

Great Training on a Budget

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Part of my job involves constantly searching for a great deal on training, and I think I just stumbled on a gold mine. Over 3,200 hours of courseware, one year of unlimited access and free updates all for under \$400. When I was originally told about the company I was a little suspicious of such a deal so I pointed my browser to www.staffkit.com to do a little investigation of my own. Sure enough, the company has been around for several years, has customers in 17 countries and hundreds of courses. I tried one of the free sample courses on their site and was very impressed with the quality of the courseware and speed at which it loaded even with my 56K modem.

The next question I had was how current is the courseware? The company promises new courses every 90 days and keeps up with new software releases. Courses for Flash MX, Visual Studio .NET, and DreamWeaver MX are already available. For the techie in the field they offer a complete range of material. Take for instance the Microsoft Exchange product where do you go to brush up on an older version? StaffKit.com has courses on Exchange 4.0, Exchange 5.0, Exchange 5.5 and Exchange 2000. Everyone is teaching the newest material, but a lot of businesses haven't upgraded their software yet. This wealth of information is available anywhere you can access the Internet.

If you are looking to get certification this is a must have resource. They offer certification training for exams on CompTIA A+, Java, MCSE, MOUS, MCDBA, Cisco CCNA, Network+, CIW Security, Linux and many more. It can be used alone or in cooperation with other training classes or materials. The online skill assessments point out weak areas

and then list lessons in the courseware covering those topics.

There is also an extensive online glossary, the ability to search all of the courseware for a single keyword, simulations, and skill assessment tests. But one of the most helpful features I found seems to be missing in most other e-Learning products and that is remembering where I was when I last logged on. The bookmarking on the site tracked where I had been in the courseware, so each time I logged in I could pickup right where I left off even if I returned days later using a different computer. This will save me countless hours over the next few months by not having to search for where I left off. There is a 'Getting Started' course that covers the course features and it is well worth the time it takes to complete.

Another feature of the site is that all of the courses are eligible for Continuing Education Units (CEU's). I have several friends who travel to classes every year because their profession requires them to obtain CEU's every year. Imagine being able to spend time at home earning CEU credit. Once courses are completed certificates can be printed and mailed in, along with a small per credit hour fee, to receive CEU credit from a recognized college or university.

If you are an employer, the StaffKit.com site offers some additional benefits like group discounts and weekly reports on employee usage. With courses on everyday applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook it is a convenient way for employees to get the skills they need without having to travel offsite. It also is a great way to reduce computer frustration in the office.

They sell individual courses but the package pricing is so economical it's hard



to pass up. Each package covers a unique range of products - Desktop Computing, Web Development, Microsoft Certification, Technical, Business Skills and Small Business. Packages range in price from \$54.95 to \$149.95 with special pricing on their "everything we offer" package. I plan to get a package for my cousin as a graduation present, since it is hard to find a job today where some level of computer skills are not a basic requirement and with one year of access it should serve her well.

I found the CompTIA A+ certification very well aligned with the material that is covered on the exam. The site is sure to be a boost to your resume as well as easy on the wallet, but the real test will come later this year - I recommended the site to my mother who seems to always have a continuous list of computer questions every time I visit. I'll keep you posted.