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Delivery of PowerPoint® Videos on the World Wide Web

Steven B. Johnson

Crops Specialist and Extension Professor
University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Presque Isle, Maine
stevenj@maine.edu

Abstract: A widespread and devastating epidemic of potato and tomato late blight in the Northeastern U.S. during the 2009 growing season brought to the light the need for rapid and effective delivery of reliable information. Extension took the lead in information delivery during the epidemic and during the winter in preparation for the upcoming growing season. Microsoft PowerPoint® was used to create a narrated video, and the completed file was converted with PPT To Video Scout software to a Windows Media Format and posted on the Internet. The procedure produced easily accessible information that is continually available for client use.

Background

Reliable information delivery is a strength of Extension programs. However, the approach to information delivery has been evolving from the methods of the past (Johnson, 2009). Much of the change has involved Internet usage (Ferrell & Fisher, 2007; Parker, 2009). Distance education and distance technologies are not new concepts for Extension. As noted by Fishel et al., with declining budgets, Extension's use of distance technologies that save time, costs, and manpower will only increase as resources become increasingly scarce. Rapid information delivery is also a strength of Extension programs (Johnson & Dwyer, 2007).

The Issue

The 2009 growing season was one of unprecedented late blight epidemics on tomatoes and potatoes in the Northeastern U.S. (Johnson, 2010a; Johnson, 2010b; McGrath, Smith, Sideman, & Johnson, 2010). Many farmers and gardeners had not experienced late blight before 2009. Many of these were unprepared for the disease (Johnson, 2009c). Rapid and effective delivery of reliable information was needed.

Options

Once the decision to deliver information via the Internet was made, various options were considered. Fishel et al. (2010) described using Polycom® for program delivery. Ferrell & Fisher (2007) described development of training materials using Articulate® software. Grabowski (2010) described development and evaluation of training materials using Adobe® Presenter software. Parker (2009) described development of multimedia training materials using Microsoft Producer® software. Dewell et al. (2009) described development of

multimedia training materials in a DVD format. Webcasts and podcasts are also considered. Some approaches had platform or other issues. Some were excellent for delivering trainings, but not for delivery of short message.

The Solution

Most Extension presentations make use of Microsoft PowerPoint®, so it was selected as the presentation method. A good quality digital microphone was used to record voice in the narration function of Microsoft PowerPoint®. The narrations are saved with each slide; saving the slide timings as well produces a playable voiced-over presentation. A little practice on the slide transitions coupled with the program's ability to allow recording from specific slides or rerecording slides from any point makes the process uncomplicated and easy to do while sitting at one's desk. While some people prefer to give a presentation without a script, The University of Maine requirements include a written transcript to accompany a posted video.

The Next Step

Posting the narrated Microsoft PowerPoint® presentation will not protect the photographs as intellectual property. In an effort to address this, the file can be converted to Windows Media Format (WMV). The software, PPT To Video Scout <<http://bytescout.com/products/enduser/ppttovideoscout/ppttovideoscout.html>>, was used for the conversion. The software produces a WMV file ready for Internet posting. The WMV file format worked out well with the universal availability of the WMV player free of charge.

Conclusions

A 7-minute video of the Microsoft PowerPoint® presentation "Getting Ready for Late Blight in 2010" <<http://www.umaine.edu/umext/potatoprogram/Fact%20Sheets/late%20blight%20info.wmv>> was produced with minimal additional effort as it was based on previous presentations (Johnson, 2010c). The information is available on a 24-hour basis in the convenience of the client's home. Rapid and effective delivery of reliable information was accomplished.

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