

The Top

24

**Here are the
24 organizations that made
it into the stellar company
of the ASTD BEST Award
winners by demonstrating
that they foster, support,
and leverage enterprise-wide
learning for business results.**



IN MANY WAYS, the winners of the 2004 ASTD BEST Awards are like members of an Olympic team—shining stars that achieve peak performance. In the spirit of the 2004 Olympic Games, we'd like to introduce you to 24 organizations from five countries that are at the top of their game—they understand the critical link between learning and performance, what it takes to demonstrate results, and how to foster an enterprise-wide learning culture. They are ASTD's BEST Award winners—the Top 24 in 2004.

From a large software services company in India that started almost 60 years ago as a maker of vegetable oils and toilet soaps, to a small, family-owned manufacturer of custom wire and cable in Wisconsin, the 2004 BEST Award winners represent the private sector, public sector, and not-for-profits in a wide range of industries. You'll recognize some of the BEST Award winners as household names and leaders in their respective industries. All of the winners will impress you by their commitment to learning and development with stellar examples of how they achieve results.

The BEST Awards started in 2003 as a complement to ASTD's existing awards programs that honor individuals and distinct programs. The BEST Awards recognize organizations that **B**uild talent, **E**nterprise-wide, **S**upported by the organization's leaders, fostering a **T**horough learning culture.

Organizations that entered the 2004 BEST Awards program answered a series of quantitative and qualitative questions in several categories. In a blind review process, the BEST Award reviewers—experts in the learning and performance field—looked for evidence that learning

BEST

has value in the organization's culture, evidence of a link between learning and performance, evidence that the organization has leveraged technology in learning, and an understanding of the organization's investment in employee learning and development.

So, what did the reviewers have to say about the winners? Here's a sampling of their comments:

- "Very strong linkage between training and business and job performance...."
- "[This organization] makes an above-average investment with obvious payoff to the business."
- "Extremely effective training governance structure with the support of top management."
- "The company has an outstanding learning and performance system which is effectively integrated with the business to achieve outstanding results."

In the words of Tony Bingham, ASTD's president and CEO, "Imagine a day when no organization ever questions the value of learning." In the pages that follow, you'll see how 10 organizations—a sampling of the BEST Award winners—use learning to increase performance, provide developmental opportunities to attract and retain top talent, and link all of that to individual and organizational success.

The 2004 ASTD BEST Award winners use learning as a strategic differentiator. They value learning as they value their ledger.

Congratulations to the Top 24 in 2004—a stellar group of winners.

Profiles by Jennifer J. Salopek

Winning Metrics

Here's a sampling of measures in which the BEST winning organizations excelled:

- ✓ High percentage of mandatory training time
- ✓ Inclusion of learning objectives as part of individual performance goals
- ✓ A C-level learning or knowledge officer in place
- ✓ Leaders who support learning enterprise-wide
- ✓ A clear link between learning and performance
- ✓ Contribution to strategic objectives for the enterprise
- ✓ Appropriate blend of learning delivery methods
- ✓ Consistent standards for assessment of learning
- ✓ High percentage of employees that receive learning and development opportunities

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2004 BEST Award Winners

1 Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L)

Defense Acquisition University
Fort Belvoir, VA
Employees: 134,431
Industry: Public administration

2 The Schwan Food Company

Marshall, MN
Employees: 25,000
Industry: Manufacturing



3 Unisys Corporation

Blue Bell, PA
Employees: 37,000
Industry: Information technology

4 PeopleSoft, Inc.

Pleasanton, CA
Employees: 11,914
Industry: Information

5 Booz Allen Hamilton

McLean, VA
Employees: 15,700
Industry: Professional services

6 TELUS

 Vancouver, BC, Canada
Employees: 25,400
Industry: Telecommunications


7 Lockheed Martin Corporation

Bethesda, MD
Employees: 125,000
Industry: Manufacturing

8 American Express Company

New York, NY
Employees: 78,236
Industry: Financial services

9 Toshiba America Business Solutions, Inc.

Irvine, CA 
Employees: 1971
Industry: Manufacturing

10 AT&T Corporation

Bedminster, NJ
Employees: 61,600
Industry: Information

11 Old Mutual

Cape Town, South Africa
Employees: 48,860
Industry: Life insurance

12 Whirlpool Corporation

Benton Harbor, MI
Employees: 68,000
Industry: Manufacturing

13 Wipro Technologies

Bangalore, India
Employees: 28,500
Industry: Information

14 HP

Palo Alto, CA 
Employees: 145,000
Industry: Information technology

15 Equity Residential

Chicago, IL
Employees: 6200
Industry: Real estate

16 Sterling Bank

Houston, TX
Employees: 1080
Industry: Financial services

17 Accenture

Chicago, IL
Employees: 100,000
Industry: Professional services

18 The Dow Chemical Company

Midland, MI
Employees: 46,000
Industry: Manufacturing

19 Northwire, Inc.

Osceola, WI
Employees: 122
Industry: Manufacturing

20 Ochsner Clinic Foundation

New Orleans, LA
Employees: 6000
Industry: Health care

21 Deloitte & Touche USA LLP

New York, NY
Employees: 29,444
Industry: Professional services

22 ICICI Bank Limited

Mumbai, India
Employees: 14,602
Industry: Financial services

23 KLA-Tencor Corporation

San Jose, CA
Employees: 4870
Industry: Manufacturing

24 MTR Corporation Limited

Hong Kong, SAR, China
Employees: 6600
Industry: Transportation



Defense Acquisition University

An organization that jumped from a traditional classroom environment to a 24/7 learning environment.

Learning at the point of need, they call it.

Fort Belvoir, Virginia. An organization's ability to learn from failure is one of the items assessed in ASTD's BEST Awards submissions. Our top winner in the 2004 awards program, the Defense Acquisition University, owes its very existence to a realization of failure and the seizure of that failure as an opportunity to drive the creation of a truly 21st-century learning organization.

DAU is the learning and development entity that supports the Department of Defense's Acquisition Technology and Logistics workforce. One hundred thirty thousand members strong, and deployed in 116 countries, AT&L staff perform the purchasing activities necessary to supply all the needs for U.S. armed forces. They spend tens of billions of dollars every year. To do this, they need to understand how to navigate government purchasing regulations (which change frequently). In addition, technical knowledge of the items they're purchasing—from Humvees to airplane parts—is required in order to communicate with other supply-chain members and make smart spending decisions.

In November 1990, a law was signed that mandated efforts to increase the professionalism of the AT&L workforce. The DoD's previously disparate technical training schools were formed into a consortium of 12 institutions; their purview was to provide certification training. However, after several years, it became evident that this system wasn't working.

The organizational structure made lines of authority and accountability ambiguous. A dispersed curriculum design process was ineffective and dispensing—slowly—outdated education. A failure to recognize and leverage the benefits of technology-assisted learning resulted in a lack of reach and inefficient use of resources.

In 1999, the position of chief executive officer was created, and Frank Anderson was hired to fill the role. His mandate was to centralize management, resources, curriculum, and organizations under a corporate university model. That unified corporate university would focus on providing technology-based, career-long learning to transform AT&L into the most motivated, agile workforce it could be.

Anderson had pursued a 34-year career in the Air Force, rising to brigadier general and serving as deputy assistant secretary for contracting and competition advocate general. "My background was a plus," he says. "It gave me a direct connection and linkage to the community I was asked to support." Further, joining DAU to direct a transformation permitted his fresh perspective: "I had no bias in terms of what DAU was already doing. I brought an openness to thinking about things differently."

Having lived on the receiving end as a customer, Anderson understood that perspective. He also feels that it facilitated his move into his new role at

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Illustration by Lisa Berghout



Unisys Corporation

“Our e-learning is not e-boring.”

Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. The folks at Unisys University believe in the concept of “career fitness.” The tools, training, and professional development activities necessary to keep Unisys employees career-fit are offered through eight schools under the university umbrella: leadership, technology, sales, services practice, marketing, business, human resources, and legal.

In alignment with the company’s lines of business, UU offers assessment, career development, leadership development, training, and consulting services to 37,000 employees, in 11 languages including Spanish, French, Portuguese, Mandarin, and German. UU’s 91 staff members—plus 10 global talent development professionals—report functionally to Virginia Clark, vice president of Unisys University.

