

Multimedia in professional education within companies – status-quo and development

Thomas Döbler¹, Claudia Dold & Birgit Stark

Living in the 5th Kondratieff-cycle – the cycle of information and communications technology – inevitably means being on our way towards the knowledge society. Knowledge itself and the management of knowledge is more and more becoming a vital resource for companies. As a consequence, besides technical and social skills, education and „know how“ acquire increasing importance and develop to be key factors in the global competition of today's world. Not only must companies learn to handle information faster, but also do so more selectively and rationally. Hence, the use of new media, which enable new forms of teaching and learning, seems to be an intruding notion. The possibilities of using multimedia applications in companies are extraordinarily multifaceted, including a broad range from tele-administration, video conferences, teleworking, tele-learning, -teaching, -tutoring, to computer based training (CBT), publicly accessible information terminals and business TV.

The properties of these systems – such as interaction, self-controlled and flexible learning, and modularity – should help to improve information management and to meet individual objectives better. Also, the systems allow a better control of both depth, duration and width of learning activities, and - above all - they enable a much more individual way of learning.

An interesting question is, to what degree companies already use and apply the described potentials at the current point of time. In fall 1998, an empirical research has been conducted that deals with this very question. Covering 987 German companies, this study („Multimedia in professional education within companies“) has been performed in close cooperation with the Fraunhofer Institute for Ergonomics and Organization. Both mail and online survey methods were used, resulting to a feedback quota of 11%.

The study covers topics such as:

- the status quo of professional training within companies (concerning both content and techniques)
- experiences of individual entrepreneurs
- criteria for the selection of multimedia instruments

¹ Uni Hohenheim, Fachbereich Kommunikationswissenschaft und Sozialforschung, 70593 Stuttgart, Tel. 0711- 459-3428, <http://www.uni-hohenheim.de/~kowi/>

- possible developments in the education and training sector, both on a company and social level.

In a nutshell, these are the results of the evaluation, as available to this point: There is still a gap between which instruments companies consider to be „desirable“ and which they currently apply in reality. CBT (learning via CD-ROMs) and „Web based tracking“ (learning via Internet and Intranet applications) are the two most wide-spread techniques so far. However, there is also a clear tendency that the other aforementioned techniques will catch up very quickly.