

The Top 20 Training Websites

By Gordon L. Johnson of www.HowToMarketTraining.com



When you are looking for a service provider — whether it be an office machine supplier or a translation specialist — where do you start your search? The Web, right? Your prospects are no different.

In training, as in all industries, creating a vibrant, informative web presence is key to marketing your company effectively. In most cases, your prospects' first impression of your company is whatever you have posted on the web.

Your website can cause prospects to pick up the phone and contact you, or it can chase them away. And your website doesn't exist in isolation. When you send a direct mail piece or an email broadcast, or when you call a prospect, your URL is usually a significant part of your message.

Given this, I recently set out to review as many training company websites as I could find to see how well we as an industry are doing at presenting ourselves to our prospects. After recovering from the shock that I would have at least 1300 sites to review (Who knew there would be so many?!), I chose the top twenty training websites.

What was the common denominator that made these sites standouts?

- Simple navigation
- Attractive, clean design
- Content highlighting the benefits of doing business with the company

Here are the 20 sites I chose as the best of the best:

3rd Place

Ascend Training

www.ascendtraining.com

I found that the best training websites are usually training companies who create training software. This isn't a coincidence, since these companies have talented programmers on staff who can design dynamic websites. Ascend Training is an exception. Their core competency is delivering public training classes. However, since much of their training is Macromedia, you might suppose they have some talented designers at their disposal.

The design of this site is simple, fun, and attractive, with straightforward navigation. I also give the site high marks for its attention to detail. Take the Instructor page, for example. Its excellent photography ties in with the overall theme of the site *and* the overall company culture. Check it out!



2nd Place

Horizon Wimba

www.horizonwimba.com

The two big strengths of this site are simple navigation and an inviting site design. Land on the front page and you get the immediate urge to click on one of the “product” boxes.

Many of the 1300 websites I reviewed tried to be all things to all people, succumbing to the urge to put “everything” on their website – often on the home page. This usually results in a jumbled mess that compromises the overall quality of the customer experience. The Horizon Wimba site also makes a wealth of information available, but in a way that screams simplicity. Take a look!

Horizon Wimba
Reach beyond the classroom®

Home | Products | Solutions | Services | Support | Community | Demos | About Us

Humanize and Personalize your Online Courses!
Classroom collaboration software for online education, language learning & interactive communications

In the News:
6/6/2006
Horizon Wimba Announces Alliance with Angel Learning
5/19/2006
Blog: Cool Voice Tools for e-Learning
5/2/2006
HowTo Moodle Taps Horizon Wimba Live Classroom for Training
>> Desktop Lecture Series...
>> Horizon Wimba Blog

Course Genie
Course Authoring from Word
Make CMS-Ready Content
Only Need Microsoft Word
Create Interactive Courses
Course Genie Demo
Course Genie Information

Live Classroom
Live Virtual Classroom
Live Classes
Online Office Hours
Meetings & Training
Live Classroom Demo
Live Classroom Information

Wimba Voice Tools
Speaking & Listening Exercises
Online Language Labs
Ongoing Discussions
Voice Tools Demo
Voice Tools Information

Bb **WebCT** Integrate Horizon Wimba products with your Course Management System
learn more view integration demos

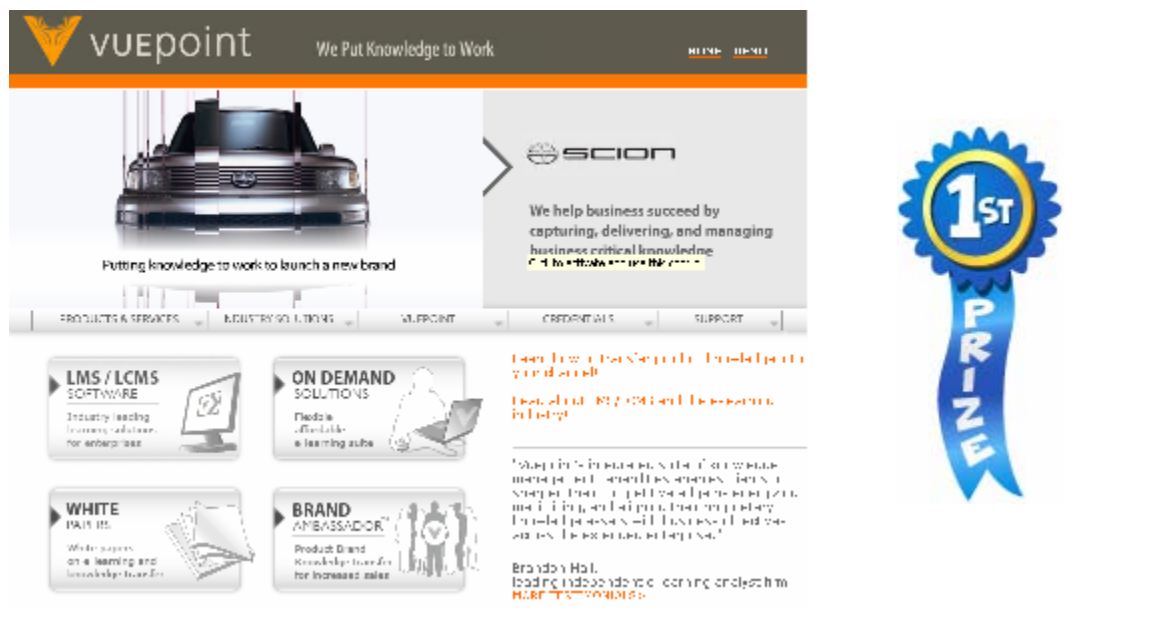
BROWNSTONE Horizon Wimba acquires Brownstone, a leader in academic assessment.
learn more visit Brownstone



