

CBT

Online training saves time, money

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, ILL. — Would you like a five-second solution instead of 150 minutes of troubleshooting? For some people, desktop applications like Microsoft Access, Excel and PowerPoint can be difficult. While some are “computer savvy,” other people need training.

Previously, training was only in two forms: on-the-job or in the classroom. Commanders and supervisors can spend about \$600 or more to train one person on a desktop application at a local college or commercial training center. Limited seating and scheduling conflicts make training more difficult. Additionally, a trainee is absent from the work center from three to five days.

Now, there's a third element to training called Computer Based Training, or e-learning. CBT minimizes a trainee's absence from the work center and saves a unit a significant amount of money because it costs the Air Force only a few dollars per user. That means 300 users can be trained with CBT, as opposed to one person trained for \$600 in a classroom.

Air Force employees have access to more than 1,500 information technology and 200 business skills CBT courses through the Air Force CBT program at <http://usaf.smartforce.com>.

Some IT courses include: operating systems, desktop computer skills; server management; wireless networking and security.

While the CBT program is geared

toward the comm & info community with its large IT library, the business skills courses can help with areas of leadership and management, general customer service relations, work environment and budget. These courses are available on the Internet, from work or home, at anytime, 365 days a year.

The average CBT course takes less than four hours to complete. If a person doesn't have that kind of time, the whole CBT doesn't have to be taken at one time to learn a certain function. Just navigate to the module that covers that topic within that CBT. A module averages 15-20 minutes to complete.

Most communications squadrons and some units have a computer training center to use for fewer distractions.

Some people are skeptical about CBT; they feel they get better training in a classroom. Today's CBT courses are interactive; they increase learning ability and try to emulate what a person would receive in a classroom.

Many new courses require more than just a mouse click to the next screen. While a majority of the CBT is instruction, there are exercises, software simulations and articles. CBT can increase professional competitiveness, recognition/award potential and increase mission capability.

Kari Reiter Hurlburt, a user at Buckley AFB, Colo., said that the Air Force CBT solution is the “best step-by-step, self-paced training I have ever seen for computers ... and consistently,

I use what I learn daily on my current job. This program really takes community capacity and makes it work to the government's advantage,” she added. “I was amazed at what additional skills I have been able to pick-up in a short amount of time.”

In addition to CBT, the program offers access to the “Books 24 x 7” online referenceware. This tool has more than 2,000 books ranging from desktop applications and graphics to the Internet and World Wide Web applications.

A useful book for new C&I Airmen is the “Computer Dictionary.” According to users, its search function is easy and, like Internet Explorer, a person can save a book to “My BookShelf” for easy retrieval. This tool, like the CBT course itself, can be integrated into OJT.

It's possible that if CBT was integrated with training, supervisors could expect bigger returns on their training.

To quickly increase mission capability, CBT has a course that will meet most needs, and for supervisors, it's a way to train people with zero impact on budget and minimize office scheduling. The CBT program is available to all Air Force active duty, Department of the Air Force Civilians, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel.