

Insurance Times: CE + dancing monkey = LearnNothing.com
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by Mark Hollmer

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LearnNothing.com almost looks like a real continuing education insurance Web site. Almost.

But the dancing monkey on the top of the home page is a sign that something isn't quite right. And so is the text.

The site "CEO," Les Ismore, promotes among other things his "Minute of Work for an Hour of CE" guarantee.

"If you have to spend more than a minute of clicking for each hour of CE credit, we'll refund your money..." he writes.

"We here at LearnNothing understand that busy agents like you don't want to waste time and money learning stuff that you don't have to know, and God knows your customers don't care either ... they just want insurance and they want it cheap..."

Intrigued?

It turns out that the Web site is the brainchild of Bill Wilson, a property casualty insurance trainer who works nationally.

Wilson, who lives outside of Nashville, Tenn., said he created the Web site about 18 months ago after getting tired of seeing some online continuing education trainers promote programs that appeared to be highly suspect.

One, he said, pushed a technology where agents could take their tests for CE credit online as the answers appeared alongside.

Another company produced an exam so simple, he said, that a child could catch on without knowing a thing about insurance.

"The exam was so simple I actually gave it to my 12-year-old (son) and he got a 66, which was four points below passing," Wilson said.

The second example was particularly vexing, he said, because the company apparently took advantage of a regulatory requirement that CE credit hours are assigned to a course based on word count.

Many tests are padded with "marketing fluff just to build up" word numbers, he said.

"It ... made me laugh because it was being passed off as education," he said.

"It was just people trying to make money in my opinion."

And so to vent, Wilson produced his bogus Web site, featuring "courses that were done by typing monkeys."

He created the Web site over a three-day vacation at home.

Wilson said he's gotten a number of responses to the Web site, including Emails both positive and critical.

He was surprised, however, to hear from another company, called LearnSomething.com, at which some employees complained about the similar name.

Wilson said hadn't even considered parodying LearnSomething.com when he developed the Web site.

"They do insurance (training) and training for Disney and others," he said. "It's really a first-rate outfit."

That wrinkle aside, Wilson said he's glad he developed his Web site and believe it rightly lampoons "the people that are ... really just marketing materials and throwing them online and calling them a course, when they're truly not education."

Those programs, he said, are nothing more than "a means to an end.

"A lot of what you see is 'here's a bunch of stuff, read it and take a test and you can get your continuing education credits."

Still, Wilson added, many online learning classes offered for CE credit are valid.

The trick, he said is to choose a program "that provides something of value to a learner (and) creates a true learning experience." pfor diminished resale value, he said. p