

Building a Media Production Department and Creative Technical Team

The Situation:

The Light Brigade was a well-established training firm with an excellent reputation for providing high quality technical courses in the fiber optic disciplines around the globe. Their live courses ranged from basic hands-on installation instruction to customized courses for the military and Fortune 500 companies.

The company was growing swiftly and it was time to create an in-house media production department to produce the training materials for the multiple courses. These courses lasted several days and depended on technical manuals, workbooks, PowerPoint presentations and videos.

The Solution:

The Light Brigade hired me as **Media Group Manager** and **Technical Editor** to create, staff and equip this production department and to oversee the updating of current training materials and creation of materials for new courses.

In addition, the newly formed Media Group would manage the website, produce marketing materials, and develop a new line of interactive multimedia computer-based-training modules.

My job was to set-up and staff the department within two months, while maintaining momentum on current production projects -- then continue to manage multiple projects.

Here are the basic phases I completed in the process of building The Media Group.

Creating a creative / technical team and giving them the right tools

- Assessed the current staff, resources, quality control and fulfillment issues.
- Collaborated with senior management and key staff the marketing, training and distribution departments to determine mid and long-term production goals, schedules and the resources needed to meet them.
- Researched, budgeted and procured equipment and software.
- Offered existing staff training to upgrade skills and/or hire qualified staff.
- Assigned the desktop publisher the task of maintaining the current schedule for updating manuals and PowerPoint shows while we built rest of the department.
- Measured and bought furniture and held a painting party where we all bonded over pizza.

Day-to-day operations, tracking systems and relationships

- Developed time lines and budgets for multiple projects.
- Designed and implemented a tracking system for billable and non-billable hours.
- Established quality control systems involving final proofs by the instructors.
- Supervised creative/technical team and contracted specialists as needed.
- Edited materials for accuracy and consistency.

- Established monthly production incentives: Pizza, M&Ms, "really dumb T-shirt parties" and turning the music up REALLY loud and inviting the CEO in for a slice.

Special Project: Rebuilt 120-page E-Commerce Website in two months.

- Conducted a usability study. Revealed the current website and ISP as inadequate to handle secured on-line transactions, accommodate a (future) SQL database or manage e-broadcasts of any scope.
- Determined that the Internet presence did not reflect The Light Brigade's corporate image, reputation or its notable standing in the fiber optic industry.
- Assessed the website architecture as unsupportable, gained permission to start over.
- In collaboration with senior management and department directors, determined four key objectives for new site:
 1. Present a redefined company image and reposition the firm in the market place.
 2. Establish a user-friendly secured transaction and e-broadcast capability.
 3. Build an infrastructure to accommodate growth.
 4. Leverage site for better sales and sales support.
- Hired a designer/architect and oversaw design and construction of the site. Included user-friendly navigation and on-line ordering to better leverage the website for sales.
- Collaborated with marketing director to update the USP and identity imagery for the firm.
- Wrote new content for website and oversaw creation of new images.
- Researched/supervised host switch for secured transaction and e-broadcast capabilities.

Special Project: Establish a Photo and Video Stock Library, Promote with Interactive DVD

- Organized the archives of existing photographs and video clips into a library.
- Devised a filename nomenclature.
- Researched copyright, pricing and licensing of photos; developed ordering system.
- Wrote, designed and produced an interactive multimedia DVD to promote The Media Library as a new product to the fiber optic industry.

Special Project: Develop Interactive Multimedia Computer-Based-Training (CBT) Products

- Wrote and produced interactive multimedia marketing CD to promote entire range of training courses available to fiber optic industry professionals.
- Wrote and produced interactive multimedia computer-based-training (CBT) DVD to illustrate potential and critical design factors of last-mile PON technology.
- Wrote and produced interactive multimedia marketing CD to promote The Media Library stock photo and video library to fiber optic industry professionals and their marketing departments.

The Result:

- The department was staffed, equipped and systematized within the two-month window.

- The first production cycle for updating, printing and shipping the training manuals to instructors across the country was completed on schedule.
- Within four months a new website was up and running. Client feedback was very positive and the firm saw an increase in on-line and sales of multiple courses. Development of SQL database for product catalogue began.
- By month seven the department had produced its first interactive marketing CD to promote the company and its training courses at an international fiber optic trade show.
- Last nine months also saw switch of video production service provider and shooting schedule to provide footage to upgrade several video tapes, including a trip to a core optical glass factory in the UK.
- Last nine months saw development of The Media Library and a second marketing CD to promote it.
- And finally, last nine months saw design and production of the first CBT DVD.