

# ⌘ The Webette

## A Simple, Effective Training Delivery Approach

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As knowledge workers who live and work in the “information revolution,” we rely predominately on software applications to accomplish our jobs. This reliance on software presents many challenges to managers and executives as they strive to keep knowledge workers trained in both their knowledge domains and the software tools they use. It is one of the biggest challenges for law firms today.

Business software is ever-changing in both complexity and interface design. It is amazing how a typical knowledge worker is even able to keep up with these changes and still be minimally productive. Significant credit must go to today's law firm trainers and training managers who adjust quickly to these changing technologies. They are able to transfer the appropriate skills using assessment tools and techniques that are sophisticated and very effective at determining “what” needs to be taught.

Yet, despite trainers' use of assessment tools and techniques, there are many examples of user frustration and lagging productivity when it comes to the use of software features and functionality. On average, most users take advantage of less than 15 percent of application features. Is this a good return on software investment? When analyzing training efficacy, it is not always deciding “what” needs to be included in training that is the problem. The delivery mechanism can also contribute to low productivity gains.

### Traditions Die Hard

For the most part, we are still training knowledge workers the way we trained them 15 years ago, when we were transitioning from dedicated word processors (Wang, for instance) and operating systems such as DOS. These traditional training methods are beginning to wane in effectiveness, because they require too much time. Firms are asking users to work extra hours to make up time lost sitting in training versus being productive in their daily tasks. This seems to be the biggest bottleneck in terms of gains in productivity.

For most software training needs, the approach of all day or half-day training sessions is too long, causes lower knowledge retention and is anything but cost-effective. For managers and firm trainers, it is time to start thinking outside the box. For example, why not start integrating training into the knowledge worker's actual daily work?

### Training as Knowledge Transfer

In the short- and especially long-term, knowledge workers will be more productive if you provide training in short bursts of knowledge transfer, not exceeding two hours in

duration. The “transfer” should take place face-to-face or via the Web with related audio. Of course, the most effective method for training mission-critical applications and processes is live and led by an instructor, but even in that setting, the short-burst rule should still apply.

### The Webette

Great software does not always translate to high user satisfaction or favorable perception of the new software or technology. Does this mean then that in-house trainers need to rise to the occasion and train the user base? Not necessarily, especially given the reality that many trainers are overwhelmed with the sheer volume of technologies directed their way.

Webettes are mini-training sessions, typically an hour-long each, and are usually offered for the cost of the connection fee. Web-based training of this sort is successful if it aligns with the users' specific training goals (*e.g.*, increase product knowledge, increase efficiency using a tool).

### Benefits of Webettes

**Webettes are short in duration.** A webette is brief, (one hour) and follows the “short burst of knowledge transfer” rule. Each webette focuses on a specific software feature or core set of features not normally covered in depth in traditional training. In addition, webettes can be focused on a given business problem that a particular feature solves. Knowledge workers can then apply this information immediately.

**Webettes are live.** Webettes are live with instructor-led training. This is important for dynamic question-and-answer sessions. Because webettes are live, you can gear the training toward solving client business needs specific to their firm as they come up during the webette.

**Webettes are not boundary constrained.** Traditionally, coordinating training for knowledge workers located in different parts of the country is logistically difficult. With webettes, you can easily pull users from different regions into their respective training rooms where they can participate simultaneously as one training group.

**Webettes are easy to deliver.** All that is required is a single PC, screen projector (if delivering the webette in a classroom), an Internet connection and a speakerphone.

**Webette delivery can be from anywhere.** The instructor delivering the webette can be located anywhere, as long as he or she has a PC, speakerphone and an Internet connection. Delivery location is not a planning constraint.

●● **Webettes have no limit on attendees.** The number of people that can attend depends entirely on what is being delivered to each Web-group and the number of connections that is required or is practical.

**Webettes can leverage other digital media.** Webettes make it very easy to leverage other digital media for future training. They can be recorded into a podcast, MP3 file or even converted to text for RSS feeds for intranets.

Webettes are a great tool if you are looking to increase software user productivity and, in turn, help increase your return on software investment. Consider webettes if you are looking for a short and effective training approach that enables you to train more people at once, or if you want to train your users on the deeper, more technical aspects of a software application without committing them to lengthy training classes.

About our author :: :: ::

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