

Transport Topics

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The Advantages of Computer-Based Training

“Technology has transformed the way driver training is developed, deployed and managed,” said Robert Larsen, senior director of product and business services marketing at J.J. Keller Associates Inc., based in Neenah, Wisconsin. Keller offers a large library of training programs on everything from safety and compliance to a full spectrum of driving skills.

Driving simulators, behind-the-wheel training and classroom instruction have their place, but one limitation is that they all depend on the driver’s ability to be present for the training. Internet-based training can be accessed anywhere at any time.

“Training can now be digitized, streamed and deployed remotely via a laptop or smart device,” Larsen said. “Our multiple training formats give trainers the flexibility to choose the delivery method that’s most convenient for their operation and the learning style that’s most effective for their employees.”

Universal Truckload Services, based in Warren, Michigan, employs more than 4,200 drivers and owner-operators and uses Keller’s driver training courses. The mobile capability has been particularly useful, said Kimberly Arnold, vice president of safety at Universal. “Being out on the road with access helps expedite our training goals,” she said.

Two of Universal’s training goals are promoting safety and keeping everyone aware of current regulations. “There’s no doubt drivers are awash in new regulations and information,” Arnold said. The training materials from Keller help new and experienced drivers keep abreast of the latest developments.

Computer-based training has the potential to do more than simply present the material. “Our skills-based interactive online training has many of the interactive elements of a simulator with the added benefit of flexibility and mobility,” Larsen said. “It reinforces the key driving skills that are the focal point of simulation, but through a self-paced, interactive curriculum.”

Thom Schoenborn, vice president of marketing at Instructional Technologies Inc., based in Vancouver, Washington, made similar points about ITI’s Pro-Tread driver training courses. “We use mastery-based training, which requires you to demonstrate conclusively that you have absorbed the material,” Schoenborn said. “Over the course of the training, every few minutes, the training stops and you have to answer questions.”

Answering the questions drives home the key points of that course’s topics. “If you answer correctly, you keep going; if not, you go back to the points you missed,” Schoenborn said. “It’s interactive. The way the course proceeds depends on your answers. You can’t fast-forward through the training.”

In Schoenborn’s view, one of the keys to successful driver training is using the right method at the right time. “There are times when you want someone in a simulator, or you need to put someone in a physical truck and work with them on something highly specific,” he said. “There are times when you need to do ride-behinds and ride-along training. There are also times to have safety meetings, one-on-one meetings and things like that, but we like to think of Pro-Tread as the foundation for every training program. Our training provides the base.”

By Bruce Lilly

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