Clark describes the U’s evolution: “We have taken a skills assessment approach at Unisys since 1990. The corporate university concept was embraced in 1998 and fully implemented in 1999. We had a whole training portfolio in place, but development activities were always closely linked. In 2003, we integrated the global talent development organization into Unisys University.

“Our approach emphasizes a three-step learning process: study, or training; feedback and coaching; and practice—the element that we really push. On an axis that compares effort and impact, we blend the three elements for maximum performance.”

In the past couple of years, UU has also been focused on another kind of blending: that of tradi-

tional training methods with technology. Surprisingly, 80 percent of all course delivery was instructor-led until about four years ago. After taking a hard look, UU also discovered that the course catalog was overweight and repetitive; that more than 200 vendors were providing courses; that a separate reimbursement was required for each employee who took an external course or an exam; that record-keeping on technical certifications—crucial information for proposal responses—was poor; and that the first-time pass rate for employees on certification exams was about 75 percent. (More than 3500 Unisys employees earn certifications every year.)

“The technology school began prototyping blended learning before we rolled it out throughout,” says Karen Petersack, associate dean of the technology school. “Our efforts were driven by the certification training. We could see how e-learning could impact it positively.”

Working with an outside partner, UU worked to

- reduce transaction and vendor costs
- reduce overall training costs by adopting a blended approach that leverages technology
- retain training quality
- improve the first-time pass rates on certification exams.

Taking a phased approach, UU initially blended its technical certification programs into a 50-50 split of instructor-led and online learning. Mentors, online labs, chat, and discussion sessions were put in place to support the online courses. Staff also reviewed

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PeopleSoft, Inc.

Turbo course development; phenomenal cost savings; smart use of e-learning. Read on for inspiration.

Pleasanton, California. When Mahbod Seraji joined PeopleSoft as vice president of PeopleSoft University almost three years ago, he was given a clear mandate by company leadership: Create a competency-based performance management system, from which PSU's new organizational development function would grow. To commence that task, Seraji and his staff first focused on creating competencies for the revenue-generating and customer-facing parts of the organization, such as sales, consulting, and customer service.

"We knew that development needed to be a big part of the performance management system," says Seraji, so he and his team devised a three-step process to help employees identify and fulfill their professional development needs. First, an employee has a conversation with his or her manager, reviewing organizational and departmental goals to understand the strategic focus of the company. Together, they use those strategic goals to guide the creation of the employee's individual goals, as well as competencies to be developed. Second, the manager provides coaching assistance for the employee. Actual development activities are the third step of the process, which resides on an intranet Website and links into a PeopleSoft-developed tool, Training Plan Builder. TPB presents suggested training resources specific to the employee's role, and may include core training recommendations, specialty training specific to product knowledge, and job-based competencies. Other

tools, job aids, scenarios, and e-learning courses are accessible through the intranet site. (The company's CEO has directed that every employee complete at least one course per quarter.)

Employee response to the Web-based system has been outstanding. Prior to its implementation, employees completed approximately 50 e-learning courses per month. Since TPB has been in place, that number has jumped to more than 500 course completions monthly. Each employee takes approximately seven courses per year. Further, employees are pleased with the system, awarding the Website and attendant resources the highest satisfaction score on the latest employee survey.

Managers are a crucial part of the process. The performance-management cycle is continuous, year-round. Managers must ascertain the proper skill set to successfully complete the year's goals as compared with employees' current status. If those skills are not obtained, managers face the possible incompleteness of goals. PSU provides managers with job aids to assist in the coaching step, which provides managers with an opportunity to assess skill development with an eye to goal achievement. Course-per-quarter completion is tracked by the business unit management teams; some groups base a portion of the quarterly employee bonus on successful completion.

Much of the supporting curriculum for employee development is created internally, especially for management and leadership development. In the past

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Whirlpool Corporation

Looking for innovation and finding it in the garage

Benton Harbor, Michigan. Gladiator Garage-Works is a complete line of products—rugged floor covering, storage systems, workbenches, even a steel-tread-clad refrigerator—for the consumer who prefers that his garage be his castle. It's the first standalone new brand launched by Whirlpool in several years. It is also proof that the company's new emphases on customer focus and innovation—and the training and development efforts that support them—are working.

In 1999, Whirlpool began to undergo a complete transformation of corporate intent and culture. It constituted a quantum change from the company's previous gestalt as "metalbenders"—a manufacturing operation concerned largely with cost and quality, and operating at a remove from the end user, who primarily purchases products through retail distributors such as Sears. To accomplish the transformation, the company identified three core competencies to be developed in its salaried employees, who make up 26 percent of Whirlpool's 68,000 employees: innovation, customer excellence, and customer-centered operating excellence. In 2001, Nancy Snyder's group, Leadership and Competency Creation, was formed to help the executive committee deploy the new strategy; as vice president, Snyder reports directly to the CEO.

The 12 professionals who make up Snyder's team ("LeadComp") are responsible for all of the aspects of transformation, which are gathered figuratively into an "embedment wheel" that embraces

visioning, communications, infrastructure, management and operations systems, culture, resources, leadership, knowledge management, and training and development.

"The first step in the transformation was to increase employees' awareness and understanding of customer loyalty, and why it is a strategic imperative for Whirlpool," Snyder says. The global learning organization partnered with regional learning functions to develop a series of learning products. The first was a learning map, an interactive tool that demonstrates the qualities of a customer-centered organization and the foundational knowledge necessary to create it. Learning groups of eight to 10 people across functions gathered, either in person or virtually, to review the learning map, working with representatives from the customer call center to understand the daily issues faced in assisting customers.

Employees also engaged in dialogue with their leaders to discover what they had learned from the map and develop action plans to implement the transformation. Leaders were provided with PowerPoint slides with leader notes to facilitate the discussions. "The map was deployed by regions, autonomously," Snyder explains. "There was much variation around the world in how its goals were cascaded."

The learning map was deployed to more than 18,000 employees worldwide, in seven languages, upon initial rollout. Now, more than 95 percent of the

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MTR Corporation Limited

Where even the passengers are trained to be safe

Hong Kong. In February 2003, an arsonist set fire to a milk carton filled with gasoline aboard a subway train in Daegu, South Korea. More than 200 people were killed, and hundreds more were injured. In the aftermath, six subway officials were arrested and the head of the subway corporation was fired.

In January 2004, an arsonist kindled a blaze aboard a moving train while it passed through an undersea tunnel in Hong Kong. Subway operations personnel extinguished the fire in less than 10 minutes, and no lives were lost.

Those examples are a testimonial to commitment to staff training and the continuous learning environment at MTR Corporation Limited, the company that operates the privatized underground railway system in Hong Kong. Alongside its systematic approach to identify the root causes of accidents, incidents, and delays, the company establishes special task forces to study major incidents on other railways. The task forces conduct "read-across" exercises to identify preventive and avoidance measures to be instituted in MTR's system. After Daegu, that task force identified 20 major actions to be taken, and training reinforcement was conducted by the learning unit.

The Hong Kong subway is one of the most heavily used in the world. It comprises 116.7 kilometers of track, 49 stations, and five maintenance depots. At peak times, 2.3 million passengers are carried each day. MTR employs about 6600 people, more than 4500 of whom are engaged in operations and

maintenance. Steven Cho is the training manager for operations; he and his training staff work to ensure the efficient, safe, and courteous service for which MTR has often been lauded.

"We aim for continuous improvement, and strive to make our training one of the best in the world," says Cho, who has been with the company for more than 20 years and was one of its first management trainees. Company leadership, in its pursuit of the balanced scorecard, has identified staff training as one of MTR's key management objectives; the director of human resources is a member of the executive committee. The learning unit has been ISO9001 accredited since 1996.

Frontline operations staff is required to attend mandatory refresher training programs every six months. Managers and supervisors reinforce the training through on-the-job exercises that are monitored by members of the learning unit. To identify additional needs, learning unit staff members hold regular training and qualification meetings with managers to discuss policy, priorities, and new initiatives and to ensure that training is meeting business objectives.

