

Web Casting - The Future of Online Education

By Jim Edwards

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Despite the communications power of the Internet, nothing beats good old human interaction when it comes to learning a new skill.

You can always read a book, listen to a tape, or watch a video to learn how to do something, but, in the end, learning from a live teacher who can answer your questions on the spot works best.

Until recently, the Internet resembled a large "book" of electronic text and pictures where any extended "human" interactivity could only take place offline by tele-conference or in-person meetings.

Now, however, the appearance of cheap "web casting" creates an inexpensive opportunity for mass interactive communication between people spread all over the world.

"Web casting" (broadcasting through the web) enables a presenter to transmit a live presentation over the Internet to as many as 10,000 participants.

For most online events, participants only need an Internet connection through a standard phone line and audio speakers.

In the post-9/11 era, people simply don't like to travel as frequently. The meal and hotel costs associated with attending seminars or other adult education events make it even harder to attract a full audience.

However, with web casting, you can pull together a large group of people from around the world at a specific time on a given day, teach them something, and then let them all get back to their lives without the traditional interruptions and expenses of travel.

Web casting enables you to literally present just about any type of information or educational material you want.

You can do everything from a simple "radio" type presentation where people passively listen, to a multimedia presentation complete with Power Point slides and live tours of actual websites.

At this point, imagination seems to represent the only limitation as far as what you can do to teach people through the Internet using this technology.

Currently, large corporations and independent speakers and entrepreneurs seem to represent the majority of web casting users.

I believe this comes from the fact that people simply don't know about it yet and don't understand how to use it.

Once that changes, web casting will go a long way towards replacing tele-conferencing as the preferred means of long-distance education.

In the future, as costs decrease even further, you will find people using web casting for everything from online family reunions and sales presentations, to home-based cooking shows and pay-per-view seminars. As the technology improves, the potential uses will skyrocket.

As with any new technology, a few drawbacks exist.

Though web casting works with modem speeds as low as 28K, no one standard has emerged for broadcasting content.

Some services require Real Player, while others require Microsoft's media player, and, as usual, Mac users often get left out in the cold without any options.

Right now, search engine giant Google.com rates the best source of information on how to offer your own web cast. Simply log on to Google, search for "webcast," and investigate the ever-growing number of available resources.

Jim Edwards is a syndicated newspaper columnist and the co-author of an amazing new ebook that will teach you how to use free articles to quickly drive thousands of targeted visitors to your website or affiliate links...

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