

# BLIPVERTS

## Delivering Knowledge to Store Staff

*“Excuse me, I have a question . . . “*

A survey on training in the retail sector commissioned by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, now part of OFSTED, found that 85% of shoppers would leave a store in favour of a competitor when sales staff were unable to meet their expectations of product knowledge and customer service. 67% of the 1000 people interviewed in the survey said they had gone home without buying a product because they found that their sales staff were simply not helpful enough.

### *The battle with the web*

Retail stores have other battles on their hands, with internet shopping offering a huge choice of lower cost products from many more suppliers, often from overseas. The web enables the shopper to make immediate price comparisons. Countless reviews from previous purchasers foster a feeling of safety in numbers, as does the ability to contact those purchasers to ask further questions. And of course on the web there is no travel required, no queues and no parking problems.

As the High Street continues to become more competitive and web shopping bites deeper, retailers can't afford to compete merely on product offering and price. So, what do bricks and mortar retailers have in their arsenal to fight back?

### *Knowledge – the weapon of choice*

In a store, customers can touch and feel and try out products. In a store, customers enjoy instant gratification rather than waiting for delivery. In a store they can ask questions face to face with a human being. In a store a sales advisor can be creative in terms of bundling, constructing on-the-spot offers and finance arrangements. And in a store the retailer has the opportunity to explain, to elaborate and to enthuse about a product – in other words, to SELL.

With the exception of touch and feel and instant availability, all these weapons are about knowledge. The knowledge that store staff have of products, processes, technique and people. Given that 85% of shoppers walk out the door when that knowledge or service is lacking, it underlines just how essential it is to invest significant effort in staff training, especially so during an economic downturn.

So, how do we improve knowledge and service levels in store staff?

## *Sorry, full up*

We are all constantly bombarded with messages from the TV, radio, the internet, magazines and billboards. We are awash with information – much of it uncontrolled, unverified, even questionable. Consequently we have diminished capacity and attention spans when it comes to assimilating new knowledge. We want information now, we want it fast and we want it simple. More to the point, we want it with the minimum of effort.

Many people simply don't like to read to learn. Alarming, according to the Guardian newspaper, the average reading age in the adult workforce in the UK is the same as a child leaving primary school.

(That worrying, if speculative, estimate covers the entire workforce, including professional footballers, parking wardens and MP's, so if we take those segments out we could well see the age creeping up slightly.)

To illustrate this further, consider that a young child has an attention span of three to five minutes and an adult has a span of around twenty minutes. And yet the average movie lasts for an hour and a half or more, and most adults can follow the plot with only minimal lapses of attention - and then recall it at a later time. How can that be?

Continuous attention span – or the amount of time a human can focus on something without any lapse whatsoever, is very brief and often as short as eight seconds! After this time, a stray thought will enter consciousness or the eyes will shift focus.

But what about that 'average movie'? Stray thoughts or not we are able to describe it in some detail, even weeks later. And people who have watched the movie more than once can often recite passages of dialogue with some accuracy.

How is that?

And how do we train people effectively, given such short attention spans?

## *Show me*

There are three primary types of learning – experiential (or kinaesthetic), auditory and visual. Experiential learners learn best by doing, by touching, by getting stuck in. They account for around 15% of the population. Auditory learners learn best through listening to explanations and then discussing the subject with others. They account for about 20% of the population. Visual learners learn through seeing images and having things demonstrated to them. Visual learners make up over 60% of the population and this style of learning is proven to improve performance in retention and comprehension.

Combine the retention and comprehension performance of visual learners with the statistics on attention span and it more than hints at short, punchy videos being an obvious choice when it comes to training.

## *Video in retail*

Many retailers have tried using video training programmes but all too often it has soon been abandoned. Why is that?

There are several factors:

- cost;
- the time required to produce the video;
- limited delivery capability;
- inconsistent style from one video to another;
- distractions by other activities, and so on.

And making videos to a regular release schedule introduces even more issues that give management pause for thought when it comes to deploying a video based training programme.

And that's where Blipverts enter the arena.

What are Blipverts ? And how can Blipverts fix these problems?

## *Introducing Blipverts*

Blipverts are short videos, typically around 60 seconds in length that are easy to watch and understand and regularly distributed to all store staff, whether they are full time, permanent, part time, temporary or seasonal staff – all getting regular, consistent, relevant training messages, without having to leave the store.

Blipverts can come in various flavours – product knowledge, customer service and sales skills, motivating, latest news, in fact pretty much any message that needs to be distributed to the estate. Blipverts can be delivered to stores via existing infrastructure such as intranets, via the web, on DVD or CD, or even as a download to mobile phones or iPods. Of course Retail Manager from Retail Manager Solutions makes the perfect vehicle.

Keeping content in a uniform container, or template, means that producing the next Blipvert can be as easy as filling out a simple form, requiring only a minimum of input and effort from the retailer. The template, which is tailored to meet each customer's in house style, also ensures consistency of content and becomes a familiar sight to the viewer. Blipverts can be created in a studio or at the customers location; they can be hosted by a professional presenter or by the customers own staff.

By making Blipverts a regular part of the branch employees' week you create a persistent communication stream from head office, fostering a greater sense of corporate belonging, while at the same time delivering a continuous education programme that simply couldn't be offered using traditional methods. You achieve this by presenting people with information in the way they like to receive it – simply, on demand, and succinctly (oh, and on a screen – just like on the telly at home).

## *Conclusion*

Video is a very effective tool for imparting knowledge to a mass audience, particularly when that audience is distributed around the country. Short videos of around 60 seconds in length, like Blipverts, are particularly effective insofar as they are far more easily distributed, are easy and inexpensive to produce and get a message across quickly, before the viewer loses attention.

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**If you'd like to talk further about using Blipverts in your business, please let your RMS Account Manager know or contact Tracy Nolan, Blipverts Sales Manager, on 02380 816000.**

This white paper will be made available as a video and an audio download. If you would like to be notified when these become available, please call on the number above.