new to you. Even if it isn't, you might want to read the entire book because you never know what you might find useful. The training processes that I use will work with most learners. I will show you how to develop technical training for an actual product using several different methods depending on the intended delivery of the training.

The tools...

The tools that we will use to produce the training will vary little, but the end result will vary greatly depending on the intended audience and delivery method. The center piece of the instructional design development tools will be Adobe InDesign with some help from the other members of the Adobe Creative Suite 5 Design Premium, Snapz Pro X and Layers for screen capture and Pages, a member of the iWork suite. On the Windows side, we will be using the Windows built-in screen capture capabilities. We will discuss the development tools further into the course. The software for which we will be developing training, will be IronCAD, a CADD (Computer Aided Design and Drafting) software package.

Chapter 1 – Some Things to Consider…

Before you start to design technical training there are several things that you must consider:

• What are the politics involved?

• Who is your intended audience?

• What is the classroom environment?

• What is the student experience level?

• What is the delivery format or formats?

• What is your expertise in the subject matter?

• What are the politics involved?

What are the politics involved?

What does this have to do with technical training? A lot because you must understand the political climate that surrounds the training that you are presenting. This is especially true if you are developing a new course, introducing new software or techniques that replace existing software or methodologies, or if you are using new training methodologies. Many people are not comfortable with change so, you must take this into consideration and be prepared for it.

If you are presenting training on new techniques, software or equipment that replaces exiting

ones, be especially careful to show the advantages of the new "stuff" over the old – but, you must be sensitive to the resistance to change. If you are very familiar with previous techniques, software or equipment it will help you to point out the advantages of the new "stuff".

Who is your intended audience?

Your presentation of training material can be greatly affected by the intended audience. High level executives are not going to want or generally need the same comprehensive training as the person who is actually going to use the software or machine. Distance learning or self paced learning is going to need a different approach than traditional classroom training.

Learning types...

The various types of learners: visual, auditory and kinesthetic will need training developed that will work with all types of learners. To do this you will need a combination of both graphic and textual training. Classroom training still probably works best because you can get a "feel" for how your students are doing, but in the modern age this is not always possible. Distance learning can be great, but you have to make sure that the material is absolutely clear. Forget the "trick" questions – be clear. Time is money in the business environment so don't waste the students time with trick questions and pontification – quick and to the point is the best method.

What is the classroom environment?

You must prepare for your classroom environment ahead of time if possible. If you travel to various locations to present your training, you may not have the luxury of always knowing what to expect. Be prepared, always carry the essentials with you, even if you don't think you will need them. Be sure to call ahead and let those in charge of the training location know what you will need. Get an idea from them what the environment will be like and how many students to expect. If computers are being provided for the students, check to see that they will meet your needs. Check to see if there is a projection system (if you need one) and that it will be compatible with your equipment. Make sure the software will be installed before the class starts!

What is the student experience level?

If the class you are providing instruction for is at a fairly uniform aptitude level, it will make the training go much faster. However, this is usually not the case so you will have to adjust content and teaching methodology to accommodate the various levels of student experience and background. Don't presume that because the requested training is intended for senior level students, all of your students will be at that level. Students from different departments in the same company may have different needs.

What is the delivery format or formats?

Is the training for a classroom, a convention or auditorium style environment. Is it online or remote individual training. Each of these types of learning environments will require a different approach. You may find that you need a multiple format approach depending on the delivery

method and the subject matter. Online delivery may require written material, web based material and presentation material depending on the style and delivery of the online training.

What is your expertise in the subject matter?

You must take your level of experience into consideration when preparing your class. If you are new to the subject, I can't stress enough that you must become proficient in the subject matter to at least one level above what you are teaching. Students do not respond well to inexperience. Finally, never complain about the subject you are teaching or about company problems to the students or anyone else who might feed that information back to whoever you are doing the training for.