Strategic outsourcing is an established policy at MTR. The corporation ensures consistency and quality of service by requiring the same standard of training for contractors as for employees. Passengers also receive educational outreach on proper and safe ridership through the efforts of a Passenger Behavior Group; television commercials, promotional campaigns, and broadcasts

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HP

How training plays out in history's biggest tech merger—and beyond

Palo Alto, California. In May 2002, Hewlett-Packard merged with Compaq in the largest tech combination in history. The resulting corporation serves over one billion customers in 178 countries, and employs more than 145,000 people. "The total number of employees almost doubled," says Daisy Ng, vice president for Workforce Development and Organizational Effectiveness (WDOE). For Ng's learning division, new priorities meant centralizing practices and integrating and standardizing tools and processes to support the unique training requirements created by the combined entity's "extremely complex and sophisticated portfolio of products and services."

Creating and communicating a new corporate culture was also a priority. "We wanted to engage all of our employees with the new priorities strategy and operating model," says Ng. Senior executives had identified a need to maintain the momentum created by the merger and solidify market leadership during the transition. To do that, WDOE designed Fast Start, a blended program that facilitated the engagement of new teams and their understanding of how their own jobs and contributions were connected to the new company's strategy. The curriculum was delivered by managers who had received train-the-trainer instruction to conduct in-person sessions on values, operations, expectations, and the product portfolio. Rapid development techniques led to program creation in

30 days. Subsequently, 95 percent of employees, representing 16,000 work teams, participated in the training.

To create high-quality solutions, HP uses its leading-edge methodology, the Performance and Learning Solution Lifecycle Portal, which has been honored by the International Society for Performance Improvement. The portal's contents are based on industry and company best practices. It provides end-to-end processes, tools, and methodologies to analyze, select, design, develop, implement, and evaluate solutions. Those solutions can be focused solely on learning or can address a broader need by integrating several options, including organizational effectiveness interventions, custom-developed training, packaged solutions, knowledge networks, or information portals.

WDOE comprises 850 workforce development professionals who are aligned within the company by business and by function, but whose activities are centralized. HP has built the world's largest corporate learning management system; it provides e-learning and classroom course schedules, registrations, access to e-courses, and tracking. The company's Virtual Classroom, which was developed internally, is a totally interactive environment that can accommodate up to 2500 learners; the product is now being used by HP's customers and partners.

Rapid design and development techniques

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Wipro Technologies

Where talent is king and training is a competitive tool

Bangalore, India. Wipro Ltd. was formed in 1945 as a maker of vegetable oils and toilet soaps. Over the past six decades, the company has diversified into consumer care, lighting, engineering, and health care. In 1980, Wipro entered the information industry and began an aggressive campaign of growth and acquisitions that has resulted in a company ranked India's most valuable in 2001 by *Business Today*. In 2002, Wipro was the number 21 software services company in the world, according to *Business Week*, but the firm has its eyes firmly set on the number 1 spot. For 2003-2004, Wipro had revenues of more than US\$1 billion, and enjoys a market cap of more than \$10 billion.

The company's growth is attributable, and proportional, to its investment in its employee base, which is increasing exponentially. Numbering around 18,000 in 2003, Wipro's payroll—which is pretty much a moving target—counted 28,500 employees in mid-2004. Of those, 99 percent are full-time, and only 5 to 6 percent are administrative staff. Education and development are crucial to differentiating Wipro in its extremely competitive market space, believes vice chairman and president Vivek Paul, who has decreed that 5 percent of employees' billable time be devoted to learning activities. Chairman and managing director Azim Premji is described as passionate about learning; he believes that Wipro's customers are paying for talent, and places virtually no budget limitations on the company's training investments.

Those beliefs sit comfortably in the cultural context of India, a country in which "education is serious business," says Selvan Dorairaj, vice president for talent transformation. "It is a question of survival here. Education can create an exceptional career." Employees are hungry for training and development, according to Selvan, who reports consistent over-enrollment in virtually all of the company's offerings. Cultural issues are also the reason why a surprising 65 percent of training time is delivered in the classroom: "In India, we still believe that having an instructor in front of people is the best way to transfer knowledge."

In the corporate culture formed by Premji and Paul, which promotes and celebrates learning, the accounting for those activities is very different than in other companies. The costs for Selvan and his team of 70 full-time trainers, who have the capacity to train 1500 employees per day, are not measured as a line-item expense, but simply absorbed into overhead. Therefore, the company estimates its total annual training expenditure per employee at a modest \$130, but that only represents costs for workshops, invited lectures, and so forth that are not provided in-house. Under that procedure, learning and development accounts for less than one percent of payroll, but again, does not include expenditures that have already been committed. Further, return-on-investment is not measured in the traditional way.

"Our chairman and vice chairman set the tone

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Sterling Bank

Trying to be The Perfect Company

Houston, Texas. In banking, employee turnover—especially in teller positions—can be high. Industry-wide averages put the number at or above 30 percent annually. At Houston-based Sterling Bank, however, that number was reduced to 13 percent last year. “We buried the ‘T-word,’” says Wanda Dalton. “We literally had a funeral for the word ‘teller’ and have replaced it with the title ‘frontline manager.’” Sterling’s culture pushes the decision-making process out to employees; frontline managers don’t need to ask permission before cashing a check or providing a customer service. Rather, they’re encouraged to take a diagnostic approach and simply get a second look from another frontline manager.

The company, which employs about 1100 people, made an outstanding 63 internal promotions in 2003. A certification program designed to provide empowerment for decision making was developed in conjunction with employees themselves. All job knowledge was grouped and programs devised to create the certification curricula, which currently exist for frontline managers, office managers, lenders, and office CEOs. Similar programs for lending assistants and financial services managers are in development. Further, the bank has developed career progressions within those jobs; a transition program, based on learning and development goals, allows employees to move from entry status to silver, gold, and platinum levels.

Sterling Bank sets itself a challenging goal: to be “The Perfect Company”—a place where the

interests of customers, shareholders, employees, and the community are in perfect balance. Honored by *Fortune* as one of the best places to work in America for two consecutive years, the bank is committed to learning from failures; it empowers employees and encourages them to set “stretch” or “breakthrough” goals.

“Thus, some of our goals are made, and some are not. We don’t consider unattained goals a failure,” says Dalton. “In fact, we celebrate the successes that arose out of the attempt. Our experience is that we achieve more than we would if we had taken on a ‘reasonable’ goal.” By using even a missed goal as a learning experience, Sterling makes it safe for employees to take on stretch goals without fear.

Until recently, the bank’s learning unit was known as Sterling University. However, a review of goals and service revealed the name as “too confining,” according to Dalton, and one that seemed too tied to classroom learning. Along with the unit’s name change to Organizational and Career Development, employees have adopted a performance consulting and mentoring approach in addition to developing their skills as trainers. The department’s stated vision is, “Opening the Door of Discovery to Amazing Opportunities and Powerful Choices.” Sterling University still exists; it’s the corporate classroom, and it’s primarily designed for skills training.

As the bank expanded its operations into Dallas and San Antonio during the past three years,

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Illustration by Lisa Berghout



Northwire, Inc.

**No order is too small for this agile manufacturer.
The secret? A well-trained workforce.**

Osceola, Wisconsin. Northwire is a small, family-owned company that has manufactured custom wire and cable since 1972. Employing only 122 people, the company is agile and responsive to customer needs, and permits marketing to drive the direction of the company. What Northwire hears from its customers is that they want increasing customization, small order volume, and fast delivery. Those customers are typically original equipment manufacturers serving the industrial and medical industries; they want to be able to order 300 feet of cable, or 30,000 feet. Northwire has responded to those customer needs by installing state-of-the-art equipment into its 130,000-square-foot facility and by requiring no minimum order size.

“Our competitors, if they accept small orders at all—and many of them don’t—typically require 12 weeks to deliver custom wire and cable. We do it in 20 days,” says Linc Duncanson, chief operating officer. Now a US\$23 million company, Northwire boasts an extremely loyal customer base as well as 100 new customers this year alone.

However, Northwire’s competitive edge also creates an increasing demand for employees who are highly skilled in extrusion, the act of coating copper strands with plastic. “Our market responsiveness means that we have created jobs that are increasingly complex,” says Duncanson. In a town of 2500 souls, it was tough for Northwire to find qualified employees. Training was conducted post-hire, and was not always a success.

