

Training on demand

Increasing efficiency and cutting costs are important for all companies. John Craig of Halo Training believes on-demand training may help in achieving these goals.

Hands up any of you who do not come under pressure to increase efficiency and reduce costs, while achieving the same results or better? From food and beverage to over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, all companies are under continued pressure to be more efficient and spend less.

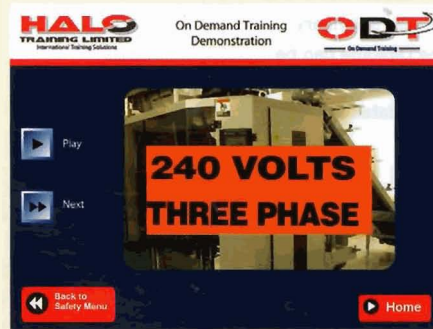
Training time

So are we talking about better training? Maybe, thinks John Craig, who for the last 25 years has developed automation and inspection equipment for the food and pharmaceutical packaging industry. He recently left his senior position with a major US company and has set up his own business to allow him to develop innovative concepts for the packaging sector.

Based on his personal experience, Craig concluded that training alone is the wrong way to think about the problem of improving efficiency and reducing costs. In his opinion, training implies a passive activity where the supervisor or operative is 'given' knowledge, which, in a way, is determined by others. Training can vary from the good to the not-so-good, but it will only happen if management decides to offer it.

According to Craig, this approach has several drawbacks – firstly, it only happens at a particular point in time and not when it is required by operational needs. Secondly, staff turnover often means that even with the most training-oriented management new staff can miss out. Thirdly, the time difference between training and the actual operational need can vary by weeks, or months, during which period the finer detail is often lost.

For these reasons, Craig has been working on a new concept – on-demand training. This approach looks not at training but at learning needs. A user has a particular learning need at a point in time. This could be anything from making a machine adjustment to changing film type. Here the user is the person who needs to actively initiate learning and without waiting for somebody else to schedule the training.



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Halo Training has developed a programme to help companies in the packaging industry to achieve better efficiencies and profitability through on-demand training solutions.

So what is on-demand-training? As its name implies, it is a solution whereby a user can initiate a learning process where and when it is most required. Using video, animation and voiceovers, the user can select from a menu of options. The material can cover everything from operational principles, maintenance, testing, adjustments, procedures and of course safety issues.

The actual training is designed after an intensive needs analysis between Halo and the customer and makes the assumption that 'nothing is obvious'. The information can be delivered on a dedicated PC, a company intranet, a production workstation, and in some cases even on a piece of equipment. The learner will then consult the material as and when required.

Valid results

How does this help to increase efficiency and profitability? In the first instance, it will reduce down-time during product changeovers as staff will be fully familiar with the procedures and how to adjust or change parts and reset packaging equipment. Lost time due to plant malfunction can be minimised as maintenance engineers will have instant access to easy-to-understand instructions for testing and restoring performance.

Correct calibration and set-up of inspection equipment can save lost production due to false product rejection, and automatic devices can be correctly adjusted to ensure that multiple rejects do not happen unnecessarily.

These are just some of the tangible benefits that can be achieved through the use of on-demand training, but there are other benefits that can lead to better performance and greater profitability. Staff who have access to this learning facility will feel that they are valued. There is also a personal aspect to this approach to learning – the quiet or shy person might not be inclined to ask questions in a more traditional training environment. With this approach, anybody can access the training material, whenever and as often as they require.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are interested in finding out more about on-demand training, contact John Craig, Halo Training. His details are on the company website: www.halotraining.com. This article was produced in conjunction with IOP: The Packaging Society. For information on accredited Packaging Training courses at Diploma, Certificate, NVQ or at Corporate Partnership level, contact Alan Kinnear, Packaging Training and Skills Manager, tel: 01780 759204, e-mail: alan.kinnear@iom3.org.