Interactive Dynamic Video-Based Training in Corporate Learning

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Abstract — For every salesman the skill to communicate properly in a sales process is very important. Usually conventional training is used to build and strengthen this skill. In this paper an alternative method — interactive dynamic video-based training — is presented. The concept is introduced and its advantages are described as well as its potential for the reduction of training costs. Using a best practice example of the insurance industries the qualification for corporate learning is demonstrated.

Index Terms — Video-based Training, E-Learning, Blended Learning, Sales Training.

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most important basic principles for sales and distribution. Success and failure depend on the capability of a salesman to conduct a purposive sales conversation. There are certain basic rules that fit to almost every business sector. For example rules to manage the beginning, the middle and the end of a conversation, to handle objections and to finalize a deal. Sales conversation can be trained by conventional training methods like role-play with video recording, syndicate work and feedback discussion. But for a greater number of learners face-to-face training is very cost and time intensive.

II. CONCEPT

Interactive dynamic video-based trainings (VBT) are an alternative to train basic sales conversation. But what does it mean: interactive and dynamic? Nearly every sales conversation can be split up into small sequences ending with a question of one of the dialog partners. Questions in a conversation can be seen as branching points leading to infinite different courses of a conversation depending on the given answers. Taking this concept as a basis, interactive video-based trainings can be developed. Each question is a branching point of a conversation and each answer leads to a different branch of the conversation. All distinctive branches create a kind of conversation tree. Each path through a conversion tree, starting at the root and ending at a leave of the tree, represents a possible sales conversation with a more or less successful outcome (Figure 1).

At each branching point, the learner has to give an answer to a question (interaction) and depending on the given answer the conversation changes its course (dynamic). Some answers in a conversation path can lead to a premature termination of the sales conversation, just like in reality (Figure 1: stop sign). Not only multiple-choice questions can be used, even numeric fill-in-the-blank questions are possible.

Each question is integrated at the end of a video sequence with a “real” counterpart represented by an actor (Figure 2). The learner not only has to give an answer to the question that could lead to a positive continuation of the conversation but also needs to analyze the body language of his interlocutor and the information given verbally during the dialogue (Figure 3).
At the end of each conversation, the learner gets a detailed and objective evaluation of the conversation path. The path is rated by the summation of the scores of each answer based on a preset rating scheme (Figure 3: 10+8+9=27 points). An overall feedback is given on the basis of the score and the feedbacks of each chosen answer (Figure 4: Feedback Q1 A3, Feedback Q1.2 A1 and Feedback Q1.3.1 A3). After the evaluation the learner is able to review the total conversation for reflection, to interrupt it wherever he likes and to re-enter the conversation to change its course.

By the means of this detailed evaluation the learner has the ability to improve his conversation skills step by step. He is able to repeat the conversation as many times as he wants to explore all possible conversation paths. He can see how the conversation changes by failure or how the outcome can be optimized using the right conversation strategy.

III. PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

In Europe, the basic education for sales personnel in the insurance industries is regulated by law to guarantee a secure customer oriented sales process. At the end of the education of an insurance salesman a theoretical written exam and a practical oral examination in the form of a simulated sales conversation have to be passed at the chamber of commerce. Both are predetermined by structure, procedure, objectives and rating methods. To prepare for the written exam an online examination system is used. For the preparation of the oral examination an interactive dynamic video-based training is used for initial training.

To prepare for the practical oral examination a video-based training was developed by the inside Business Group. The VBT simulates a sales conversation like in the real examination. At the beginning the learner has to choose between two topics for the conversation: property insurance or life insurance. After that the conversation starts. In both cases the learner has to pass eight conversational phases: opening, personal information, insurance status, prioritization, determination of demand, offering and closing. Any phase consists of at least one up to five levels at most with three to 98 video sequences each including one question (Figure 5). In each video sequence the customer sits face-to-face to the salesman respectively the learner. Based on questions and answers the salesman gets different feedback of the customer and the conversation changes its course. Each simulated sales conversation lasts 10-15 minutes. The conversation tree has 20 levels and consists of more than 100,000 conversation paths with a total time of more than 300 minutes of video. At the end the learner gets a protocol with feedback and a detailed evaluation of his sales conversation based on the original evaluation criteria of the chamber of commerce. Additionally the learner is able to review his conversation for reflection and to view several successful sales conversations.

A German insurance company with more than 250 learners per year saved more than 40% of the total training costs as a result of transforming its conventional training into Blended Learning including the VBT to prepare for the oral examination. After a period of one year with 258 completed exams the results of learners...
using VBTs didn’t change significantly in comparison to the learners trained conventionally in the past.

IV. CONCLUSION

Video-based trainings are a reliable and objective training method. They are time and place independent and can be used at any pace. VBTs can be easily integrated in E-Learning and Blended Learning scenarios. They are a good alternative for or addition to conventional sales conversation trainings, especially in educational mass production. Using VBTs training costs (training personnel, hotels, materials, down time) can be saved since training days can be reduced. The total savings depend mainly on the total number of learners. The more learners are to be trained, the more money can be saved. The initial costs are high but medium-term the costs per learner are low.

REFERENCES


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