



TMR REPORT LEADING SYNCHRONOUS TOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

by Mary Keith Resseau

You may have purchased this report hoping to find the one thing you should look for in web meeting and training products, also called synchronous tools. I'll tell you right up front: it's a well-trained user.

Using these tools seems to be our industry's equivalent of setting the clock on our VCR—so needlessly complicated that you'd rather not do it at all. A 2005 study by the Oxford School of Business found one of the biggest obstacles to synchronous tool use is simply that end users can't figure out how to use them. A Wainhouse Research study, also conducted in 2005, revealed that ease of use is most important to end users.

And it isn't just the learners who are having trouble. It doesn't surprise me that the second and third top disadvantages to using these tools, as reported by learners in a 2005 E-learning Guild report, are:

- Too little interactivity
- Facilitators not skilled in synchronous delivery techniques

Synchronous technology is a relative newcomer to the training field, and I'm afraid we often don't make very good use of it. However, it isn't uncommon that new technologies aren't realized to their full potential. The earliest copyrighted film that still survives is *Fred Ott's Sneeze* from 1894. The film records Fred Ott, an Edison employee, sneezing for the camera. Interestingly, it wasn't even submitted to the copyright office on film, but rather as a series of photographs. The first film to tell a story wouldn't appear for another nine years (*The Great Train Robbery*). I think this just about sums up where we are with much of synchronous training today: broadcasting the twenty-first century equivalent of *Fred Ott's Sneeze*.

According to Jennifer Hofmann of InSync Training, "We have seen so much bad training delivered this way, people can be openly hostile to coming to an online event." I agree with Hofmann's assertion that training on how to use these tools by itself isn't enough. Users also need to invest time in learning to design and deliver training using these tools.

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