Prior to 2003, new employees received one-on-one on-the-job training for eight to 10 weeks, followed by supervised training of six to eight months. With three shifts working the line and varying trainers on duty, training could be inconsistent. In that environment, a failure to transfer knowledge most often took the form of defective product and quality issues. An employee with an identified skill gap was fed into a Corrective Counseling Action system. And although not necessarily cause and effect, the rate of turnover was unacceptable to the company, which lost six employees with less than six months of tenure during the first half of 2003.

“People were afraid of failure. With quality issues, the physical issues always get solved, but people must support those changes. We realized that we can’t be punitive; people must be able to make and understand mistakes,” says Duncanson.

To address those problems, Northwire created a learning solution, and moved down the supply chain to implement it. In an innovative partnership between public and private entities, the company developed its Extrusion Technology Certificate program in conjunction with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College. The two-semester certificate program is approved by the Wisconsin Technical School System, and all core class credits are transferable to other institutions.

Classes are taught at the Northwire plant and are open to the public. Many instructors are Northwire employees, and all were state-certified as

Northwire continued on page 62



Ochsner Clinic Foundation

HR as a strategic partner to drive organizational results

New Orleans, Louisiana. Ochsner Clinic Foundation was formed in 2001 when a hospital, a clinic, and an endowment institution were merged. The entity has a long and distinguished history: Dr. Alton Ochsner discovered the link between tobacco and lung cancer in 1939. In 1942, he and four partners established the first multispecialty group practice in the South. Currently, Ochsner has more than 6000 employees and nearly 600 physicians in more than 70 medical specialties and subspecialties.

Post-merger, Ochsner began to develop best-practice human resources and organizational development functions. "Our goal was to move past a support role to a strategic partner model," says Joan Mollohan, vice president of HR. The HR department took a gradual approach: In year one, an integration committee spanning all divisions set behavioral expectations and created a new performance-evaluation system. "We needed a mechanism to raise the bar of performance to achieve key organizational objectives," says Jan Brien, director of Organizational Development and Training (OD&T).

In a move to maximize customer service, 50 percent of the evaluation system is based on behaviors linked to six service principles. The remaining 50 percent of an employee's evaluation is based on technical job performance, which is guided by basic competency-based job descriptions.

The new behavioral component achieved the objective of a focus on customer service, yet it also caused some interpretation challenges among

employees and managers. "It was a struggle," says Brien. "People were unsure about the specific behaviors that differentiated 'outstanding' customer service from 'exceeds' or 'achieves' standards." However, continual refinement of systems was something Ochsner had planned for. "Flexible HR structures were established instead of hastily creating structures that might not be effective. One of our goals was to create structures that could be integrated into existing models while allowing for future improvements," she says.

In year two, a set of behavioral "anchors" was created—specific example behaviors for every service principle and every rating level to better differentiate performance. Brien notes, "This brought reliability and consistency to the ratings system." As a result of defining behavior anchors within each performance standard, the employee satisfaction measure, "I know what is expected of me," spiked in the three months of the rollout. By improving the reliability of measurement and defining behavioral expectations, employee satisfaction increased.

Every employee at Ochsner completes a personal learning map as part of the annual performance evaluation process. "The learning map is a tool to monitor both technical/professional development and expected behavioral performance," says Brien. Map goals are defined as action steps for employee development in areas targeted from the performance evaluation and are monitored throughout the year with recommended check-

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DAU continued from page 32

DAU: "I think it's easier to make the transition into learning by starting out with a knowledge of the business—knowing the mission side, then learning and shaping the training."

The AT&L workforce that DAU supports has increased by 32 percent in the last year. Further, it's buffeted by the same demographic trends that affect all employers: By 2005, almost half of the total workforce will be eligible to retire; by 2007, the number reaches 70 percent. As DAU strives to train a replacement generation of workers, its student population has increased by 82 percent since 1998; its US\$100 million annual budget, however, has remained unchanged. Clearly, radical innovation was required to continue to meet the training and education needs of the AT&L community.

"We had to justify our use of resources in being the best that we could be," Anderson explains. "We couldn't accept 'good' as good enough."

DAU adopted its corporate university model in 2000. Soon thereafter, the guiding star of its mission was established: the Performance Learning Model, which was personally envisioned, designed, and implemented by Anderson.

"The PLM evolved from thinking less about training, and more about deploying learning assets that are responding to evolving practices," says Anderson.

The PLM includes four main thrusts:

- certification and assignment-specific training
- continuous learning
- performance support and rapid deployment training
- knowledge sharing.

This learning strategy caused an enormous paradigm shift from the traditional classroom environment of the 20th century to the total learning environment of the 21st century. Focusing on enhancing workforce capabilities, it pinpoints how and where employees learn and their ongoing needs.

Under the previous consortium model, AT&L employees received 2.2 million hours of classroom instruction per year and about 375,000 hours of distance learning. Since DAU was established, with its e-learning emphasis, AT&L employees can learn 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The deployment of "learning assets at the point of need," Anderson's catchphrase, means that much of that learning is transparent to the learner. In a direct response to the problems of the old model, the university's reach has also been extended considerably, touching more learners than ever before.

In 2003, DAU provided 2.2 million hours of classroom instruction, plus 1.5 million hours of e-learning through more than 1100 course offerings. The number of graduates increased by 75 percent, and more than 40,000 students accessed online courses. Further, 18,000 employees used knowledge sharing systems per week; more than 200,000 people, including partners and suppliers, are registered users of the continuous learning center.

Cost savings and efficiencies are measurable and significant:

- DAU staff has been reduced from 643 to 540.
- Annual student travel costs have been

reduced from \$33 million to \$18 million.

- The average cost per student has declined 42 percent.

However, it's not all about costs. As Anderson notes, "People can't memorize everything, but they need to know everything." Fully 50 percent of DAU content exists in electronic format, and 70 percent of students are touched by some sort of e-course or support tool. "We are fighting the 'use it or lose it' notion of learning. We are trying to create a greater reach-back capability to knowledge, so that people can do their jobs."

One of the keys to DAU's success is its uncompromising alignment with the goals and objectives of senior leadership. "Leadership owns what we do," Anderson says. "Our job is to facilitate senior leaders' ability to develop their workforce so that they can excel. Learning *should* be viewed as the responsibility of the senior leadership team and is at its best when it is."

The degree and quality of that alignment is part of how Anderson assesses DAU's value-added contributions—and they're paying off. "We have competition in the form of outside providers, who constantly try to convince our senior leadership that they can do it better than we can. We must be the best in town. And, although our budget hasn't increased, it hasn't decreased. We are getting outstanding support given the current environment."

Being close to, and aligned with, senior leadership also enables DAU to be extremely responsive to changing learning needs. It has recently

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created a rapid deployment training capability: When major policies or business practices change that affect how AT&L staff do business, DAU teams create new learning material and place it in a digital repository within five days of the change, and send out mobile training teams that provide on-site instruction.

For example, after a change in guidance for running a major weapons system engendered a comprehensive rewrite of the requirements process, DAU was offering training on the new procedures within 48 hours. "We are linked to the senior leaders who own that process. As they were making changes, we were tied in so that, as soon as the changes were released, we could integrate the requirements process into our training," says Joe Johnson, executive director of the Planning, Policy, and Leadership Support Group at DAU.

The Performance Learning Model extends learning assets throughout the AT&L enterprise. Suppliers, partners, and shareholders all have access to courses, performance support tools, the Continuous Learning Center, and the Knowledge Sharing System. DAU has more than 85 strategic partners. Partners are other corporate universities, such as those at Boeing and Lockheed Martin, as well as professional organizations, academic institutions, and certifying bodies. Suppliers are those vendors from whom AT&L workers buy directly. Senior leaders are viewed as shareholders, and frequently participate in executive-level training as well as leading lectures or partici-

pating in case studies. "We believe that all of our leaders should teach," Anderson says.

Suppliers can also take advantage of DAU's program startup workshop. Developed jointly with industry, the workshop is bundled with a new or modified contract engagement to facilitate issues on both sides of the purchasing table. "It is true action learning, conducted in context, using best practices," says Anderson. DAU is also extending its reach by partnering with other organizations, such as the Air Armament Academy at Eglin Air Force Base, to build a learning relationship and share learning assets. In this way, continuity and consistency of instruction throughout DoD's AT&L learning organizations can be ensured.

