Product Knowledge Fluency: Starting with Customer Needs

Our Mission
To be the recognized leader in measurably effective product and industry knowledge training, documentation, and related consulting services across multiple industries.

Joint Venture Partners
Precision Teaching & Management Systems, Inc.
- Founded in 1982 by Dr. Carl Binder
- Based on research on behavioral fluency, instructional design, performance measurement
- Establishing a new definition of mastery = fluency
- The Fluency-building® Technology

Information Mapping, Inc.
- Founded in 1967 by Robert E. Horn
- Commercialized, 1982
- Based on research on how people learn & comprehend
- Setting a standard for information management
- The Information Mapping® Method

Elements of Success
- PT/MS Fluency-building® Technology
- Information Mapping® Method
- Product knowledge design principles and templates

We are Research-Based
- Verbal Learning and Memory research
- Perceptual-motor Learning studies
- Reading research
- Functional Behavior Analysis
- Human Information Processing
- Human Factors Engineering
- Precision Teaching
- Field R & D in client organizations

Product Knowledge Problems
- Product training and documentation is features-driven rather than needs-driven
- Too much of the wrong information creates information overload
- Reference documents are difficult to access
- Exposure methods do not ensure learning
- Training does not include sufficient practice for achieving fluency

P.O. Box 169 Nonantum, MA 02195 (617)332-0008
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Results

Too many products, not enough knowledge.
Sales professionals only "know what they sell and sell what they know".

Product Knowledge Solutions

• Develop a Customer Needs Model to drive training, documentation and sales strategy
• Use audience and performance analysis to include only the information needed for effective selling
• Create easy-to-access documents using Information Mapping's method of analysis, design & presentation
• Apply Reference Based Training (RBT) methods
• Ensure fluent knowledge with Fluency-building™ exercises and Fluency Testing™ materials

Results

• Fluent product knowledge
• Fluent access to reference material
• Needs-based sales solutions
• Confident and productive sales professionals
• Increased cross-selling and revenues

Selling Requires Fluency

Fluency = Accuracy + Speed
= Automatic or "second nature" response
= True Mastery

Levels of Performance

Fluency (True Mastery: accuracy + speed)
100% accuracy (Bloom's "mastery")
Beginner's level (inaccurate and slow)
Incompetence (no measurable performance)

Fluency Ensures...

• Retention and maintenance of newly learned skills and knowledge
• Endurance, attention span, resistance to distraction
• Application or transfer of training

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"Fluency bridges the gap between learning and performance."
- Carl Binder

The Fluency-building™ Technology
- Criterion-referenced learning
- Effective practice strategies
- Efficient materials and procedures
- Fluency Testing™ methods
- Self-paced learning and self-monitoring

Attributes of Fluency-building™ Exercises
- Brief timed practice exercises, typically .5 to 2 min each
- Focus on mastery of skill and knowledge elements
- High rate of learning opportunities per minute
- Aimed at reaching objective fluency standards
- Self-paced practice, measurement, and recording

The Information Mapping Method
- Audience Focus
- Information Types
- Information Management Principles
- Organizing & Sequencing Strategies
- Presentation Strategies

Measured Product Knowledge Results
- Accuracy of knowledge multiplied x 15
- Speed of correct responding multiplied by x 2 - x 4
- New trainees 2 to 3 times more fluent than experienced sales professionals
- Closing business that "we would not have gotten without this program"

Some of Our Products & Templates
- Complete self-study and workshop programs
- Trainee certification materials and procedures
- Fluency Testing materials and procedures
- Documented Customer Needs Models
- Company and Product Strategy Documents
- Industry Profiles and Industry Analysis Workshops
- Sales Strategy Documents and Job Aids
- Exercises and materials for Sales Meetings
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Selling Must Be Needs-driven
1. Market Background & Company Strategy
   (Why buy from us?)
2. Recognizing Customer Needs
   (Model(s) of customer needs and concerns)
3. Product Information
   (Solutions to customer needs)

Key Principle: Addressing Needs

Company/Product Strategy
- Market background/context
- Trends and issues (sources of needs)
- Vendor position
- Why buy from us?

Customer Needs Model
- Original concept: decision table
- Problems/Needs of the customer
  - 7 plus or minus 2 categories
  - Sub-categories of "functional needs" or customer concerns
  - Graphics and tables

Uses of Customer Needs Model
- Consultative questioning strategy
- Conceptual framework ("deep structure") for product knowledge training and documentation
- "Features and benefits" shift to "needs and solutions"
- Cross-selling
- Integration with sales models and processes
- Analysis of industries, markets, decision-makers, etc.

Developing Needs Models
- Consult with product marketing & sales people
- Identify problems solved by products/features
- Use customer/industry language
- Adapt familiar models when possible
- Squish problems/needs into categories
- Think about it in the shower!