

Software Training - The future

by

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Engineers who use computer based tools have a wide range of training requirements. The training currently on offer reflects this by including the basic key operation courses to the very advanced events on the engineering application of the software.

The current lecture based training is offered by a number of training and education organisations such as Wallingford Software, Water Training International, Bradford University, Sheffield Polytechnic etc and between them they cover the whole gamut of the training needs with a greater or lesser element of hands-on practicals.

The advent of data bases and graphical interfaces which may be used for data collection, model building, model verification and interpretation of model generated information has changed the way engineers approach the use of the software tools. When combined with the increase in computer literacy of engineers and the more ready availability of computer based training (CBT) software this suggests that the training methods should be reviewed.

There are many benefits which can accrue from formal, instructor led, courses which include the opportunity to ask questions, the interchange of ideas and experiences with other delegates, and dedicated time to concentrate on the task-in-hand without distractions from the work environment. However there are also disbenefits such as the high cost incurred for travel, accommodation and loss of productivity resulting from the engineers absence from the office.

This objection could be overcome by the use of CBT packages. CBT is ideal for the basic introductory training, especially if it is combined with suitable worked examples. The more formal courses or technical presentations in conferences or seminars are more suited to the advanced training needs of the experienced engineers who then have an opportunity to discuss the implications and the technical application of the information.

In parallel with the general computer industry software, application training is in a period of rapid development and this exciting time should see many advances and benefits for the individual. However as with most things the final product will depend on both the requirements of the customer and the ability of the supplier to recover the development costs.