In the past year, DAU has deployed its internally designed second-generation LMS, an open architecture that is fully interoperable with other standard products. In December, it completed development and began testing a new mobile learning capability for AT&L employees who do not have consistent online access. It allows learners to "check out" courses and exams (questions are encrypted) by downloading them to a laptop or PDA and complete the work without an Internet connection. Learners can then reconnect and "check in" to the course, which seamlessly uploads data to the LMS. Thus, location, connection, and bandwidth cease to be issues of concern to the learner. *

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course catalogs and vendor relationships, eventually cutting the courses by more than 900 and the vendors from 200-plus to 12. Those vendors' offerings are managed through a system created within UU that works on a voucher system and automates individual transactions. Now, UU receives one monthly invoice and cuts one check. The first-time pass rate is now 95 percent.

The blended approach has been widened out of the technology school and leveraged throughout the corporate university. Since 2000, UU has decreased its instructor-led training from 80 percent to 23 percent, and increased e-learning from 20 percent to 77 percent. According to learner feedback, 93 percent are satisfied. Financial results, from FY2002 alone, are staggering:

- more than US\$2 million saved in development costs
- more than \$2.5 million saved in student travel costs
- more than \$11 million saved in vendor delivery costs.

Changes throughout the organization accompanied and supported the changes within UU, says Clark, particularly in the areas of investment planning and corporate priorities. Continually improving practices, UU now takes a top-down approach to understanding business units' strategic goals (Clark says that the previous bottom-up approach resulted in "bigger standard deviations" in requirements) and to the needs of the various geographic regions. By being closely and quickly aligned, "Funding is driven down to what's important to do."

Since the full deployment of e-learning, more than 32,000 unique students—83 percent of the total—completed more than 170,000 courses in 2003. That's because "our e-learning is not e-boring," Clark emphasizes. For example, a character who is a caricature of a Unisys executive appears in an online adventure based on *The Matrix Reloaded*. Designed to help sales-school students develop client business analysis skills, the course has participants navigate through different relationships and encounter characters inside the matrix, to discover which areas of the business they should research to obtain meetings with executives and position Unisys to solve the executives' business problems.

In another sales-school course, the premise of *Mission: Impossible* is adapted to send participants on multiple missions with an agent to build and deliver persuasive presentations. Following the online course, participants attend a one-and-a-half day instructor-led event. Back on the job, a Web-based application tool can be used to reinforce the learning and create a presentation outline that can be adapted and reused repeatedly.

For the Unisys employees, there are about 450 defined roles organized into "career bands." About 80 percent of these have competencies associated with them. Skill assessments in those competencies lead employees down career paths, which have been developed for 50 percent of functions. Organizational information on career paths resides in the Career Fitness Center, an online, one-stop source for career information and tools; it was accessed by 100 percent of employees

in 2003. Training designed to orient employees to career paths was taken by more than 800 people in two weeks.

"There is no paternalistic approach," says Clark. "Employees are advised about the possibilities within a particular function as opposed to a step-by-step process." An employee self-service area within the CFC includes development planning pieces, such as tips. After reviewing career path possibilities, employees can self-select skills to develop. All options—covering the three steps of study, feedback and coaching, and practice—are delivered to their desktops.

A learning and development committee advises each school on curriculum offerings and alignment with business units and goals. The dean of each school reports directly to the chairman, and each school has a curriculum manager.

Clark emphasizes that Unisys University employees are "never training order-takers. Their consulting approach means that, nine of 10 times, there are other things going on, and training is not the answer." She also reports that their understanding of, and alignment with, the lines of business has paved the way for "opportunistic consulting." *

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two years, PSU has been on a drive to reduce reliance on third-party vendors. Whereas previous content development costs for management curricula ranged from US\$135 to more than \$2000 per person, they have been brought down to \$17-\$26 per person in the past year.

PSU focuses on enterprise-wide training and development, while individual schools support the various business units: sales, consulting, products, and technology. A task force composed of representatives from PSU and the schools meets monthly to collaborate and avoid duplication of effort; however, PSU owns the infrastructure for training design and delivery. PSU also provides consulting services to the schools on needs analysis and instructional design, and can do train-the-trainer sessions or facilitate delivery of courses through e-learning and blended methods.

PSU's 35 employees work in five groups: product and application training, technical design, management and leadership development, operations, and international, supplemented by contractors on an as-needed basis. The operations group supports the efforts of the others by managing the LMS, recruiting faculty, securing materials, generating reports, and so forth.

Training delivery has been at a ratio of 75 percent technology-enabled to 25 percent instructor-led for the past couple of years. However, Seraji reports an increasing emphasis on online learning, and notes, "PeopleSoft has created an infrastructure that allows offerings to be put together in a couple of hours."

Lengthy classroom courses have been convert-

"PeopleSoft has created an infrastructure that allows offerings to be put together in a couple of hours."

ed to "academy-style training," which refers to breaking content up into three- or four-hour chunks delivered by an instructor via live Webcast. Students around the globe can ask questions, see demos, and participate in hands-on activities. The lectures are delivered every other day for two to three weeks, and are supplemented by activities to be completed in PSU's hosted learning environment, such as self-study, reading assignments, and exercises. The academies have reduced travel costs for both instructors and students by more than \$9 million.

Academies are not reserved for hard-skills or technical training, but are used to deliver almost any subject matter, including teambuilding. "Virtual teams are a reality now," says Seraji. "Their members should learn in the same way they work." After PeopleSoft acquired J.D. Edwards last year, which added 5000 employees to the ranks, PSU

designed and delivered transition training for managers and employees. New managers received courses on creating and managing virtual teams as part of this effort. Former J.D. Edwards employees received a two-day course called "Destination PeopleSoft," which included sections on corporate culture, change management, and technical tools and resources. The transition training has been followed by technical cross-training on the products of both companies.

"This training has allowed for much tighter synergy between the development, sales, and consulting forces by making sure everyone can speak to both sets of products and technologies," says Seraji.

PSU is in the process of creating a framework for the company's talent management process. Using input from top executives, the PSU team will craft a system that crosses competency-based selection with organizational needs to identify key individuals and future leaders. Following an intensive assessment process, coaching and feedback drive the creation of an individual development plan.

PSU's management and leadership development group focuses on business skills and leadership development. Identified leaders can take courses from PSU or its partners. The curriculum focuses on four key areas: managing people, managing customers, managing operations, and managing business. The management and leadership development area develops even more online offerings in-house than the other groups.

As part of its consulting activities, PSU undertakes other projects. For example, 360 feedback

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evaluations were done for all client executives last year. A need for a more consultative, less product-oriented approach was uncovered. Benchmarking against best practices, a consulting skills course was designed to target areas of weakness and to promote consistent standards for consulting across the organization. On another project, an organizational scan tool was used to uncover nontraining business issues. Finding that some solutions were outside PSU's scope, the team went to its partners for assistance. "The scan tool works phenomenally, and permits us to escalate organizational issues to the appropriate people," says Seraji.

PSU takes full advantage of its relationships with its human resources business partners and school leaders to determine training requirements for each business unit. "Our ability to work collaboratively with our constituents at PeopleSoft has been the main driver for our success," says Seraji. "We get together with our school leaders and other representatives from the businesses at the beginning of each year and prioritize the needs as a team. We then meet on a monthly basis to ensure that we're on the right track and make any necessary adjustments to accommodate the shift in strategies or priorities, as the business dictates. *

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salaried workforce has completed the map experience. Employee understanding of customer loyalty and the global strategy, as measured on an annual survey, has increased from 63 to 98 percent.

The second step of the transformation was to instruct salaried employees in the three new core competencies. A series of nine e-learning courses—about 26 hours of instruction—guides participants to basic certification. Completion of the certification is a balanced scorecard item and is tied into the bonus structure. Job families and a three-step self-assessment tool assist leaders in targeting employees to pursue proficiency and mastery skill sets. Those participants undertake a blended learning curriculum that combines rigorous workshops with project assignments to ensure the immediate application of classroom learning, a hallmark of Whirlpool's development approach.

All salaried employees complete an annual personal development plan. Upon completing the three-step self-assessment, employees access the company's knowledge management site to determine how to close any development gaps, through such mechanisms as e-learning, classroom training, or mentoring. As they do so, they are assigned projects that require the application of the new skills. "This application stage also allows the employee and leadership team to assess the impact on organizational performance," says Snyder.

