

PowerPoint Works for Learning

Learning creation today requires some software knowledge. Selecting the best tools for your organization's eLearning needs is mind-boggling. PowerPoint is an old friend and is a powerful tool on your computer that should not be ignored.

PowerPoint is a tool that is familiar to almost everyone. It is a simple tool that can be used in a sophisticated way. Being familiar lends itself to quicker completion without the need to learn new, cumbersome software. It may not contain fancy bells and whistles, but it is an excellent place to start. Narration, branched scenarios, interactive maps, videos and on-line resources can be added to PowerPoint slides to enrich the learning experience.

To begin, visualize a blank PowerPoint screen. It is the canvas to which media is added to create rich learning. PowerPoint should not be viewed as just the Flash conversion but as the authoring environment. Skip the wizards and templates. These contain overused slide layouts and bullet points that fail to engage recipients.

Try narration. Describing or recounting pertinent information is helpful by keeping the attention of the user. Narration can be achieved through the use of the microphone in your computer. Articulate's Presenter is a good tool that allows non-technical users to simply add narration to PowerPoint files. Audacity, open source software for recording and editing sounds, is free. It is a tool to import narration and sync narration with the animation.

Various forms of media are capable of making simple presentations stimulating. Audio can either be recorded or imported into slides. PowerPoint also has rich animation capabilities beyond clipart. Animation effects can be created using a series of key frames in PowerPoint or motion paths can be fashioned to make objects move anywhere on a slide.

Simple, interactive decision making scenarios can be created using PowerPoint hyperlinks. Interactive content can be easily added to PowerPoint using supplementary software such as Articulate's Engage. Branched scenarios enrich the learning experience by allowing the user to learn from their decisions.

Adobe Flash is a popular method for adding animation and interactivity to course design. Import Flash animation or Flash games with the file extension .swf enhance a course. Software simulations using Flash can also be nicely integrated into the slides creating an interesting learning simulation for the user.

Leverage the power of the Internet by using features such as chat, wikis, learning forums, and online tools. Author the course in PowerPoint and then supplement by bringing in these web resources. Internal websites can also be incorporated

into the learning material. And don't forget video from the Internet in the form of a web object or link that can be embedded into the slide.

Interactive maps are another way to turn a dry presentation into something fun for the learner. Cut and paste a map onto a PowerPoint slide and then build-in points of interest, legends, specific geographic information using outside software.

It is nice to see a simple, familiar tool like PowerPoint save time and money in rapid learning development.