The Power of Technology in Training
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Using effective audio-visual training aids in your learning events can help reinforce your verbal message significantly, while stimulating the brains of your learners and tapping into different learning modalities. By creating and using effective support material, you can help ensure that you will hold learner interest while helping them gain, retain, recognize, recall, and later use the information to which they are exposed.

Do not become so distracted by adding glitz and sparkle when creating training materials that you forget their intended purpose --- to reinforce you primary message. Two key things to remember about using audio-visual training aids are that:

1. They are supposed to supplement your message, not replace it.
2. You must keep your learning aids simple.

Trainers and educators traditionally use many types of material and items to help get their classroom message across to learners. Virtually anything can become a training aid. There is a multitude of commercially produced products and equipment. Trainers and educators can also design, build and use many items that they create in order to enhance their learning environments. There is no hard and fast rule about what classifies as a training aid, so if something works to help communicate an idea or concept, use it.

Training aids that tap primarily into the auditory and visual learning modalities fall into the audio-visual category. These are training support materials that you view with an electronic projection device or listen to through a playback system such as MP3, laptop computer, compact disk or cassette player. They can add a more polished and formal appearance to your delivery when designed and used effectively.

Computer-Generated Slides. Depending on the computer software used to create your presentation, you have an opportunity to add a variety of enhancements to inject pizzazz into your slides. Examples of popular presentation software include Microsoft® PowerPoint®, Harvard Graphics™, Lotus Freelance™, Adobe Persuasion™, or Novell Presentations™. If done correctly, these tools can help ensure effective message delivery and create a powerful impact with what you show your learners.

One important point about creating slides is that they should include key topics and not have your entire outline written out line-for-line in very small print. You should use them as a guide to highlight important points and not as a script from which you will read. The latter approach is boring and unprofessional. It also sends a message that you are unprepared or that you assume your learners cannot read material themselves. If you need to give detailed information about topics to your learners, do so with handouts that they can read later or can review before you discuss the content in class.

Digital Visual Projectors. The digital projector is a modern day update of the old opaque projector that projected images of book and document page onto a screen. In addition to being able to project book pages and documents, these newer devices now allow you to project images of three-dimensional objects or specimens onto a screen where large groups can view and discuss them. This allows you to demonstrate components, assemble and disassemble objects and much more. Most models also allow you to transmit the images into your computer or store them on a secure digital (SD) flash memory card or a universal serial bus (USB) flash drive to transport and forward to others.

Audio-recordings. Depending on your session topic, you may be able to incorporate an audiotaped component that supplements and adds to your other content. For example, if you were doing a workshop on effective listening skills, you might play someone reading a portion of text as learners listen. Afterwards, you could have them individually write down everything that they can remember about what they heard. Afterwards, form teams to compare and discuss what they wrote. You could follow this activity by a period in which learners brainstorm reasons why some people heard things that others did not. You could summarize all this with the entire group and a lead a discussion on how to improve listening which could tie all the content pieces together.

Other ways to incorporate this media would be to use music during a visioning activity, tape-recorded role-play scenarios that learners analyze and discuss, or short lecture-based segments from well-known authorities. The latter can add credibility to what you have said if the experts validate and support your information.

Videotape/DVD. Consider using training and commercial videos or digital video discs (DVDs) if you want a bit of visual stimulation that can add to many session topics. There are thousands of topics available with prices ranging from $79.00 to $1,000.00. Just remember to get copyright permission in writing before using. If you purchase the video, that is usually not a problem since purchase grants you individual use. If you have questions about your rights to use, contact the manufacturer or distributor.

As with all training aids, make sure that you are thoroughly familiar with equipment and that you cue up the video in advance to the beginning of the scene you wish to show. This will prevent wasted time in class and prevent any embarrassment that might occur when you cannot get the video to play, pause, and rewind. Also, make sure that you have a screen large enough for everyone to see from any location in the room.

Since most learners have a limited attention span, show only short segments of the video at a time. Fifteen to twenty minutes is a good range. If you want the use an entire video, consider breaking it into sections and show each segment at different points to reinforce and relate to key concepts made during your workshop.

Multimedia. There are various interpretations of what multimedia involves. Typically, the term refers to any learning medium such as a website or slide show that includes a

combination of several sources for communicating information or concepts. Examples of multimedia include text, pictures, video and sound.

If you have ever entered a conference hall where multiple screens have projected rotating images and/or video playing with musical background and subtitles that are displaying information across the bottom of the screen, then you have experienced a multimedia presentation. These types of media might be used to offer a chronology of events related to your workshop topic through images, text and music. Another way you can incorporate multimedia into your workshop is to have learners access websites that offer multiple forms of information as part of their learning experience.

Internet. You can imagine literally any topic and find it on the World Wide Web. It is a great source for information and documentation as well as a source that learners can access for projects and research. You can tap the Internet in class to project images of website, products or information that ties to your session content. You might also have individual learners or groups search for material that they will present to the class in short "teach backs." This type of event can help stimulate learning, add variety to your delivery, while allowing participants to become more actively engaged in their own learning.

No matter what training aid you select, remember that your message is the important part, not the entertainment that you provide through audio-visual means. Use these tools to grasp and hold attention so that you can deliver your key points effectively. If you accomplish that, then learning will likely occur and your participants will be able to apply what they learned following the event.

Bob Lucas B.S., M.A., M.A, CPLP is an internationally-known author and learning and performance professional. He has written and contributed to thirty-one books and compilations. He regularly conducts creative training, train-the-trainer, customer service, interpersonal communication and management and supervisory skills workshops. Bob can be reached at blucas@robertwlucas.com or through his website www.robertwlucas.com. Follow his blog at www.robertwlucas.com/wordpress and like him at www.facebook.com/robertwlucasenterprises