

Interactive Sales Training: You Can Do It!

FROM THE 2010 FREELANCE WORKSHOP

By Barbara Woldin

Using online resources has become the norm in our industry and sales training is no exception. If you had been feeling a bit skittish about tackling interactive sales training, Brian Bass, President of Bass Advertising & Marketing, Inc., put your mind at ease in a brilliantly given and engaging presentation, “Interactive Sales Training: You Can Do It!” Bass explained the ins and outs of developing Web or CD-Rom-based interactive scripts at the Eighth Annual AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop.

In the beginning his presentation, Brian states that pharmaceutical sales reps are the “Face of the company, Voice of the customer” and “Pulse of the market” and need to become partners with their customers as well as promoters of the brand. They not only need to know the strengths of their product and those of competitors, understand the concerns of their audience, be confident in discussing the science and adept at handling objections, but also to understand the disease state, know the treatment guidelines, and be fluent in their product. Sales training is a means to these ends and serves to educate, empower, and support the brand.

Interactive sales training provides many benefits over traditional print media. It is non-linear and uses a Web or CD-Rom interface. More importantly, it engages the learner and supports adult-learning principles: motivation, participation, and application, and does so by incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles. Given all these parameters, he broached the question, “How do you write this stuff?” and answered with “Think 4 dimensionally,” meaning use words, sounds, images and motion. “That 4th dimension [motion] to interactive sales training,” he reiterated, “is really key.”

Instructional design enables you to build your own learning world. Scripts comprise the interactive learning process and include instructional units for the purpose of delivering didactic (*see the Figure*), interactive, or assessment content. He also showed a sample script built for the new Articulate technology. Didactic refers solely to visual and audio components and is strictly instructional in nature, while the latter two kinds of scripts involve a kinesthetic component requiring learner participation. Surprisingly, rather than actual content, instructional design has more to do with how the content is delivered within the interactive environment, including instructions for the programmers. Collectively, the total interactive package incorporates motivation, education, and evaluation.

COURSE	Masters in Action	SCREEN TITLE	Levetiracetam Intro
MODULE	Lesson 1: Addressing the Competition	ABBREVIATION	L1_S2_P1
SECTION	Levetiracetam	SCREEN TYPE	Video
TOP NAVIGATION			
None			
VISUALS		AUDIO	
<p>Cut to video of "levetiracetam," martial artist, performing demonstration moves.</p> <p>Onscreen text:</p> <p>Levetiracetam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanism of Action Half-life Dose Response Time to Peak Time to Steady State The KEEPER Trial 		<p>Gong sounds, then theme music low.</p> <p>Sound effects as appropriate.</p> <p>Sensei speaks:</p> <p>To compete against a formidable foe such as levetiracetam, you must be knowledgeable in all of its ways. Your wisdom must include knowledge of the mechanism of action, half-life, dose response, time to peak, and time to steady state for levetiracetam, as well as knowledge of the KEEPER Trial. Click on each to learn more.</p>	
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN/CREATIVE TREATMENT			
<p>Sensei remains in small screen while speaking. The gong image in the center main screen moves to the right, redrawing the text "Levetiracetam" to make room for another smaller screen that drops down to the left in the main information window. This new screen contains the menu, which builds as Sensei says each point.</p> <p>When the learner selects one of the points, the larger screen shows the onscreen text described in the Visuals section of the following screens, as Sensei continues to speak from the small screen in the bottom right corner.</p> <p>The far-left window displays the navigational instruction:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">When you are enlightened on all 6 key points, click "Next."</p>			
BOTTOM AND SPECIAL NAVIGATION			
Next = Next sequence	Exit = Exit disk		
Back = Back to previous sequence	Print = Print document		
NOTES			

FIGURE. Example of a didactic interactive script

Brian ended his presentation by providing tips on writing interactive scripts, namely, that one should develop concept before content (creative theme and information flow), know your technology (capabilities and limitations), think spatially, and write as if you are the learner.

Barbara Woldin is a freelance medical writer and editor and a specialist in marketing communications. She resides in High Bridge, NJ.

The AMWA-DVC Eighth Annual Freelance Workshop was held on April 17th, 2010 in Plymouth Meeting, Pa.