

Using Software Media Clips to Enhance Documentation

Shlomo Perets

<http://www.microtype.com>

Tech writers can do it too!

- **Traditionally, media clips were considered specialized and created by multimedia experts for marketing**
- **We can do it better...**
 - **Subject matter expertise**
 - **Consistent concepts / terminology**
 - **Synergistic effect of media clips integrated with documentation/training/help**



This presentation is not...

- **...Tool specific**
- **...Output type specific**
(training / help / guides / marketing)
- **...Output format specific**
(Flash / AVI / ...)



Types of media clips

- **“Show Me”**
- **Simulations**
- **Interactive quizzes**
- **Tutorials**



“Show Me” characteristics

- **Short segments (up to 3 minutes)**
 - **Easier for viewers to stay focused**
 - **Easier for producers to re-record a segment**
- **Typically little or no interactivity**
- **Not stand-alone items**
- **Integrated into the documentation – in the context of a problem to be solved or steps to be demonstrated**



Why add “Show Me” clips?

- For many users, it is easier to watch a demonstration than read a page of text
- Accommodate different reading/learning styles
- International audience
- Internet generation



Screen recorders enable you to:

- **Capture screen shots and mouse/cursor movements as you perform a process**
- **Add annotations and highlight elements**
- **Add narration**
- **Define interactive elements**
- **Output files in different formats (for PDFs, CDs or web)**



Common screen recorders

- **Camtasia, Captivate (prev. RoboDemo), ViewletBuilder**
- **Free tools: Windows Media Encoder, Wink**
- **For a comparison of tools, visit www.donationcoder.com/Reviews/Archive/ScreenCasting/index.html**



Identifying candidates

- **Decide which topics will gain from being presented visually**
- **How do they fit in with the documentation/help?**
- **Media clip length/complexity**
- **Consistent/even distribution across documentation**



Media clip planning

- **Sequence to be demonstrated**
- **Textual aspects**
 - **Narration**
 - **Callouts / sticky notes**
- **Additional effects**
 - **Sound effects**
 - **Visual effects: highlighting, zoom & pan**



Develop a style guide

- **Introductory and concluding slides**
- **Consistent screen sizes**
- **Provide useful info (duration, sound)**
- **Callouts: consistency of style, position**
- **Can clip stand alone without narration?**

