

“Just popping down the Virtual...”

3D training to find out how things should be done

With brewing companies concentrating on marketing and their supply chain, the retail trade needs to look at new ways of training their managers, lessees and staff. The Virtual Learning Zone package developed by Bill Allen at AVS Television Productions in Manchester, is a uniquely modern and effective way of getting information across using 3D graphics, where users can view the ‘virtual’ Pub and Brewery.



Images: AVS Television Productions

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The ownership of licensed premises and the people who run them has changed significantly over the last 15 years. There has been a move from integrated brewing companies to large ‘pub companies’. Pubs themselves can move frequently between pubcos and the turnover of staff in each house continues to be high. This turnover presents a big problem in training. The traditional way of holding courses on a whole series of relevant topics is expensive and the timing is never right. Changes in legislation, health and safety and technology necessitate a frequent updating of information, as well as a need to give a consistent message.

“Learning by Nellie” – or, “on the job training” – may have worked well previously, but does not serve today’s needs. ‘Learning by Nellie’, is still the most common form of training in the industry especially for staff. With computers being almost universal, the use of new technology has given the opportunity of providing clear, accurate and consistent teaching which is available on demand without waiting for a course to be developed or updated, or for an overworked trainer to turn up. In recent years some small multimedia houses have worked with progressive companies to provide cost effective training material available on video, and more latterly, on CD and DVD. The fast development of multimedia tools has led to a flexible, cost effective response to customers needs.

One such company is AVS

Television Productions in north Manchester, which has been working with the brewing and particularly the retail arm of the business for over 20 years. Bill Allen, the MD of AVS started the company in 1984. Since then they have produced videos, CD ROMs, DVDs, and Powerpoint material, many of which are used for Internet and intranet applications, in the Brewing, Chemical, Rail and Soft Drinks Industries. As well as working for clients, AVS produce their own products for the Automotive industry, even tennis training and ‘keep fit’ DVDs.

Where did it all start for AVS in the brewing industry?

In 1985 AVS was asked by Wilson’s Brewery in Manchester to record on film the renovation of over 200 public houses, before, during and after modernisation. AVS have continued to work with many of

the major Brewing companies since this first project on a long list of assignments that included Health and Safety training, site inductions, training for cellar service technicians, line cleaning, and more recently training for bar staff on how to present and pour ‘the perfect pint’. Bill Allen comments on the significant part played by his staff in the company: “One of the main reasons for the success of AVS is due to the continuity and efforts of our own members of staff; Craig Wallwork, our on-line editor has been with AVS for nine years and Mark Dawson, our computer graphics expert, for six. We can also call on a number of freelance staff.”

The Virtual Learning Zone

This year, AVS will be launching a range of new training products for brewing clients. These will be high quality, good value products, which can be fully customised and adapted

The Virtual pub from the outside. The cellar is in the bottom right corner.

The team at AVS from left to right, Bill Allen (founder), Mark Dawson – (computer graphics expert) and Craig Wallwork (on-line editor).



Technology moves on at a furious pace, and the use of CDs, DVDs and VCDs, is commonplace in the home. With thousands of customers and accounts spread over the whole country, multimedia is an ideal way for brewers and account owners to communicate and keep people informed in a cost-effective, high-quality, consistent way.

A 3D image of a pub cellar, notice the detail and clarity that can be shown. The inset shows how a keg is dispensed. 3D images give the opportunity to show the inside as well as the outside of the keg.



“to train anyone” but especially bar staff.

The concept is a unique idea based on a ‘virtual’ pub and brewery using 3D graphics .For youngsters who have grown up on 3D video games, this is not so new, but for a middle aged

brewer, the use of 3D graphics to show, for example, how a beer cellar is run can be a revelation! They say ‘a picture tells a thousand words’

The Virtual Learning Zone Brewery – a 3D representation of a tower brewery with 3D detail below.



and in 3D it gives a very clear uncluttered image, which makes things easy to understand.

The virtual ‘Pub Inn’ is a complete 3D computer graphic model of a pub, which has individual pieces of equipment. These 3D computer graphics can be put together to suit a specific customer’s needs and way of working. The really clever part, is the ability to integrate the 3D graphics to suit any potential users training requirements and corporate logo’s or branding.

The Brewery works in the exact same way. The graphics show brewing equipment and how it works. Much of the initial development was based on the local JW Lees brewery. The images depict a traditional tower brewery and brewhouse. As with the Pub Inn, the idea is to tailor the graphics to a particular training requirement.

The benefit for customers of these packages is that they will provide; Broadcast quality computer graphics, hitherto, not available due to the enormous production costs involved, resulting in a higher level understanding, the learning process can be reduced and the product can be adapted for any company.

The need to update packages every few years

Being a small company Bill is very clear on his company’s philosophy

“Our clients want value for money and they nearly always want to update the product within a three year period. We look at what clients want and only advise them on what is relevant and necessary. In this way, a long term relationship based on trust can be developed”

It is becoming more usual for training to lead to a recognised

qualification. To this end, AVS has developed products aimed at recipients qualifying for The Award in Beer and Cellar Quality (ABCQ), an industry recognised national qualification from the BIIAB, the wholly owned awarding body of the BII (British Institute of Innkeepers). AVS has also been awarded an IVCA ‘Practical Training Award’ for a Pepsi Cola Europe training production.

Multimedia techniques change and improve very quickly. VHS quickly moved on to CD and then DVD and VCD – Video Compact Disc, which is playable on both CD and DVD machines. The use of the Internet is another method of communication, which can provide training with built in management training information. Another technique available is ‘Chroma Key’ virtual 3D sets. This is when a ‘virtual set’ is built into the production; we are all used to this when watching television news with the reporters fronting up special sets.

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Offer to IBD members

Bill Allen will give a 10% discount to our readers. Visit: www.avstelevision.co.uk and click on the brewery section.

● Readers may contact the author at paul.buttrick@beerdimensions.com