

TRAINING BY GAMING

Burlington firm designs cutting edge interactive video program used to train sales people

BY DEIRDRE HEALEY

Instead of scolding employees for playing video games at their desk, bosses in the near future will be encouraging them.

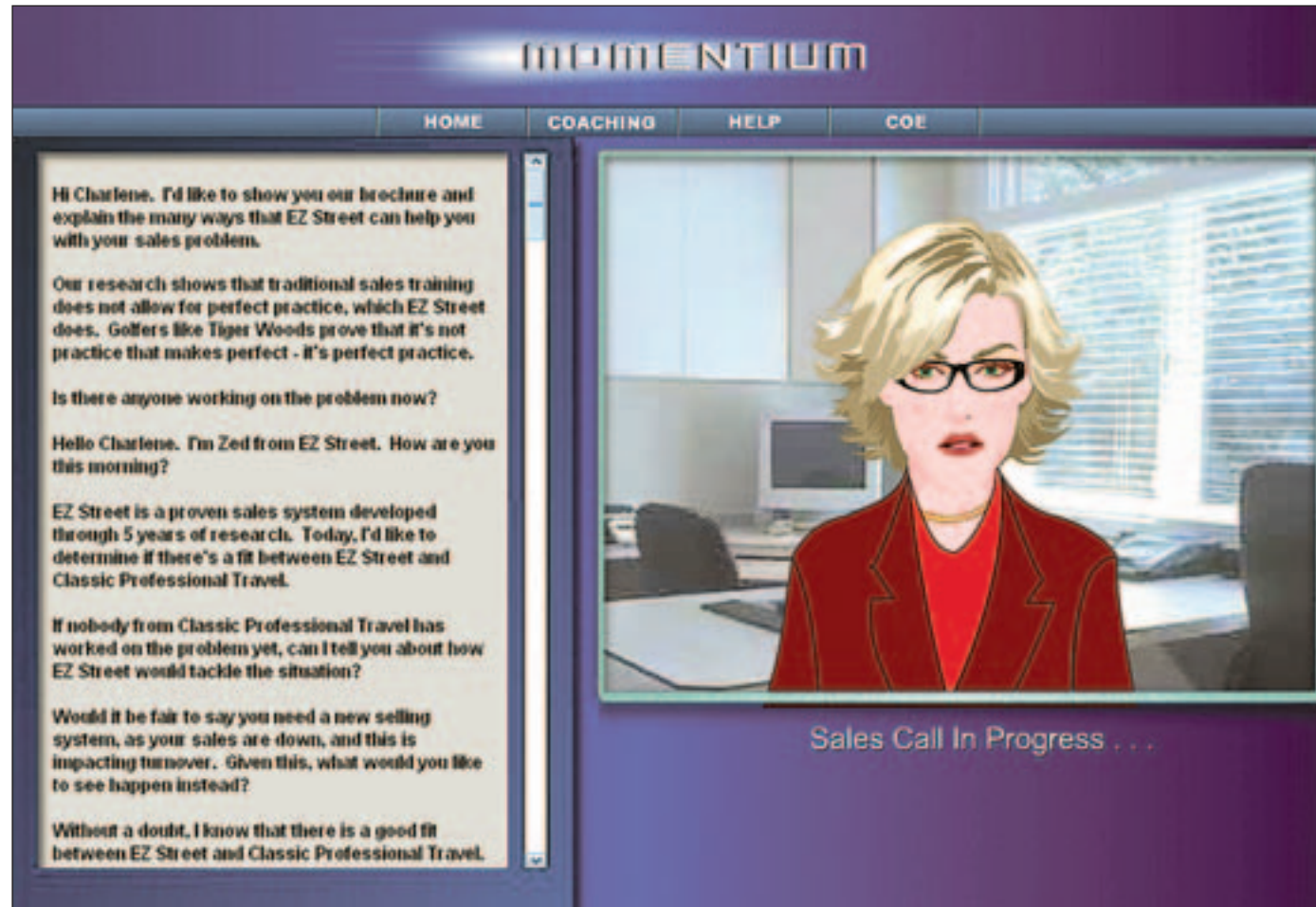
Gaming is the latest technology in career training and it is expected to explode as people brought up on Nintendo and X Box continue to make their way into the workforce.

A Burlington company, e=mz2, is one of the first in the area to capitalize on this trend with a video game aimed at turning sales people into sales super heroes. The game simulates the actual experience of trying to win over a client, allowing the user to practise their skills without having a door slammed in their face.

"This is a huge leap forward in sales training," said McMaster University business school professor Mandeep Malik, who is a consultant for the video game. "I think it will be a revolutionary concept, not just in sales training, but training in general. Gaming is the future of training."

e=mz2's cutting edge program is called Momentum. Before the program was designed, the company spent five years studying brain research on how people learn, absorb and retain information. They also examined the learning styles of baby boomers, Generation Xers and the echo generation as well as the most effective sales techniques based on client personality traits.

The result is a year-long interactive game where the user is a sales superhero, only the cape and secret lair are re-



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placed with a laptop and tower office. The action begins when the salesperson receives a phone call detailing their next mission.

The user makes a quick visit to the coaching academy to be briefed on key sales concepts and then is off to win over their client. The client changes from mission-to-mission and personalities may clash, but the superhero must use the newly-learned sales skills and choose the appropriate dialogue to win the sale.

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And of course this must all be done within a time limit. If the superhero fails, the client kicks them out of their office and a coach tells them what they did wrong.

But if they succeed and complete the mission, then

the superhero moves on to the Circle of Excellence to be quizzed by the sales master in an effort to earn more points. The total score at the end of the mission is then relayed back to their employer.

It costs about \$100 a month

per employee if a company enrolls 100 employees. That is cheap when you consider a weekend training conference can cost upwards of \$800, Malik said.

Liz Phillips, e=mz2 sales representative, said the program is ideal for people in sales because they can access the program on the Internet at any time.

"Sales people need to be making money and don't want to be taken off the road for training," she said.

Marc Prensky, owner of

RETENTION RATES

- **95 per cent:** Game-based learning
- **90 per cent:** Immediate use or teaching others
- **75 per cent:** Practice by doing
- **50 per cent:** Discussion group
- **30 per cent:** Demonstration
- **20 per cent:** Audio visual
- **10 per cent:** Reading
- **5 per cent:** Lecture

Source: Corporate Universities,
by Jeanne Meister

games2train.com, has been developing video game training programs in the U.S. for the past decade.

Prensky said gaming is effective because the memory "muscles" used when playing a video game increase the retention of the information. The hands-on learning and the visual and audio components keep a person stimulated and interested in completing the training, he said. Video games also adapt to a person's skill level so users never get bored.

"People now entering the workforce aren't going to sit through a PowerPoint presentation," he said. "They will be checking their BlackBerrys, cellphones or laptops and tuning you out. Gaming offers a world of simulation that keeps them engaged and learning"

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