



RETAIL ROUNDUP



Lights! Camera! Technology!

[By David Harouche]

In the highly competitive retail environment that exists today, effective training programs are an essential tool in achieving a business's growth strategy and long-term goals. Retailers have begun to recognize that trained employees lead to higher sales, better customer service, and standardized procedures. With the popularity of new media and streaming video via the web, retailers are challenged to develop content that will not only educate their employees but entertain them as well. Training methods come in many forms that include a teacher-student setting, computer-based tutorials, and self-study guides. Retailers, however, are rapidly moving to computer-based video in their efforts to train employees on product knowledge, selling skills, loss prevention, and management development, among other applications.

In a basic sense, training means learning how to deal with the mechanics of whatever it is you are working with, either to do work or to achieve a goal. But it is the engagement and holding of an employee's attention that will determine if messages have been successfully communicated. A primary reason why computer-based video content yields high success rates is that it is a medium that this new generation is fluent with. The Millennial Generation uses the Internet daily to receive the majority of their information, whether it's on YouTube, MySpace, or Facebook. Delivering computer-based video is an equally effective tool for sending out training to the field.

Communicating consistent messages and images is of paramount importance when developing a training video. In the past, what was lacking was accountability. Today's computer-based video programs can deliver the consistency and entertainment value of video while allowing management to verify that the field is using the training. Through the combination of video and the Internet, retailers are finally able to track and verify that the programs distributed to the field are impacting business and provide measurable ROI.

Whether content is delivered by fellow associates or professional actors, video gives the assurance of a complete and predictable message. No matter where a store is located,

all employees will be able to see and hear the same message. The medium can also put a face to the names of executives and staff in other locations, making people feel more connected and a part of the company.

At the same time, by having the video content tied or wrapped in a shell that allows the user to interact with the program, you create a broader interactive experience that enables the user to participate in and guide his or her experience. By tracking the user's progress and results, opportunities can be easily identified and issues can be addressed quickly.

Retailers vary in store size and number of employees and so do their training departments, which may provide some challenges in developing a training system that is organized and cost-effective. More so than any other training method, however, computer-based video allows retailers to train larger numbers of employees in a shorter amount of time. By having a single repository for all the training results, administrators are able to keep focused on the training objectives and get a pulse for what is happening across the entire chain.

Once the purpose, audience, and messages for the training program have been established, the format of the project can take on a variety of looks. Computer-

based videos can be branded to seamlessly integrate with the retailer's marketing. From the shell design and navigational elements to the language of the script, choice of actors, music, and fonts, each element should reflect the brand aesthetic. Keeping employees interested and entertained with a format that looks consistent with the brand image is a crucial element for successful training.

A broad range of retailers have implemented computer-based video programs for internal communications. Their responses have consistently described better employee attitudes and more efficient processes. Many have expanded existing programs to include loss prevention, employee orientation, and product demonstrations. With all of these options for video production, consistency was maintained for the highest level of communication.

Computer-based video has quickly become the medium of choice for retailers who require an effective and efficient means of communication with the ability to measure results. Consistent messages and an appropriate level of entertainment will ensure that training is successful and that the bottom line has been affected. For the future, video will play a key role in e-business and the way employees are trained.



RETAIL ROUNDUP

About the Author

David Harouche is president of Multimedia Plus, a leading video and interactive

production house specializing in corporate communications and training for the retail industry. QuizScore is Multimedia Plus's patented solution for delivering high-

quality video and measuring results via a low-bandwidth Internet connection. Visit Multimedia Plus's homepage at www.multimedia-plus.com

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs, and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.