Educating With New Technologies

Since I've been in this industry (1982), education came from classes held locally or at industry conventions. These classes were all taught by instructions using traditional educational methods. While these classes were certainly effective, they were always costly. Every class was from $100 to thousands of dollars. These expenses limited the education of the vast majority of employees that serve in our industry. Poor education can be blamed for the ills of many mortgage companies. In the last few years, technology has changed all this. Education can now be much cheaper because of the advent of technology. Where a typical class might have cost $295 for a daylong event, a similar class using technology could cost a fraction of this amount. In fact today, an instructor could offer a class nationwide for a small fee and earn far more than if they traveled to specific city and did the class face to face.

Of course, for every class you might be interested in attending you have to evaluate the cost per hour and the quality of the speaker and material. From what I can see, I've not found any significant difference in the quality of the speaker or the material when using classes broadcast over the Internet. One core difference is that with online education, you loose that personal contact with the instructor and other classmates. I found that the importance of this varies tremendously for each student. Some of the students thrive in a live classroom environment as being among peers can help motivate them. While others, prefer the seclusion, confidentiality, the ability to work at their own speed and the ability to take classes at times that are convenient. You'll want to at least try both methods to see what works best for you. What follows are some of the various companies involved with online training.

Probably one of my jewels is the little known company called Mortgage Scholars at www.mortgagescholars.com. It's a good example of how inexpensive online education can be. The cost comes out to be just a few dollars per hour of education and it's even cheaper as your entire office can use it as much as they like for the $299/yr cost. Note that I'm on the advisory board so I may be biased. This company is best for loan officers and branch managers as there is nothing available for loan processors and others. It's primarily Q&A sessions with the best and brightest loan officers and branch managers. However, they don't offer significant class material to augment the recordings.

Perhaps the mostly widely used and higher quality education comes from the Mortgage Bankers Association. Check out their CampusMBA Web Based Courses (www.campusmba.org) and you'll find a variety of classes all between $100 and $200. These classes help fulfill requirements for MBA Professional Certificates. However, they can only be used once and only by one person making them almost as expensive as classroom training. I'd like to see the MBA lower their prices on these courses so that more of the industry becomes better educated. It would also be helpful to have them on CD or tape as Mortgage Scholars offers.

Here's a few other web sites to check out:
www.loanofficerschool.com - training for loan officers and loan processors.
www.loantrainer.com - comprehensive catalog of online training for the entire staff.
www.elliemae.com - online training specific to their products.

Another major technology development has been products such as WebEx (www.webex.com) and Placeware (www.placeware.com). These two companies offer Internet conferencing solutions that allow an instructor and students to view the same computer screen over the web. They have

become immensely popular among large corporate users but smaller companies should be using them as well. In addition to the above solutions, you should consider organizing your own training. If you are a multi-branch operation, why not have your top loan officer put on a seminar for the rest of the loan officers. Or, considering hiring just about anyone from anywhere to put on a seminar. These solutions have become a staple when you need to provide training on software applications. Most software vendors will use these solutions to offer on-going training classes on their software – most often at bargain pricing. Few loan officers maximize the use of their software applications so keep them constantly trained with a low cost seminar from your best "power user".