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Which Way Would YOU Rather Learn?
A new kind of RFID training provides working knowledge in hours.

By Leslie K. Downey

RFID has the potential to bring dramatic new efficiencies in manufacturing, commerce, healthcare, and other areas. But growth of the industry has been impeded by lack of familiarity with the technology, according to RFID industry analyst R.W. Baird and Company. More widespread knowledge would accelerate adoption, but how can it be delivered?

Industry surveys have shown that most workers are learning RFID on the job, which is slow and limited to the knowledge and processes inside the enterprise. The other dominant alternative, outsourced, classroom training, is often a passive, boring experience that does little to promote comprehension and retention.
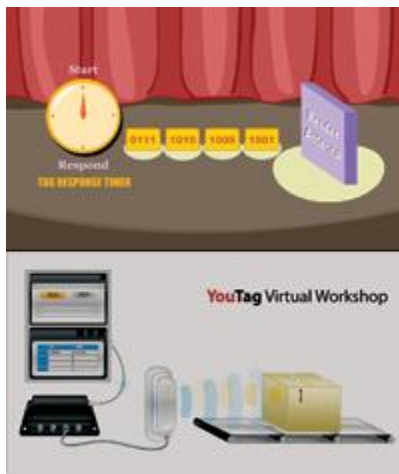
E-learning – training available over the web anytime – is convenient and saves travel expense. But how effective is it? Studies have shown that high quality e-learning promotes more rapid absorption and longer retention of basic information than classroom training.

The Advanced Distributed Learning Initiative (ADL), an organization sponsored by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness within the U.S. Department of Defense, reported the results of multiple studies showing that high quality e-learning substantially improved a student's performance over classroom instruction – roughly equivalent to moving a student in the 50th percentile (i.e., in the middle of the "bell curve") to the 65th percentile.

What is 'high quality' e-learning?
Research indicates that high quality e-learning courses share the following attributes:

User-directed experience: There's a high degree of interactivity between the learning program and the user. In the traditional classroom environment, a student asks about one question per 10 hours. Studies show that users of high quality e-learning can interact with the courseware via questions and answers up to 120 times per hour. The user can also proceed at his/her own pace, reviewing as much as needed, with the content adjusted to the user's knowledge level.

Multisensory experience: The more people's senses are involved in the learning experience (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting), the better they learn. For example, material with graphics is usually more effective than plain text. Audio narration can reinforce information as an individual reads.

Novelty and relevance: Greater relevance is attributed to e-learning, which is typically provided "just in time" in support of on-the-job activity, than to traditional, "just-in-case" training in the classroom. The Research Institute of America found that, over time, the retention of knowledge from classroom lectures dissipates, with only 15% of such knowledge being retained three weeks after the course.

Practical outcomes — the development of working knowledge and skills — are emphasized over memorization. And information is often presented in a novel way for better retention.

RFID Revolution's new *RFID Essentials* demonstrates the characteristics that are hallmarks of effective e-learning.

RFID Revolution's *RFID Essentials* suite exemplifies high quality e-learning. Course 1, "Introduction to RFID", delivers a hands-on, motivational experience that no other RFID survey course can match. In a compact eight hours, users acquire the working knowledge they need to advance their organization's RFID initiative and speed return on investment.

Course 1 is designed for information technology, engineering, operations, finance, and sales professionals and managers who want to familiarize themselves with RFID in hours, instead of days or weeks reading or sitting in a classroom.

It is vendor-neutral and comprehensive, covering such topics as:

- the differences between barcodes and RFID
- RFID technology, standards, and market trends
- how to recognize promising applications and profitably implement the technology
- how to secure RFID data transmissions and protect personal privacy

Two-year collaboration with industry-recognized experts
When we decided to develop *RFID Essentials* Course 1, we made a bet that the power of really great e-learning could be harnessed to rapidly and cost effectively train thousands of professionals worldwide. Our company collaborated for two years with three of the RFID industry's most distinguished experts: Dr. Dan Dobkin of Enigmatics, Craig Harmon of Q.E.D. Systems, and Louis Sirico of RFID Wizards. We developed a course that would deliver on that promise. We're pleased that early customers have been extremely enthusiastic.

Craig Harmon, contributing expert in RFID standards, notes: "Some of our learners who have had classroom RFID training have told us that Course 1 provides as much content in six to eight hours as other online or classroom training does in three days. Its learning techniques make the material memorable, which is the real purpose of training. "

Course 1 enabled Peter Khademi, President of Irvine, California-based RFID International, to jumpstart his new business, without leaving his office: "I took *RFID Essentials* Course 1 to get quickly up to speed on RFID when I changed my technology focus as part of starting a new business. I thought it was superb – unlike any technology training I'd ever had. It's chock full of great content, so I could go at my own pace, reviewing segments as needed. What I liked best was the virtual workshops and other application simulations that gave me an opportunity to test my understanding. I am recommending this course to my international associates."

How **RFID Essentials** *delivers better learning*
The course is learner-directed, meaning that the *RFID Essentials* Course 1 engages learners with a high degree of involvement. It not only probes frequently for understanding, but contains a number of simulated applications to let users practice. "Our 'YouTag Virtual Workshop' gives you the equivalent of hands-on experience with realistic tags and readers, on your PC, " says Dan Dobkin, contributing expert in radio frequency technology and host of Course 1. "And users have the option to ask the instructor (me!) questions in the Online Discussion Forum. "

Available on the web anytime, the course enables the user to proceed at his or her own pace and schedule. It's not "one size fits all." Users can review and practice as much as they want, from the convenience of their office or home.

In Course 1, the user can focus on the basics or explore the optional, "in-depth" sections to build on his or her knowledge. Louis Sirico, contributing expert in implementation, explains: "*RFID Essentials* goes beyond the basics and explores the secrets of subject matter experts. The optional final exam contains questions categorized as Basic or Advanced and the certificate received depends on how many questions in each category have been answered correctly. Students even have three chances to pass. "

As a multi-sensory experience, Course 1 is not only rich in graphics, but contains many imaginative animations to illustrate technical concepts like antenna polarization. Radio waves operate in three dimensions. Animations are much more effective than words and graphs in helping people understand how radio waves work and how to make sure RFID readers can communicate with tags. In addition to seeing the material, the user has the option to hear audio narration by Dan Dobkin.

"Course 1 is not only user directed," says Craig Harmon, "but it presents information in 'digestible chunks.' A lot of classroom and e-learning offerings present information like a fire hose – rapidly and uncontrollable by the user – making it impossible to drink in."

Our three subject matter experts were intent on presenting technical information so that it was accessible to someone unfamiliar with RFID. Throughout our development process they collaborated closely with our company's consultants and e-learning experts. The result was an abundance of really imaginative content that makes it easier to understand concepts.

The course emphasizes the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills over rote memorization. Lessons typically begin with real RFID applications, such as hospital asset tracking, supply chain tracking, and auto-tolling, illustrating the technology to be taught. And they feature simulations and other interactive exercises enabling the user to practice what he/she has learned.

"Providing learners opportunities to think through how to solve practical problems keeps them engaged, " says Louis Sirico. The exercises in Course 1 often place the learner in a specific role in an enterprise's RFID initiative, maximizing realism. "Some of these exercises are entertaining and informative, because people learn when they're enjoying themselves. Who says learning about RFID can't be fun?"

Available to individual subscribers and enterprises
RFID Essentials Course 1 is available to individual subscribers and enterprises with multiple users. Group pricing is available.

We're confident this course offers a high ROI on your training investment. We care about customer satisfaction and offer individual registrants a satisfaction or money back guarantee.

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