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Screencasting: how to create and use screencasts to pull traffic to your web site

Screencasts are an easy way to quickly create unique web content to generate web site traffic, increase product sales, and reduce product support woes. In this article, you'll learn what a screencast is and how you can create one immediately.

Have you seen any good screencasts lately?

I'm betting you have - even if you didn't know they were screencasts.

We use screencasts throughout our site, and at our MemberGate site we have a [support library](#) of more than 100 screencasts.

So screencasts are not really new. They've been around for years.

But now, thanks to changes in tools used to create screencasts, they are becoming an important part of the internet.

So what is a screencast?

A screencast is short movie incorporating live motion computer screens, usually with a narration track explaining the activity on the screen.

To see an example of a typical screencast, check out this [simple screencast example](#) I created while writing this article.

As the example illustrates, screencasts can be an effective way to provide a lot of information in an easy-to-view, and easy-to-create format.

Why is this important?

Since the very beginning the internet has been about providing information. Billions of web pages providing millions of surfers information covering every imaginable topic.

And almost all the information on all those billions of web pages is still being presented in text format - the same 'words on a page' format used since the days of clay tablets.

The 'read the words and try to figure out what the author was trying to say' limitation of text means that web page visitors often have to wade through pages and pages, trying to grasp the instructions to accomplish even the simplest of tasks.

But screencast technology changes that.

With a screencast, web visitors can call up a movie that demonstrates exactly what they want to accomplish. Whether it's a screencast on how to [change settings in Internet Explorer](#), how to [compress images using SmartSaver](#), or how to use the [Google Tracks](#) report in MemberGate, the visitor can quickly learn by seeing it done.

And because screencasts are often published in the flash format, web surfers worldwide can view the screencasts without having to worry about compatibility problems with video players.

Ease of creation

The big breakthrough in screencast creation and publishing is directly attributable to one program - [Camtasia Studio](#). With just this one tool, almost anyone can quickly create and publish a screencast, often in a matter of minutes.

Camtasia Studio is an 'all-in-one' screencast creation, editing, and publishing tool. Using it, you can capture your live computer screen actions along with voice narration, edit both the audio and video, add graphics, titles and overlays, and publish the completed movie in a variety of formats.

If you choose to publish the movie in flash format (which is ideal for screencasts), Camtasia Studio handles the complete task - converting your movie into flash format, creating the html and player controls, and putting it all in one package making it easy to place the screencast on your web pages.

Using this one tool - [Camtasia Studio](#) - you can create a screencast, edit it, and publish it to your web site in minutes.

Creating your own screencasts

Creating a screencast like my [simple screencast example](#) can be surprisingly easy - if you start with the right tools.

To create the above screencast, I used:

- **Camtasia Studio software** - to capture the computer screen activity as I performed the task being shown in the movie
- **Plantronics USB Headset Microphone** - to record my audio narration as I performed the task being recorded
- **Camtasia Studio** - to edit the screen capture movie
- **Camtasia Studio** - to convert and publish the completed movie into flash format

The entire process required only two tools (Camtasia studio and a microphone) and took less than 15 minutes.

Other uses for screencasts

One of the great things about creating screencasts is that in addition to being used on web pages, you can include screencasts in menu driven CDs that can be viewed in both Windows and Mac computers.

This means you can include screencasts to build an instructional video for your favorite software tool, or to create a video users guide for your own software product.

Another way we use screencasts is in replies to questions posted in our discussion forum. Often it is easier to create a quick screencast showing the answer to the question than it is to write a technical reply. Messages posters are amazed that we can reply to their questions with a easy-to-follow movie showing the answer.

The efficiency of a screencast

From a content creators point of view, creating a screencast showing how to do something is almost always much more time efficient than writing an article presenting the same information.

While creating, editing, and publishing a screencast like this [simple screencast example](#) took less than 15 minutes, researching, writing, and editing an article covering the same topic could take four times as long - and it wouldn't be nearly as effective.

From a product developer / information publisher point of view, creating screencasts is definitely an appealing way to create high value content in a short period of time using only minimal resources and tools.

From a web visitors point of view, screencasts provide a quick and easy way to obtain information on almost any subject (especially computer software). It is the ultimate 'learn by seeing it done' information delivery system.

Now that it is easy to create and publish screencasts, you can expect to see a lot more screencasts in the coming months and years. Especially as visitors come to expect and in some cases, even demand, information be presented in the easy to follow screencast format.

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