

An Alternative to the Written Word

—a training update

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Armey Training 2007, the distributive training concept, challenges us to reshape our training. Reduced manpower and resourcing demand we streamline our products and deliver training to soldiers, leaders, and civilians when and where it is needed. The Army of the 21st Century will be smaller, but our soldiers are slated to be more talented, better trained, and will fight using higher tech equipment. This compact, high tech fighting force requires a sound, state-of-the-art brand of training that ensures we use all of our capabilities to obtain maximum return for each hard-to-get training dollar that is spent.

Crucial to the new look is greater emphasis on train-the-trainer. The TRADOC plan is to provide 50 percent of training within the soldier's assigned unit by the year 2007. We will probably wind up with smaller schoolhouses, more emphasis on combat training centers, and more training responsibility at unit level. To round out the new look, there will be a compact, high tech training development staff charged with a mission to design training packages for both the homestation training environment and the schoolhouse.

Now comes the question: What instrument(s) do we use to provide this homestation training? Granted, the wealth and speed of information, diversity, and high impact images, so

descriptive of our new computer world, will play a large role in this new training process. But, the use of an old and well-established teaching method, pulsed and non-pulsed slide/tape programs, to provide a portion of the training packages now being taught in the Army Service Schools can provide a budget-wise answer for at least a portion of the process.

A multitude of professional studies were conducted during the 1960's and 1970's that addressed the impact on learning and retention of learning when instruction was conducted using the slide/tape method of presentation. The majority of the studies showed no change in degree of learning over traditional teacher-lead methods. The results of using the media approach increased student response, interest, and retention of learned material, or, in some studies, showed no significant difference in amount of material learned over using the traditional classroom method.

Even with the emergence of the computer, many studies on the impact of using slide/tape programs for instructional purpose persisted into the 1980's. The results remained the same: Viable learning took place.

The advantages of using slide/tape presentations as a training medium for Distributive Training are numerous:

- Provide more scenes per fifteen

minute segment than video.

- Provide high visual impact; act as a visual stimulant for encoding new information.
- Lengthen attention span intervals by decreasing distractors.
- Provide a statistically proven sound training tool for individual, small group, and large group training environments.
- Easily handled, stored, revised, and updated.
- Can use a full range of photographic techniques (stop action, microphotography).
- Provide realistic color reproductions of original objects.
- If a non-pulsed audio is used, speed of program entirely under instructor's control.
- Flexible: use in part, as whole, and/or in concert with other media.
- Overcomes time and space limitations; can create special effects.
- Tests and workbook exercises may be added throughout presentations.

One suggestion should be noted: Where large amounts of media are required, use computer-generated graphics. These provide lower cost and ease of revision and variation in design.

The initial product, a pulsed slide/tape program on the new M291 Skin Decon Kit, is presently in the production stages. Watch future issues of *CML* for validation results and a view of the training design variations used in the visual portion of the program.

Media can never be a substitute for good two-way communication between trainer and trainee, using actual equipment, computing problems, reading maps, and so forth. However, media, used wisely, selected carefully, and consistently used in concert with conventional methods, will convey messages too complex for mere words and promote student interest and retention of training.