



Make training customized and always available, and your employees will make better use of IT investments

Training on Demand

Let's do some math. Think back to a day when you or a member of your staff attended training through one of your vendors — perhaps your property management system (PMS) or point of service (POS) system vendor. Let's assume that on that day, the trainee was taught 50 different system features. Of the 50 features taught, how many will the trainee remember just one month later? If he or she is like most hospitality professionals, they will probably retain 30 of them — those used most often.

When a new employee is hired and trained by the afore-mentioned trainee, the new employee is taught only the 30 features retained. Of those, the new employee will remember approximately 20 of them one to two months later. If that employee were to train another new hire, he or she would teach only those 20 retained features of the system.

A downward cycle

Following this cycle, fourth or fifth generation employees are taught and use just 30 percent of a system's full functionality. This, according to findings from a University of Delaware study conducted in 2006. This diminishing training method results in the non-use of as much as 70 percent of a system's features. When coupled with hospitality industry turnover, the severity of this phenomenon is compounded.

In the quick service industry, for example, the turnover rate may be as high as 400 percent per year. In the hotel industry, turnover may be as high as 65 percent to 70 percent annually. This means that in a quick service restaurant, in one year, the entire staff

will change four times. In a hotel, it will change completely almost every nine months, on average. When training is done in this diminishing method, many of a system's features will fall into oblivion.

In the University of Delaware survey, a large majority of PMS users reported that the main reason they do not use

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some of a system's features is attributable to a lack of knowledge about how a particular feature works. Do vendors do a good job in training users? Probably they do, but because of the transformation of information from generation to generation, many features are still lost.

Training on demand

One solution to diminished training and the resulting system feature loss is a training-on-demand approach, whereby hospitality professionals create their own training programs for technological and operational uses. The training programs are created when knowledge is fresh in employees' and executives' minds and can be accessed by future employees or for refresher training on an on-demand basis.

There are several tools available, such as Camtasia (www.techsmith.com)

or Adobe Captivate (www.adobe.com), that allow users to record to a computer an instructional narration via a microphone or camera. Sessions can be recorded in modules, giving employees the option to choose shorter sessions or inclusive training programs. Once video is created, it can be saved as a Flash presentation, Windows Media

Player file, movie file, or even an iPod movie file. These videos can then be uploaded to a protected Website or intranet for future access. Files can also be accessed from an Internet-enabled POS or PMS terminal so that the staff can train themselves on a regular basis, perhaps during allotted training times or non-peak hours.

Several vendors such as MicroFidelio (www.micros-fidelio.com), New Market International (www.newmarketinc.com), PAR Springer-Miller (www.springermiller.com) and others are working on on-demand training programs. A combination approach of using vendor-supplied tools and creating in-house custom training can allow for a significant increase in the use of a system's full functionality. After all, these are features and functions that you already paid for. **HT**

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