1st Place
Vuepoint
www.vuepoint.com

This website is strong in all three of my main criteria: design, navigation, and content. The design is clean, making good use of photography, iconography, typography, and white space. Navigation is straightforward with generous sized buttons, drop-down menus, and icons to help you find your way around. The content (messaging) is excellent, and uses case studies as the focal point of the site. With so many fly-by-night training companies, customers want to see longevity and lots of experience. This website's case studies show off Vuepoint's experience very well.

Rarely do great design and great messaging come together like this. Vuepoint obviously invested an amazing amount of time, thought, and teamwork into creating this site.



The image shows a screenshot of the Vuepoint website homepage. At the top, the Vuepoint logo is on the left, the tagline "We Put Knowledge to Work" is in the center, and "HOME" and "MENU" are on the right. Below the header is a main banner featuring a Scion car. The text in the banner reads: "Putting knowledge to work to launch a new brand" and "We help business succeed by capturing, delivering, and managing business critical knowledge. Call to action: see this case study". Below the banner is a navigation menu with items: PRODUCTS & SERVICES, INDUSTRY SOLUTIONS, VUEPOINT, CREDENTIALS, and SUPPORT. The main content area is divided into four columns. The first column has a "LMS / LCMS SOFTWARE" section with the text "Industry leading business solution for enterprise". The second column has an "ON DEMAND SOLUTIONS" section with the text "Flexible, scalable e-learning suite". The third column has a "WHITE PAPER" section with the text "White papers on e-learning and knowledge transfer". The fourth column has a "BRAND AMBASSADOR" section with the text "Product Brand Knowledge Transfer for increased sales". To the right of the main content area is a testimonial from Brandon Hall, stating: "Vuepoint's business solutions were instrumental in our success. They've supported our growth and helped us meet our goals. Vuepoint's business solutions will help us continue to grow our business." Below the testimonial is the text "Brandon Hall, leading independent learning organization HALL & PARTNERS". To the right of the entire screenshot is a large blue ribbon graphic that says "1ST PRIZE".

The Top 20 Training Company Websites:

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| 1. Vuepoint | www.vuepoint.com |
| 2. Horizon Wimba | www.horizonwimba.com |
| 3. Ascend Training | www.ascendtraining.com |
| 4. Articulate | www.articulateglobal.com |
| 5. LearnKey | www.learnkey.com |
| 6. Discovery Learning | www.discoverylearning.com |
| 7. Marshall Goldsmith Partners | www.marshallgoldsmith.com |
| 8. Design Media | www.designmedia.com |
| 9. Emantras | www.emantras.com |
| 10. Kryterion | www.drakekryterion.com |
| 11. ROS Incorporated | www.rosourcing.com |
| 12. Chalk | www.chalk.com |
| 13. Ninth House | www.ninthhouse.com |
| 14. Qarbon | www.qarbon.com |
| 15. Ziglar Training Systems | www.zigziglar.com |
| 16. Learning Point Inc. | www.learningpointinc.com |
| 17. New Horizons | www.newhorizons.com |
| 18. KnowledgePlanet | www.kimpact.com |
| 19. The Forum Corporation | www.forum.com |
| 20. Cylix | www.cylix.co.uk |

Postscript: In picking the winners, I reviewed 1300 websites, but I probably still missed some good ones. Let me know if you know of a truly great site worthy of a mention.

Gordon L. Johnson is a marketing consultant for the training industry. He offers marketing solutions for training suppliers who want to grow their business and corporate training departments who want to market to their employees. You can reach him at gordon@gordjohn.com or visit his website at www.HowToMarketTraining.com.