

Collaboration Expands Software Feature

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Two well-known Charlotte entrepreneurs have teamed up to create an interactive, on line storytelling course. Lou Solomon, founder of Interact, and Dick Handshaw, found of Handshaw Inc., have created a computer-based course to help executives learn to make their presentations more personal and conversational.

Mark Schaffner, president and chief executive of the Ben Craig Center, a business incubator affiliated with UNC Charlotte, says the effort symbolizes the area's collaborative spirit.

"You have two people who are in a very similar industry with Lou in the training business and Dick in the training technology sector, coming together and understanding how they can use their skills together to succeed," Schaffner says.

Solomon's company teaches executives to weave personal stories and authenticity into their presentations and make them more like chatting with friends across a kitchen table instead of talking to a big room of strangers. Her live courses include on-camera "boot camps" and intensive group coaching.

Since launching Interact in 2000, Solomon has been concerned with finding a learning piece to follow the live courses. She thought something web-based that would allow people access when convenient was the ticket.

Enter Handshaw, whose company has provided web-based training to a wide range of businesses including Bank of America and Krispy Kreme.

In 2003, Handshaw took one of Interact's on-camera courses and began discussing with Solomon ways to provide follow up support via his web-based software, Lumenix.

Solomon's on line course gives a story example and then provides the user with an opportunity to record a similar story. The course features interviews with local business notables such as Mike Whitehead of Whitehead Associates; Kal Kardous of Charlotte Copy Data; Angela Hubbard of United Way of Central Carolinas; and Hank Heidenreich of TEC International.

In creating the course, Solomon added an interactive journal that lets a student receive feedback from a live coach on any given assignment. Handshaw says it's the first time any Lumenix user has created such a feature.

"Lou has used Lumenix to create a personal learning experience," Handshaw says, "She has gone out and done something with our software that no one else has done."