The knowledge management site represents the company's first incursion into e-learning. "Our company leadership first understood the need for a knowledge management system as we began to attempt to embed innovation in our people," says

Snyder. Somewhat overwhelmed by the potential size of the project, her team employed a strategy of building "just enough" to launch the site, and focused on the innovation portion first. Now, it contains libraries of studies, best practices, a portfolio tracking system for current and past project documentation, and a Meet the Expert area that facilitates the sharing of tacit knowledge.

"Anyone at Whirlpool can innovate," says Snyder. "We celebrate innovation from anywhere and everywhere, and build it into every step of the product development process. We want to encourage a resilient, risk-taking culture in which people are willing to learn from their mistakes." Her group has also worked to move resources—money—down in the organization and to give employees more autonomy. "We want to get employees to vote with their feet and find innovation projects that harness their passions. The knowledge management site democratizes knowledge and allows people to organize affinity groups around their passions."

Designed to harness and organize those passions is a tool called the Brand Idea Pipe. The pipe tracks innovation and strategic actions through each stage of the process. Each project has a set of metrics that is tracked, such as revenue, people resources, expense, and capital. It also has key documentation, including key learnings, and each project group must identify its learnings before entering the next stage of the process. "Any employee can look at innovations being tracked through the system and volunteer to help," says Snyder.

Such was the case with a team of employees who, in 2002, had an idea for a product that would fulfill an unmet customer need. Whirlpool's vision is "Every home, everywhere," which, according to Snyder, means investigating every room in the traditional home and finding new spaces to play in. One such untapped area was the garage. The team invited colleagues to a weekend get-together; using the company's innovation toolkit, they tinkered with an idea. Within a week, the innovative team had developed their idea and presented it to the Innovation Board.

Although the Board loved the idea, they didn't have the full funding the team required. They needed a lab to build prototypes; so, the team persuaded a skilled friend to come in after hours to help. In less than six months—a 75 percent improvement in product development cycle time—they launched the product; Gladiator GarageWorks is now a stand-alone brand and is described as a "roaring success."

Now, Snyder and her team are working on how to deploy the new strategy to the company's hourly employees in factories worldwide. "We are still struggling to understand the requirements of how core competencies can be developed on the manufacturing line," she says. The company's manufacturing leadership has adopted customer-centered manufacturing, and is teaching factory workers about the customers and trying to bring them closer together. The team is also customizing innovation tools and practices for factory use. "If the new strategy is not changing every job, then it's not working," Snyder says. *

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[for learning and development]," Selvan explains. "They believe that talent transformation is a credibility-building factor among our customers. Therefore, we do not measure ROI. Rather, we ask ourselves, Are we differentiating ourselves from a customer-acquisition point of view? That, for us, is a simple reflection of ROI."

Customer acquisition and retention are paramount for Wipro, which seeks to form long-term partnerships with its customers; 90 percent of its business is from repeat customers. Further, it attempts to move relationships up the value chain, from time-and-materials software development projects to full-service consulting. The mission of all t&d activities is "to nurture individuals and teams to deliver enhanced customer satisfaction through learning and development."

The company has identified seven dimensions to the talent it wishes to develop in its employees:

- technical proficiency
- domain skills (industry knowledge)
- languages
- project management
- behavioral skills
- leadership
- business skills.

All employees, regardless of role or tenure, are eligible for leadership training through the company's five-level leadership development program, which begins with the entry-level program, Impact, and continues on to the Strategic Leadership Program, the highest level. Business skills are a recent area of emphasis for Wipro, and focus on teaching employees about various

functional areas, such as finance or sales and marketing. All employees also participate in a mandatory Wipro values course, which is delivered personally by Premji and followed by an open-forum Q&A session. Those values emphasize humanity, innovation, integrity, and delivering value for money.

Learning is extended along the supply chain. Local colleges, which educate many of Wipro's eventual employees, are seen as vital partners. Through a program called Industry-Institution Connect, Wipro provides training to the engineering faculty of those institutions. An intensive 15-day classroom session, supplemented by a month of online learning, brings faculty members up-to-date on technology trends and corporate needs, and helps them to understand what is expected in the corporate world. "In this way, the faculty can integrate our needs into their curriculum, and we do not have to repackage the graduates that colleges are sending out," says Selvan.

Large customers receive a training program that's bundled with the start of an engagement. Entitled Working with Wipro, the program, conducted through videos and classroom activities, covers company values, processes, and jargon, as well as any cross-cultural issues clients might encounter while working with Wipro's mostly Indian employees. Once established, clients receive a "Cocoon," a dedicated extranet site that hosts project status reports, metrics, performance analysis, reports, best practices, and so forth; a Wipro employee is responsible for the site and answers client questions.

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Directly or indirectly, all learning and development efforts are aimed at equipping employees to move “from coders to consultants,” and carry the theme “Blending with Business,” which emphasizes four goals: customer acquisition, excellence in execution, moving up the value chain, and creating “rainmakers.”

“If those four goals are being achieved, and an impact is being made, then we feel that our investment in talent transformation has paid off,” says Selvan.

When Wipro’s system architects are working with customers, many opportunities come their way to enhance customer satisfaction—to be rainmakers. However, many of those architects simply didn’t know how, or were constrained by cultural norms. Wipro received complaints from customers that contract personnel simply weren’t probing or assertive enough. So the company formed the Wipro Behavioral School. Based directly on customer feedback, the six-month program emphasizes CRISP: communication, relationship management, interpersonal skills, self-realization, and personal effectiveness. Those behaviors and skills are taught under an “inform, perform, transform” methodology; participants spend 12 days in the classroom interspersed by 15 days of practice, during which they interact with faculty. In this transformation stage, participants complete 20 to 24 behavioral modules over a period of six months.

“Learning from mistakes is a conscious concept that is built into the company. We know that

you can’t be perfect from the start,” says Selvan. Indeed, mistakes—or at least sharing them—is celebrated through a regular award known as “All for the Best.” The award is designed to encourage employees to populate the company’s lessons-learned database; supervisors are encouraged to nominate their subordinates for this award. “It encourages people to take risks and not be diffident,” says Selvan.

Learning is linked to individual performance through the company’s appraisal management system, the People Capability Maturity Model, created and certified by the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie-Mellon University. As part of the P-CMM, 22 competencies in terms of behaviors are defined, each of which can be assessed at one of five levels. Completely online and automated, the system produces skill gap analyses and is linked directly with the Wipro Behavioral School: The five CRISP elements outlined above revolve around those 22 competencies. CMU’s Software Engineering Institute also assesses P-CMM users; Wipro is the first company in the world to earn Level 5 recognition, the highest as defined by the Software Engineering Institute. *

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were also used to create a senior leadership program to accelerate the enhancement of critical leadership skills and enable senior leaders to successfully transition into their roles. “This was critical after the merger,” says Ng. “Senior leadership must understand and unleash the potential of the new company. We wanted to develop competent, passionate people with a winning attitude who could collaborate across boundaries.”

The program, which took 120 days to develop from conception to pilot and 120 days from pilot to full deployment, takes participants through a six-month experience that includes:

- assessment and feedback sessions with executive coaches
- two hours of e-learning on strategy and financial essentials
- a 4.5 day workshop/business simulation exercise
- coaching follow-up
- 360-degree skills assessment
- an executive challenge exercise via virtual meetings over the Web.

Following the successful deployment of that program, WDOE was asked to develop a similar one for the next level of management: managers of teams and of managers. Further, it was asked to do so in half the time of the original aggressive schedule—120 days from conception to deployment—and to reflect the challenges of middle management, distribute the program globally, and decrease the length of the class while increasing the number of

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participants. That was accomplished by recording live presentations to senior management and using them in sessions around the world; re-using the simulation exercises while adapting them to the middle-manager level; adding a custom e-learning module on business essentials to the previous two hours of instruction; and leveraging back-end processes already in place.

One hundred percent of HP employees are eligible for leadership development opportunities. Individual contributors can take advantage of more than 150 e-learning modules. Managers participate in a program called Driving for Business Results, while managers of managers receive Breakaway Leadership, which focuses on behavior and attitude. Employees at the executive level participate in a program called Leading Business Systems; company CEO Carly Fiorina was involved in its development and attends the first and last days of the program. The participants take a nine-month journey of 360 feedback, coaching, and e-learning that culminates in a five-day competitive simulation in which they must run HP for three years, then make a presentation to a mock board of directors. Coaches sit in on the simulation and give daily feedback, then work with the participants for six months after completion of the program. At that time, the graduates themselves become coaches.

