Mobile Active Learning Training Simulation System (ALTS) Concept and its Role in Business Training

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Currently the training model used in the majority of companies in Thailand as well as the rest of the world is a learn-by-telling one. Everyday employees gather in training rooms or at resorts and spend hours viewing PowerPoint slide after slide. Many times they fall asleep, talk on their mobile phone or take page after page of notes about what is being "told" to them. These same employees then go back to their offices and giving little thought to the "telling" they received "do" their job. People "do" everyday, so what do we not "do" when we train them? The following article outlines a model that will allow employees to "do" – that is learn and practice the skills they use everyday at work while playing a simulation game on their mobile phones. This model is a truly flex learning tools for anywhere, anyone as well as just-in-time learning.

Using a series of short (3-5 minute) videos to present the viewer with an action situation and brief "infomercials" to provide the facts or expert stories, MMS enabled mobile phones can be used to prove learning engagement activities. The structure of these learning activities will have to be modified due to the mobile's inability to have hyper-linked videos. To compensate for this lack of in program control it will be necessary to provide the viewer with instructions at the end of the movie as to what the next step in the activity should be. The project plans to provide this through the use of an animated character - the next step in the simulation process – such as the name of the movie to watch (i.e. plan_a.mp4) if they select this particular course of action. Each of the follow-up videos will contain additional choices and or feedback, if your choice has not the most effective one for a given situation you will receive feedback in the form of a story from a subject matter expert on what course of action they took to resolve a similar situation.

Step 1: sim_start.mp4

Once the viewer has completed this movie they will be asked to select a course of action in order to proceed, such as movie (choice1A.mp4 or choice1B.mp4). If they are unsure of what to do, they learner can acquire additional perspectives from subject matter experts by watching stories of how they solved a similar situation by selecting (expert1A.mp4). The learner may also wish to receive more detail information about the situation by selecting (resouces1A.mp4).

Step 2: Receive Feedback

Once the learner has selected a choice video they will receive feedback on the actions. This maybe in the form of the next set of events to happen as with an appropriate choice or it may be in the form of negative consequences such as a supervisor taking action to correct your actions. This movie will end with another series of choices to make similar to the first one. This pattern of watching, reflecting, seeking resources and choosing are at the heart of these mini-simulations. Only by having the learners actively engage in decision-making are they learning. Unlike

traditional passive learning this model forces the learner the act and therefore think critically and learn real problem solving skills in context.

Step 3: Repeat until simulation concludes

By using a simulation / game approach to training the learner will need to solve short-term goals on their way to solving the larger long-term and more complex game goal. Through the use of their content knowledge the learner will solve real world process knowledge problems just as they would in their everyday work environment. In order for people to learn to become experts at "doing" they need to practice and practice in context. These mini-simulations will allow them to be exposed to the most common problems facing professionals in their situation and to practice the skills required to solve the dilemma quickly and efficiently. As an added bonus the learner will be engaged in a learning environment that is like current on-line gaming environment, which is media rich and filled with opportunities to "do" instead of passively sitting and watching a PowerPoint presentation of which they will remember on average 5% on it.

Recent studies (Schank, 2005) have confirmed the importance of having learners practice process knowledge skills in context so the when they are properly indexed for later retrieval. Far too often we train our employees in seminars where they sit and watch a PowerPoint slide show and are told how to do certain procedure. Hearing does not mean understanding and it most certainly does not allow an employee to properly index the "facts" for use in a real world situation that maybe even be in a crisis. This learning out of context or being told no longer is effective for our rapidly changing business environment. Content knowledge is rapidly changing and to continue to allow our employees to learn to memorize facts is neither realistic nor effective if the goal of the company is to be innovative and flexible. A new strategy of "Learning-to-Learn" must be implemented across all corporate training venues. This does not mean putting trainers out of work by placing current "telling" training on-line as many are doing today. Instead, trainers will need to change their method of teaching from one of telling to one of doing. Classroom training still will be needed to ensure those skills that require a social component be handled effectively. The trainer will also need to work closely with instructional designer of the new learning-by-doing media to ensure that it is in line with the performance objectives and that it ensures practicing of the identified process knowledge or skills need to handling a given situation.

We expect our health professionals to use the most effective means in our care. Why should we ask any less of our training professionals? There is no longer any reason why HR departments are not offering the most effective means for their employees to acquire the skills and knowledge to perform their jobs in a way that benefits all. Failing to provide the next generation of employees the adequate tools to learn will ensure that companies will in effect become dinosaurs and like the dinosaur pass from the Earth into history and be replaced by the more adaptable mammal of the business world, those who are learning-by-doing and therefore learn-to-learn.