

# Online Learning: How it Works and The Role of Online Trainers

VOICE 1  
Do you really believe you can learn with Online Training?

as a wrench without a mechanic unless they are guided and structured by trainers

First, a learner interacts with the content presented... the presentation... such as Vignettes Videos and follow-up activities.

VOICE 2  
I sure do!

VOICE 1  
Well, I just don't think you can learn without a human touch.

VOICE 2  
I agree with you! What you have to realize is that what you see and hear on the computer are just tools for learning. But, behind all of these are well designed training programs and living, breathing, helpful, human, online trainers plus all the other participants I can communicate with directly!



In this phase of the learning, the more complex the information, the more the learner needs the opportunity to review the materials at his or her own pace, independent of other participants or online trainers... Online Training, in many circumstances, can be more

with well designed goals and objectives.

effective in accomplishing this than actual classroom experience.

## Two Types of Interaction

Learning involves two types of interaction:

Interaction with Content (That is, the presentation... receiving information visually, audibly and interactively like making choices) and Interpersonal Interaction (That's the human-to-human stuff we've been talking about... give and take... discussion with other people).

Secondly, a learner can interact with other learners through chat rooms, bulletin boards and email... This is where a great amount of sharing of experiences helps each learner to make the materials relevant.

Thirdly, there is an interaction between learners as a group when aided by an online trainer in a moderated discussion. Each of these three forms of interaction has its own rightful and significant place in online learning.

There are at least three ways interaction occurs in online training.

## Transaction Routers

Yes, Online Learning is very much human-to-human communication. Online learning tools such as presentations, Internet access, chat rooms and bulletin boards are only transaction routers allowing exchange of and storage of data.

However, it must be emphasized that these are only the tools used to implement the training. They are as useless

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(continuation...)

### Synchronous and Asynchronous

Importantly, interaction doesn't require real-time communication (or synchronous). In other words, you can exchange thoughts, ideas, questions and answers, comments, declarations, diatribes... whatever, with all these humans, but you don't have to all be there online at any specific time (or asynchronous)!

What this means is that interaction between online learners and online trainers can be independent of time and place, and learning will

still take place! For example, by using bulletin boards or mailing lists, one can post ideas or join discus-



sions as his or her own personal schedule permits.

### Roles of Online Trainers

The primary role, then, of an online trainer is to keep the learning on track, provide knowledge, weave all ideas into the discussions, and maintain harmonious, meaningful interactions.

The online trainer performs four roles:

The facilitator; the promoter; the administrator; and the technical advisor.

These roles will be covered in detail in individual Vignettes.