Customer education is also a crucial part of the learning offerings at HP. More than 200,000 people access learning annually through HP's 80 Customer Education Centers and 200 partner

locations around the world. The centers offer 250 courses, delivered in person or through HP's Virtual Classrooms and its Virtual Lab. The corporate Website offers more than 3000 online courses. Customers in small and medium businesses have access to a complete online learning resource, including classes and mentors. Corporate purchases of HP products include free self-paced training programs or access to a virtual classroom for 50 people for up to a year. Training packages are also offered with product support contracts.

The company's services division provides a global technical training resource center to customers and partners. It provides online support, training, and discussion forums for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. It includes technical knowledge bases and more than 3000 self-paced, Web-based training programs and instructor-led Web seminars. Customers can create new forums and topics as they wish.

The process to link learning with individual and organizational performance is "very systematic," says Ng. It starts with business goals developed in four areas through the use of the balanced scorecard: employees, operations, financials, and customers. Those goals are then cascaded down through the organization, with each business and function outlining its objectives to support the company goals. WDOE, although centralized, assures its alignment with those cascaded scorecards by assigning a development team to each business, region, and function; those teams assess performance

gaps each quarter and identify development and performance improvement needs to achieve the scorecard goals. For individual development, role-specific curriculum roadmaps outline critical learning solutions for high performance. Employees' progress against development objectives is assessed by managers during the annual performance planning process.

The Kirkpatrick four-level model is used to measure satisfaction and impact. For skills that require certification, testing ensures training transfer. To measure the application of knowledge and skills on the job, HP uses a variety of methods, including surveys and structured observation. Finally, the impact on business results is measured, and those results are shared across solution portfolios to each business, function, and region.

"We run Workforce Development and Organizational Effectiveness like a business, and complete a quarterly business review," says Ng. "We work from business results, to the balanced scorecard, to impact and evaluation, then that process loops back.*"

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"There was no need for distant employees to travel to the home office," Dalton says. "We wanted to deliver products out to employees in their locations."

Performance consultants (PCs) hold live online chats regarding specific business areas, usually products. Weekly threaded discussions cover procedures, policies, and issues and are facilitated by one of the PCs. A new learning management system allows PCs to use their time more efficiently, and the bank has made a bold move into e-learning; currently, 55 percent of training is delivered through a blended approach. The bank also has a strong commitment to mentoring and executive coaching.

Training in bank operations and culture begins immediately after a new employee is hired. Every Monday, all new bank employees are brought together for a half-day "enrollment" session. Along with guiding them through the necessary HR paperwork, performance consultants discuss corporate culture, opportunities for continuing growth and development, vision and values, and the importance of orientation. New hire orientation sessions are held monthly for a full day, as a program entitled Deepening the Sterling Experience is conducted. Senior bank officers spend up to 90 minutes with the new employees, "demonstrating that we are committed to their personal and professional success," says Dalton. Sixty days later, after they have had an opportunity to work at their locations, new employees are brought back for a follow-up session, and asked whether their experience

Sterling employees are encouraged to consider, if there were no barriers, what could be accomplished?

was consistent with what they had been told. That, too, is a learning opportunity for the bank: "Any issues are researched and escalated if necessary to ensure that we provide the ultimate working and learning environment."

Sterling has devised a set of measures to guide its "Perfect Company" vision; the president and CEO report on these to employees on a quarterly basis. Company-wide processes support the incorporation of learning and development in objectives and performance goals. During the annual Performance Excellence Process, employees participate with their managers in assessing knowledge, skills, and behaviors as they relate to corporate values and cultures. Each employee also has a quarterly Performance Scorecard that defines individual accountability in five standard areas: production, quality and service, job knowledge, company and community contribution, and personal growth and development. The rating that is pro-

duced by the scorecard is tied directly to quarterly incentive bonuses that are tied to the profitability of the organization. The company is currently working on developing individual development plans for each employee as well.

All employees are eligible for leadership development training. In Sterling's signature Leaders-Edge program, participants are brought together for six classroom days, followed by coaching calls, over a 12-week period. The experiential learning exercise revolves around teams of participants conducting "breakthrough projects," which Dalton defines as "exploring ideas that don't seem reasonable, are not a logical progression. They're encouraged to consider, if there were no barriers, what could be accomplished?" Teams move through the exploration process by using the "Five Why" rule: Ask, "Why?" five times before attempting to solve a problem. The program culminates in teams' project presentations to the rest of the class and their explanation of what they've learned.

The learning unit also employs the Five Why approach, as it conducts performance analysis or needs assessment to all requests for training. "Often, solutions for closing the performance gap are not courses at all," says Dalton. "In some instances, employees do have the skills and knowledge to handle the task, but don't perform effectively. By asking the Five Whys, we may find that they lack the tools or resources to perform the task, or that the employee lacks the motivation to be successful in the current job. If that's the case, we can provide alterna-

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tives to training, such as coaching, teambuilding exercises, mentoring, or possibly recommend job reassignment.”

Sterling concentrates not only on service to external customers, but to internal ones as well. Through a process called Service Standards, units are measured on the service they provide to each other. It was discovered, however, that in some cases units were pushing themselves too hard: “Often, we were pushing to meet deadlines, at the expense of overtime, stress, and so forth, when the need for resolution was not as soon as the timeline we had imposed on ourselves,” says Dalton. A cross-section of employees rewrote the Service Standards in 2003, after considering the constraints placed on employees and the requirements of providing excellent service to external customers. The new standards embrace reality, calling for “affordable internal service and extraordinary external service.”

“The productivity gains from this process allowed us to increase our workflow without increasing our staff,” Dalton says.

Performance consultants have recorded improvement in several metrics, including time to employee readiness or competence. In 2002, the average time for a newly acquired unit to reach competence was 16 weeks. In 2003, that time was cut to 12 weeks, facilitated by front-end needs analysis and finely honed targets. Post-conversion support and training is now provided to fill any gaps and to further teambuilding efforts. *

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technical-school faculty. Courses include such offerings as extrusion controls and operation, production tracking systems, quality assurance, workplace safety, and manufacturing practices. Some courses are taken from WITC’s Applied Engineering Associates degree program; ETC graduates can apply their certificate coursework toward that degree. Although some ETC enrollees are already Northwire employees, most are recent high-school graduates. The company awards six scholarships per year to the most promising candidates, and, although eventual employment at the company is not guaranteed, Northwire has hired all of the ETC graduates thus far.

The results of this innovative program are measurable. Training hours have been reduced from 320 to 160. ETC graduates earn \$30,000 in their first year of employment; under the previous pay-for-skill system, the average starting salary was \$23,500. “The skill level of people entering our production workforce has risen twofold,” says Duncanson. Under the former system, only one or two people could be trained simultaneously; however, the ETC program can accommodate eight to 10 students. Further, the number of employees requesting career development plans has increased five times.

Northwire’s job structure comprises three skill levels: trainee, operator, and technician. Trainees follow a daily learning schedule, and supervisors review skill competency weekly. Once all learning modules are completed, trainees undergo a formal skill assessment. If satisfactory, they are promoted

to operator. The process to progress from operator to technician is much the same. Once the technician level is reached, annual skill and performance evaluations are performed, based on two to three performance improvement objectives developed each year.

Before the institution of the ETC program, it typically took employees 1600 work hours—or 40 weeks—to progress from trainee to operator. ETC graduates qualified for the operator level in five weeks.

“We measure our success through the employee skill levels,” Duncanson says. “We want every employee to achieve technician-level skills, and to be cross-trained in another position, also at that level. There’s no holding anyone back here.”

Aside from the ETC program, Northwire conducts employee training on such subjects as forklift operation, safety procedures, and hazardous materials handling. Some of this is conducted via e-learning courses delivered to the computers at every workstation; satisfactory completion of required training is fed into a company-wide training matrix and tracked by the human resources department. Technical training is also offered to customer engineers and purchasing people to help them understand what questions to ask of Northwire and how to get what they need.

