Software that Works the Way HR Works

by Lyn Murphy

Did you ever need to know the answers to these training questions? What are our actual versus budgeted costs? Who’s registered for this class? When is this class? Are the materials ready for tomorrow’s session? Are Management 101 and Telephone Skills scheduled in the same room? How many VCRs do we need? Who is available to teach TQM Part I next month? Has anyone in operations not taken Customer Service Skills? Training Administrator (TA) from Gyrus Systems can easily answer these questions.

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Training Administrator provides a single system to handle all of this and more. The software covers data on training resources (facilities, rooms, instructors and equipment), (organization data, address, name tag and diploma, job history, EEO data, disabilities and emergency contacts), courses and sessions, schedules, budget and reports. A few of the features are organizational structure, needs analysis, competency data and course evaluations.

What it does

Training Administrator is one of the first HR products designed for Microsoft Windows. It is icon or picture driven, uses the mouse point-and-click method of movement within the system, and can remain in the background of other applications such as word processing, spreadsheets or HRIS.

Training Administrator covers many details within the system; an organization may use as much or as little as needed for its own applications. Most functions also have a screen that can be customized to each company’s particular needs. In addition, security profiles can be defined by functions, and users may be given view or update capabilities.

What we like

This system works the way HR people work. For instance, selecting "course" from the main menu displays specific courses, scheduled sessions and current rosters. From this point, the user can immediately go to the enroll function to enroll a new student without returning to the main menu. This closely follows the real-world situation of students contacting the training department to inquire about enrollment. The administrator can check if they are enrolled, and if not, proceed directly to enroll the students. Software that works the way HR works is easier to use and more productive.

Training Administrator manages all the aspects of training that all training directors would love to be able to get their hands on. The program can be the best friend of the administrator responsible for all aspects—planning, arrangements and enrollment—of a company’s training program. The manager will appreciate the budget reports, the development plans for employees, the skill competency data and the course evaluations.

Costs. Budget and cost data are available with the touch of a few buttons. Training Administrator makes it easy to get up-to-date information by the expense categories the users define. Budgets can be kept at company, division, department and cost center. Training plans can be designed for employees along a career path. This includes the target jobs as well as the training necessary to reach the goals.

Details. Training Administrator produces a terrific checklist, and each course has its own items for the checklist. The checklist is a reminder to handle all the details needed for the upcoming classes. The standard reports, of which there are more than 100, cover all areas.

Reports. The reports on courses include catalog, student requests, students who have not taken a course, test results and developmental costs, among others. Enrollment report examples are class roster, sign-in sheet, name tags, certificates and confirmation letters. Equipment schedule, equipment maintenance schedule and equipment by facility are examples of

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the equipment reports. Student transcripts, training by EEO categories, labels and student absences from training are a few examples of student reports. Other standard reports are available on schedules, rooms, organizations, operators, instructors and checklists. These standard reports can also be modified to adapt to the user's requirements; customized reports can be created.

**Time line.** The calendar function shows not only those classes already scheduled but also your company's holidays and other events you may wish to track. The calendar can be accessed from almost anywhere within the system at the click of a mouse button.

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**Tough spots.** There are a few troublesome issues that **Training Administrator** handles well. Because the program keeps track of job titles of employees and the training that was taken, reports can be generated to determine course participation by job title. Expenses are tracked by general ledger account numbers rather than organization codes. While this may add a bit to the data entry time, it allows for accurate reporting of training costs as employees transfer from department to department.

**Support.** Gyrus Systems does a good job of supporting its users. The user manual clearly explains each function and each item on the screen. Gyrus System's tech support has been very helpful—especially during installation.

**What could be improved**

**Training Administrator** works by combining three different software packages: **TA**, **Info Publisher** and either **Word for Windows** or **WordPerfect for Windows**. **Info Publisher** provides the report query language, **Word** or **WordPerfect** provides the finished output of the reports.

Gyrus used the best of commercially available software to complete **TA**. However, for the new user, it does take some getting used to. Ad hoc custom reports are not constructed in **TA** but in **Info Publisher**.

While the selection of standard reports is pretty diverse, each HR or training department will always have its own special reporting needs. **Info Publisher** is not for the novice computer user, nor is it an easy and straightforward report writer. A user with experience in writing complex reports in other systems will probably find **Info Publisher** just a bit challenging. New or infrequent users will require considerably more practice in creating reports.

**Having the right equipment to do the task is an important factor for **TA**.**

Initially installing the system on a 386 PC with 4 MB of RAM and 55 MB of hard disk space resulted in a system that ran very slowly. Running the system on a 186 PC with 8 MB of RAM and 70-plus MB of hard disk space made a major improvement in system performance.

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Generally, **Training Administrator** would be a good fit for a fairly large organization. While a smaller company can benefit from the functions of **TA**, a larger organization, or one that does a great deal of training, has the volume of classes to realize its full potential. Computerized tracking of rooms, facilities and equipment is not absolutely essential for a group holding 10 training session per year, but a group having 15 facilities, 120 rooms and 50 pieces of equipment would certainly appreciate the value of **TA**.

Hardware and software requirements would normally be better met in a larger company. The HR office using hand-me-down PCs will have a difficult time with **TA**. **Training Administrator** requires a minimum of a 386 PC, 4 (more is better) megabytes of RAM, Windows 3.1, 40 to 75 megabytes of hard disk storage space and a mouse. Two additional programs, **Info Publisher** and **Word for Windows** or **WordPerfect for Windows**, must be purchased if not currently owned.

**Summary**

**Training Administrator** provides an easy way of managing the complex details of running a successful training program. This product will greatly enhance the productivity of an organization that can overcome the hardware/software concerns.

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