



DOD explores training 'vignettes'

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The Office of the Secretary of Defense has awarded Intelligent Systems Technology Inc. a research and development contract to design and test a Web-based training system aimed at simplifying course creation and eliminating the "dead space" in traditional programs.

ISTI is exploring how short, focused Web-based training vignettes can be created within a lesson to help trainees resolve specific problems individually while better preparing them for potential "real-life" problems, said Azad Madni, chairman and chief executive officer of the company, which is based in Santa Monica, Calif.

"When training people, there are large amounts of dead space in the training in response to specific events along an entire scenario," said Madni, adding that the instructional mini-scenarios actively engage trainees and can be completed in a short time.

Madni said an example would be a vignette about how to deal with a problem employee. ISTI's vignette system helps learners work through a scenario and resolve conflict so that they are more prepared for the real thing.

The vignette system faces challenges, Madni acknowledged, but OSD's Phase I Small Business Innovative Research award will help form the concept and "implementation architecture" for a prototype. It also will help identify appropriate content to test the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of the system.

The OSD research award, made in late December 2001, is worth about \$100,000. A follow-on contract worth about \$750,000 is expected, Madni said.

ISTI also announced another research and development award from OSD to design a wireless, Web-based medical digital assistant (MDA) for use by physicians, nurses, pharmacies and combat medics. An MDA is a personal digital assistant that helps medical care providers in collect, retrieve and communicate information related patient care.

In this phase of the effort, ISTI is developing the overall system concept and demonstrating a prototype based on an open standards-based architecture. The goal is to improve the human interface to computerized patient records within DOD hospitals and in the field, Madni said.

ISTI's other federal customers include the Navy, the Army, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and the departments of Energy and Commerce.

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