At monthly all-hands meetings, Duncanson and other executives discuss business performance and share information on the open-book company. Duncanson also holds regular gatherings he calls “Touch-Base” meetings, in which he articulates and takes questions about corporate

values: accountability, reliability, honesty, mutual support, and respect.

Through their computer workstations, employees have access to data on set-up times, run rates, earned hour ratios, and the amount of scrap produced. Trends are charted, and supervisors discuss them with workers twice each shift. This information is important to employees, as quality rates and controllable scrap are two measures that determine monthly incentive compensation, which has averaged 8 percent over the past eight months.

In the next few months, Northwire will be working on converting more of the ETC curriculum to e-learning programs. The company is also opening a second plant, in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, and the ETC program will be replicated at El Paso (Texas) Community College to support that facility.

Learning initiatives occur within a corporate construct framed by Northwire's Five Icons of Quality: manufacturing to specifications, on-time delivery, controlled costs, a clean and safe work environment, and continuous improvement. This construct and the corporate values are vital to Northwire's success. *

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points. Based on learning needs assessment, and the study of employee and leader learning maps, the OD&T department develops learning opportunities that can directly support the needs of the organization. As a result of the learning map process and course offerings that address employee development needs, Ochsner has seen a 250 percent increase in attendance at training and development events.

Employee training and development needs are met by the Ochsner Learning Institute, which was formed in 2001 and is part of the OD&T department. The Learning Institute administers and tracks annual required development time, as well as courses and other solutions to close performance gaps. Described as "Ochsner's commitment to learning," employees are required to fulfill eight hours of mandatory learning each year; the requirements are 24 hours for supervisors and 40 hours for leaders. The Learning Institute offers customized training within departments, based on needs assessment; survey and assessment options for department, team, or individual improvement; and consulting.

Ochsner developed its own learning management system in-house in partnership with the information systems department. Known as RITS—Registration and Information Tracking System—it allows for automated scheduling of employees for training and a My Profile system for tracking. RITS metrics are linked to the organizational dashboard so that the organization can monitor its progress toward creating a true

learning culture. Instructor-led training comprises 80 percent of delivery. "Stand-up training will always be a key training delivery method for us. We strongly believe in the interactive learning from other students in a course," says Brien.

Fifteen percent of training at Ochsner is delivered by other methods, including a video library and a program called Reading on the Run. Reading on the Run offers employees the opportunity to download articles pertinent to development areas, as identified on the learning map, and to complete an assessment to demonstrate comprehension. As the organization works to move more material to an e-learning platform, the video and reading programs will be piloted first.

Ochsner launched its Leadership Institute in 2003. Serving a target audience of about 450, from the supervisor to vice president levels, the institute is based on GE's Crotonville model and is housed in a dedicated facility. Its offerings are designed with the goal of providing a targeted focus on the organization's performance management system and the integration of different management practices. Also taking a page from Crotonville, the institute encourages leaders teaching leaders: "Nineteen of our 21 executives are instructors," Brien says. Its curriculum is driven by Warner Thomas, the chief accounting officer and chief operating officer; and Patrick Quinlan, the CEO—both act as key institute instructors. "Support from leadership is one of our key differentiators."

The Leadership Institute serves to deliver the 40 hours per year of professional development

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—beyond industry-specific training—required by Ochsner. The Nursing Academy, one of its branches, provides nurse leadership training, which is contracted through the Health Care Advisory Board. Leaders must create personal learning maps just as all employees do. Learning maps are the outcome of the Leadership Performance Management Evaluation process based on Ochsner's organizational scorecard, including measures of clinical quality, financial performance, patient satisfaction, and employee development. The executive team annually creates a goals and objectives matrix that vice presidents use to create their own goals and branch them down through the organization.

Since the creation of the Leadership Institute one year ago, Ochsner has seen a 122 percent increase in leadership learning activities; courses receive an average evaluation score of nine out of 10.

Employees new to working at Ochsner have also been a priority for the OD&T team in the past two years. "Our first-year [employee] flight statistic was getting too high for our satisfaction," says Brien. After benchmarking other organizations' onboarding programs, her team devised two goals for new employees: to better share information with them and to help them build relationships. The Welcome Aboard! campaign was created around a New Orleans theme. New employees receive a trolley-car tag to wear on their badges to serve as a visible reminder of their status; experienced employees are encouraged to welcome them throughout their first year. A revamped orienta-

tion process covers policies and procedures as well as behavioral expectations, culture, and service standards.

Managers became a crucial part of the orientation and welcoming process. They conduct a weeklong agenda for new employees that includes departmental orientation and fostering formal and informal interactions with other staff. To prepare managers and supervisors, OD&T conducted an in-service training program that shared program goals and expectations, and distributed a toolkit that includes such items as scripts for first-week discussion ideas. "As they received better tools, managers really bought in to Welcome Aboard," says Brien. After 30 days on the job, new employees have breakfast with their department's vice president, and are regularly surveyed throughout the first year.

Since the inception of Welcome Aboard, Ochsner has recognized US\$798,000 savings in turnover costs and has significantly reduced its first-year employee attrition.

Ochsner's OD&T and HR department develops and implements programs and services that are directly connected to organizational strategic initiatives. Reducing turnover, developing leaders, increasing employee morale, and creating a customer-focused culture are results of HR practices that drive alignment with organizational goals and objectives. *

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on station video monitors are used to deliver those messages.

Learning is closely linked to individual and organizational performance. Individual and organizational learning gaps are identified through a comprehensive training cycling process, based on the ISO Quality Management System. The overall human resources management strategy of the company focuses on communication, consultation, staff welfare, and training and development, Cho says. He also notes that MTR "emphasizes practicality," and promotes cost-consciousness as Hong Kong's economy slowly recovers from a period of stagnation.

The economies of both the city and the corporation took a hit in 2003 with the spread of the SARS virus, which crippled tourism and business travel; subway ridership fell by up to 25 percent during the peak months of the virus. In response, a SARS working group was set up to monitor the situation closely and to recommend appropriate actions for staff and passengers, including suspension of training when required.

Fully 85 percent of annual training is delivered in a classroom environment, according to Cho. Although lectures, exercises, and audiovisual presentations are part of the mix, offerings are more hands-on than the phrase "classroom training" would indicate; trainees spend most of their time practicing on simulators.

Improved customer satisfaction is always a priority for MTR. In 2003, all frontline staff received enhanced customer service training, which emphasized value to the customer, and

covered courtesy, sincerity, listening, expressions and service behaviors, attire, and grooming. Subsequent quarterly customer service surveys indicated improvement of customer satisfaction in most areas.

Eight percent of training is delivered through the use of simulators at MTR's Integrated Training Facility (ITF). This vast space houses full-size simulators of the three major railway operations environments: the central control room, station management, and the driving cab of the train itself. In the simulators, training staff put employees through more than 100 scenarios, including normal operations, incidents, and defective-equipment scenarios.

In 2001, MTR launched a state-of-the-art system that integrates the simulators in the three operations areas, allowing trainees to work in teams while tackling the scenarios. Through 50 preset and 150 customized incidents, the system records trainees' performance on audio and video, records action results, assesses those results against preset criteria, and generates a report. Trainee teams then meet as a group with a facilitator for debriefing. The ability to bring control, station management, and train operations staff together for learning is crucial, says Cho: "The ITF helps us to make sure that our staff in various areas can communicate and interact efficiently. It also helps them to understand each other's challenges."

MTR currently delivers a scant 6 percent of training exclusively through the use of technology. Since 2001, however, the company has been

developing e-learning for railway training. Most standard training programs are available on the company intranet, which is accessible to employees in the stations and depots. Currently, Cho's staff is working on developing more virtual classroom training: synchronous courses that will be used to deliver refresher training and important safety messages and updates.

The company's knowledge management and sharing system is robust. Accessed through MTR's business portal, the system covers executive and management information, rules and safety procedures, crisis management procedures, HR information, e-learning courseware, work improvement tips and tools, and departmental home pages. A Knowledge Library holds best practices captured from railway operations and capital projects, and a Virtual Team tool permits project teams to collaborate electronically.

MTR began providing consulting services to other railways in 1990 on all aspects of operations. Training consultants help other organizations to formulate training strategy, develop systems and plans, recruit and train trainers, and implement the plans. "The consulting aspect not only yields good revenue return to the company, but also improves the credibility of our learning unit worldwide," says Cho. *

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