

Graduate School, USDA

Innovative training institution engages its national network of staff, instructors, and consultants in interactive, cost-effective online learning using Adobe® solutions

Graduate School, USDA

<http://grad.usda.gov/>



Industry

Continuing Education

Challenge

Deliver cost-effective and quality training to individuals nationwide

Solution

Online training using Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro software

Results

- Improved quality, interactivity, and variety of course content
- Reached wide audience via the free, ubiquitous Adobe Flash Player software
- Created new revenue sources by increasing the number of classes and participants

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro
- Adobe Captivate™
- Adobe Presenter
- Adobe Flash® Professional
- Adobe Reader®
- Platform: PCs running Microsoft® Windows®

Broadening professional development opportunities

New and interactive learning technologies are replacing the traditional classroom instruction that has often required students to travel long distances. As a result, training professionals are re-evaluating continuing education methodologies in search of more efficient career development.

Because government agencies and enterprises often have limited dollars for job training—particularly for travel—development experts are employing cost-effective web technologies to reach individuals with relevant and engaging courses. As it expands its curriculum to offer more online training via these technologies, the Graduate School, USDA has turned to Adobe solutions.

In 1921 the secretary of agriculture established the Graduate School, USDA to provide individuals with opportunities for career advancement. A nationwide institution, the Graduate School enrolls 200,000 participants annually and offers nearly 1,000 courses.

Adobe solutions for blended learning

To deliver engaging course work in synchronous and asynchronous modes to government employees, federal contractors, and industry professionals, the Graduate School uses Adobe software, including Adobe Acrobat® Connect™ Pro, Adobe Flash Professional, and Adobe Captivate.

Typical courses focus on necessary government skills, such as accounting and auditing, human resources, leadership and management, and information technology. Courses generally include live presentations, video and audio, interactive discussions, and online testing—all delivered as part of the “GS Connect” program.

According to Dr. Sharon Fratta-Hill, dean of information technology at the Graduate School, the scope and quality of these courses produces new operating revenue as more courses are added and enrollment increases. “Our goal is to add experiential value to engage learners in superior ways. Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro software enables us to do exactly that.”

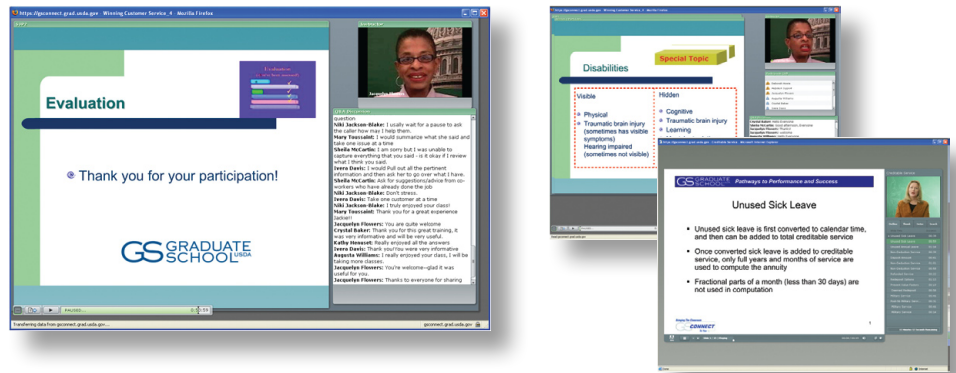
The Graduate School’s first slate of online courses includes a customer service class that incorporates real-time meetings with instructors, dynamic discussions, and interactive polls. Students view videotaped examples, delivered as Adobe Flash Player compatible video, of customer service interactions and comment on their quality.

In an Earned Value Management class, participants learn from a combination of audio and Microsoft PowerPoint slides, while a pre-retirement course uses extensive video linked with PowerPoint slides.

Rapid development and secure deployment

The Graduate School’s technical experts used Adobe Presenter to develop courseware and create high-quality presentations from within Microsoft PowerPoint. They augmented the content with movies that are compatible with Flash Player, as well as how-to procedures and narration

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Graduate School, USDA Platform

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/

recorded using Adobe Captivate software. By abandoning a platform of limited interaction and static instruction, the School’s management has adopted more interactive lessons that incorporate real-time discussions, video, audio, interactive tests, and other live elements.

Equally important, the School needed to ensure that courses would be readily available to everyone who wanted to take them, without requiring participants to download and purchase costly software. In addition, Fratta-Hill notes that “when you are training people at security agencies, they are not permitted to install extra software on computers.” Because Adobe Flash Player is installed on more than 98% of Internet-connected computers, there is easy access to programs for everyone.

Graduate School educators agree that Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro is an important tool for providing synchronous and asynchronous online learning solutions in geographically dispersed yet collaborative work environments. With a staff of four instructional designers, the School plans to reach its goal of deploying 20 online classes within the first year of adopting the cost-effective Adobe software and technology.



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