

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING



Technology-assisted training

Training is essential for all companies. That is why many specialists consider those tools liable to facilitate employee training as an added value for the transfer of knowledge and skills. Among these tools, the electronic voting keypads developed by PowerVote stand out.

In-house training sessions enjoy a precious ally thanks to modern technology. Via wireless voting keypads that allow their users to answer preprogrammed questions under PowerPoint, the electronic voting system makes training exercises more practical, less complicated and immediate.

Interactive voting keypads are particularly influential in the pharmaceutical and health-service sectors. Indeed, ever more companies in these fields rely on this type of technology to train and teach their employees.

According to Rob Smith, a director and coordinator of continuing training programmes, interactive voting keypads constitute **"an extraordinary resource for the improvement of educational methodologies"**.

What is more, according to Sonia Solbes of Boehringer Ingelheim, these systems, applied to training, have proven extremely useful in the facilitation of in-house company training:

"We use the voting keypads to ask participants their opinion regarding specific points, to test their degree of understanding regarding a given subject during a training session, and to test agents."

However, according to Rob Smith, certain directors of continuing training still hesitate to integrate this system into their programmes, due to the unfounded fear that such technology is too complicated to use. A fear "that, in this day and age, really doesn't make much sense, considering all the effort that has gone into producing a very intuitive platform and programming", explains the director and coordinator of continuing training programmes for the Order of Optometrists

USE AND EXPERIENCE

The use of this tool varies widely from one company to the next. Certain companies use the system for very specific situations, as explains Martin James, director of training for a pharmaceutical laboratory:

"We have used the voting keypads two or three times to carry out training tests during certain sales conventions"

But there are also companies that have applied the voting keypads to the near totality of their training programmes. For instance, Boehringer Ingelheim has been regularly using **"the electronic voting keypads not only during training courses, but also during commercial and sales sessions"**. The company owns no less than 45 keypads.

But the Order of Optometrists was the first body to apply these keypads to training. It was in 1998, and for the first time, that a training programme making use of an interactive video platform was set up for more than 80 Optometrists. **"This platform was incompatible with PowerPoint, which greatly complicated the saving of questions and answers," remembers Smith.**

In addition, the voting keypads at this time were larger, heavier "and, what's more, almost three times more expensive to hire or purchase than today's devices". Nevertheless, and despite the limitations of these early keypads, the director and coordinator of continuing training programmes admits that this initial experience **"was, for the most part, appreciated, as much by the trainees as by the instructors"**.

Without a doubt, the experience entailed a change in direction for this institution that continues to use interactive video systems such as the PowerVote platform.

ADVANTAGES

«Previously, when we asked a question or when we asked the audience to express its opinions, only the most extroverted or those with an excellent understanding of the subject matter dared to answer or share their opinion. The others remained silent. However, with the remote controls, we can ask the entire group questions and obtain individual answers, without this very real fear of public speaking,» explains Sonia Solbes.

Rob Smith places special emphasis on the conveniences of such interactive systems for teachers: «They allow the instructor to monitor in real time which points and subjects require further attention, and this throughout the entire length of the training course».

Likewise, having available personalised information on each student from the very beginning of the training course allows the instructor to compare these results with the ongoing evaluation and, most importantly, with the final evaluation to test knowledge acquisition.

«During each training session, the teacher can monitor in real time which subjects require further attention, thereby guaranteeing more effective training for the students,» he concludes.

In addition, instructors who make use of electronic voting keypads point out their ease of use and the time saved compared to more traditional systems.

«The fact that corrections are made automatically is very useful, because this eliminates the risk of error, as compared to paper exams which require the instructor to add up all of the points obtained to produce a total score. This saves a lot of time,» explains Sonia Solbes, of the training department of Boehringer Ingelheim.

SUPPORTS

The system's advantages

Practical and simple : the wireless voting keypads are simple, user-friendly and require no prior training.

Immediate : voting results are displayed in a matter of seconds, before participants become distracted.

Anonymous : the system guarantees participants anonymity for voting and answering questions.

Personalised : for evaluation purposes, it is possible to discover how each participant voted. This allows for a rapid evaluation of each participant's level of understanding.

Information : it is possible to compile reports based on all data obtained.