

Video Archive of NH Manufacturers Developing at UNH

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UNH News Bureau

March 19, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- Business schools today are going multi-media, which means not only that students can find lectures and class notes on line, but soon they'll be able to see videotaped clips of manufacturing or industrial processes, for example, narrated by knowledgeable production line managers.

A handful of New Hampshire companies are opening their assembly lines and managerial offices to the camera so that students at the University of New Hampshire Whittemore School of Business and Economics learn from "real world" sources, says Craig Wood, associate professor of operations management. "Electronic cases" accessible on a Web site add authenticity to course materials and will offer benefits to participating businesses as well, he adds. An early corporate partner in the manufacturing videotape project is Hadco Corporation of Derry, known as Sanmina after being acquired by that company last June.

Videotaping not only offers the obvious benefits -- pictures that illustrate processes more easily than hundreds of written words -- "It also allows everyone to go more in depth," Wood explains. "It allows sources to speak for themselves, in their own words." Enriched by the speaker's tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures, difficult terms and complex ideas become more understandable.

Wood and his Whittemore School colleague Allen Kaufman, professor of management, hope that by layering many taped interviews and tours -- with distribution managers, marketing specialists, packaging

foremen, benefits coordinators, everyone from the CEO to the mailroom clerk -- on a Web page, they can create an information-rich, cohesive portrait of a business. Virtual tours can then be put together so that a quality assurance researcher might follow a single employee's work load for a day, for example. Another student more interested in sales might begin at the product end. Still others might elect to look at the same manufacturing process "before and after" a major supply chain management change. "The possibilities are exciting," says Wood.

For a company like Sanmina, the Whittemore School's Web site could serve as "getting to know you" pages for potential customers. Video clips created as teaching aids for Wood and Kaufman's courses may prove to be a perfect way to showcase the corporate emphasis on total quality management, effective communication, and keeping the competitive edge, Wood notes. Customers might choose to look at product specifications, distribution plans, and marketing materials in a password-protected section of the Web site. The company might use the Web page as a way to survey customers, Wood adds, opening a line of communication from customer to business.

"This might be a great opportunity for them to call attention to the importance the company places on having a good relationship with suppliers and with customers," Wood remarks. "It's the Web-based equivalent of effective listening."

The first videotapes shot by Wood and Kaufman are now being edited and should be up on the Web in the next couple of months, Wood said. The Whittemore School professors are also working with Kingsbury Corporation of Keene, Textron of Farmington and the New Hampshire Biotechnology Council to develop electronic cases.

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