

CD-ROM

## Make every minute count

### It's About Time

**Publisher** BDP (020 7357 6444)

**Price** £399 (with licensing arrangements)

There was a time in my reviewing history when I would look at computer-based training and find structural shortcomings. Facilities were lacking. Interaction was limited. The questions posed were naive. Navigation was frustratingly rigid. But all that has changed.

Users can now take it for granted that they will be able to find their way through the material on the CD-Rom easily, restart at the point where they left off, skip through segments of material, find illuminating video clips to illustrate the subject matter and generally have an enjoyable, and stress-free, learning experience.

These standards apply to Skillboosters, a relatively new label in the interactive training market. Its first product – Persuasive Presentations – hit the market early last year at the attention-grabbing launch price of £39. It now has a series of four titles on soft skills, priced at £399 for organisational buyers – although these will

still sell at the old price to individuals paying for themselves.

Each provides around three hours of training, featuring video clips, interactive exercises and cartoon illustrations of key points, all linked by a spoken commentary. Summaries of each segment of input can be printed off and kept for reference. This neatly avoids the "missing documentation" syndrome that can affect shared resources.

*It's About Time* is the latest product in the series. A comprehensive introductory module helps users new to the medium, and the assessment quizzes enable learners to position themselves and determine their learning needs in relation to the material. Module two sets the scene. It explores the implications of not managing time effectively, advocating that we concentrate on results rather than effort and set ourselves the goal of achieving a balanced approach to work and life. (Do I hear hollow laughter? Some people doubt whether this is possible with even the most sophisticated and skilfully executed time-management techniques. Make up your own mind on this one.)

I liked the emphasis in this module on the "time thieves" – and on the activity that asks learners to keep a log of how they spend their time. This is an essential starting point for identifying where the most significant changes could be made. It also provides a context for the tips and techniques that follow.

Module three looks at prioritising and planning, and how to cope with procrastination. The video footage here is particularly apposite. Module four focuses on "organising yourself" in terms of a clutter-free and ergonomic approach to your environment, effective use of the telephone and e-mail, finishing with some "timely tips", including an exhortation to avoid the traps of perfectionism.

Lastly, there's a module on "time for others". This advises on delegation, holding productive meetings and dealing with interruptions.

I frequently hear anecdotal evidence that much of the advice available on time management misses the mark because it doesn't admit to different styles and approaches. I predict that *It's About Time* won't fall into this trap. It starts with the individual and how to analyse frequently occurring behaviours, suggesting ways of dealing with these, rather than imposing a "one way fits all" model of managing time. Even someone with an extreme penchant for multi-tasking will be able to find sensible and applicable advice.

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