

White Papers

Your Direct Performance Path™ to Success

Every company faces business pressures and operational challenges, some of which require expertise and manpower beyond your team's capabilities. That's where Michaels & Associates can help. When you work with us, you will notice that we are *refreshingly different*. From your past experiences, you *might* expect our company representatives to offer pre-formulated products, sales pitches and answers. Instead, you will find a team of objective, independent consultants who are experts in their field and who know that one size does *not* fit all. Michaels & Associates works from our first meeting to help you define solutions your business needs today.

Our experts understand that an early assessment of current business practices and overall business needs is instrumental to the success of any documentation or training project. Just like building a house, it's critical to plan and create a blueprint *before* breaking ground. Doing otherwise could waste valuable resources and time. As a result, Michaels & Associates uses a custom, consultative approach tailored to each unique business challenge – we call it the **Direct Performance Path™**.

Our Direct Performance Path™ approach incorporates our four-phase methodology to ensure quality in all we deliver. This methodology enables us to streamline the development process to design, develop, and deliver solutions that complement and facilitate your corporate objectives and performance goals. We also incorporate adult learning theory into our solutions to ensure we meet employee's learning needs.

Throughout the development process, we educate our clients on all available options. We conduct research, and provide you with options, so you may confidently decide on the best solution for your documentation and training projects. Whether we develop a custom solution for you in-house or we find a product that meets your needs and budget better, we always recommend the most direct path to your success. In short, our unbiased and innovative approach puts us in the unique position of becoming a champion for you and an advocate of your business.

Knowledge is power! Michaels & Associates consultants take pride in empowering our clients to succeed. It's true: Our mission in business is to care for yours.

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M&A Four-Phase Methodology

Our four-phased methodology forms the foundation of all the work we do, regardless of whether the work is live instruction, e-learning or employee documentation. With the solid foundation of this methodology, Michaels & Associates consultants and clients are empowered to leverage available resources to focused and successful results.



M&A Methodology

Discovery and Project Definition

First, we build a project team composed of your key stakeholders, employees and at least one senior Michaels & Associates consultant (with any number of other expert consultants available, as needed). This team determines the scope and direction of the project. We begin our projects by delivering a **Project Workbook** that defines our process and gives you tools you can use throughout the project.

This workbook typically includes the following items:

- A user guide for your dedicated client website which provides access to forums, a project time tracker, reports and all project-related materials
- An overview of our production process
- Team and SME roles and responsibilities
- A project schedule with milestones
- Project development worksheets and examples

Research and Goal Analysis

Next, we spend time getting to know you and your business so we can understand your processes and procedures. We interview your subject matter experts (SMEs) to learn your processes and how they are fulfilled. We observe employees as they go about performing their tasks. We gather and review existing documentation and



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A successful solution to any business need depends on a well-planned approach.

observe your training program. If the subject is a software application, we ask for a system walk-through, with access to the software. This third-party analysis of your documentation and training provides fresh, unbiased input that contributes to a balanced analysis and a successful solution.

We use this research and analysis to present you with our recommendations, usually in a **Findings Report**, which may include several of the following items:

- Gap, needs, task and/or audience analysis
- Advice to retain noteworthy existing documentation or training
- Recommendations for improving existing documentation or training
- Proposals for new approaches
- Recommended high-level outlines for new content
- Suggestions for optional, nice-to-have enhancements
- Guidance for maintenance and future development
- Definition of the initial scope of work
- Recommendations regarding external factors that may seriously impact the success of the proposed solution

Design and Architectural Elements

Based on this research and input from the project team, Michaels & Associates creates a **design** that is best-suited for a successful solution to your needs. Including your project goals and the outcomes of our thorough research, your project design may result in one or a combination of several of the following elements:

- Benchmarks and reporting information
- Documentation Design Document
- Instructional Design Document
- Architectural Design Document (for e-learning and/or for web sites)
- Detailed course, documentation, or e-learning designs, including sample layouts and graphic treatments
- Project Plan

Development and Performance Instruments

Next, we get busy developing the final product, which may include a 'mix' of deliverables that create a [blended learning](#) solution to reinforce concepts and maintain employee interest. Components of the solution typically include one or more of the following:



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Documentation

- User guides, process flows, procedures, job aides and other forms

Instructor-led training

- Facilitator guides, student guides, slideshows, graphics and other training tools

Self-study materials

- Either paper-based or computer-based products

Virtual, computer-based training or documentation

- Either web-based or computer-based courses
- Online help

Lessons Learned

Another option from Michaels & Associates is to follow your project for maximum return on your investment by contracting for a **Lessons Learned** report. This report traces the progress and obstacles of your project and provides “next step” recommendations. We never stop striving for excellence, and we give you suggestions for how to do the same for your future projects.

By choosing Michaels & Associates as your partner and employing our proven approach and methodology for your training and documentation projects, you and your company will achieve success – by offering solutions that enable employees to be more productive, sooner. [Contact us](#) to help you develop your direct performance path™ to success.

Michaels & Associates opened for business in 1998, and since then, we've been on a mission: make employees more effective in their jobs and ensure that these jobs are aligned with management directives. Yes, it's a challenge, but we continue to exceed our customers' expectations by offering fully-customized services:

- Training & documentation needs analysis & assessment
- Training design & development
- Training delivery & facilitation
- Technical writing & documentation design & development

Who benefits from these services? Our clients, from small software groups to retail financial giants, know they do. We have worked in the medical, homebuilding, finance, automotive, telecommunications, electronics, software, aerospace and travel industries, just to name a few. Regardless of the “who,” our “what” remains constant: the best possible solution at the lowest possible cost. We form a true partnership with our clients so we can get to know their needs and execute their objectives quickly and expertly.

Our consultant family is as unique as our client base. We are composed of people with skills across nearly all tools, techniques, and approaches. Many of us have earned industry recognition, and Michaels & Associates has won Society for Technical Communications (STC) awards for instructional materials, documentation and e-learning. We want to provide the best solutions for our clients, so we pride ourselves in having the best people in the industry on our team.

Learn how Michaels & Associates will help you achieve your goals.

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