

NCR Corporation

In sharp contrast to organizations that are just launching an online university, NCR Corporation was quick to embrace the online learning model.

"NCR was one of the first companies to attack e-learning in a big way," says George Brennan, the company's vice president of learning. "In the late 1990s, 90 percent of our training was classroom based. By the year 2000, that figure was 45 percent. Today, only 20 percent of our learning takes place in the classroom."

Brennan adds that NCR's learning management system (LMS), NCR University, houses 10,000 courses that are available to 46,000 users, including customers and partners as well as 26,000 NCR employees. Online course completions in the past year reached 225,000.

In its effort to move education to an online platform, Brennan acknowledges that the company may have been too aggressive in promoting the new format.

"We are swinging back to a more blended approach now," he says. One example is the professional services consulting program—NCR's most innovative learning initiative launched within the past 12 months.

The program targets professional services consultants, highly skilled technical professionals who oversee installation, integration, and implementation of NCR solutions at client sites.

Often, the technical consultants can recommend additional services or solutions but, being primarily project managers and implementers, they lack the sales and consulting skills to convert those opportunities into additional revenue.

Recognizing their value as revenue generators, the organization wants to utilize their time with clients rather than calling them in for training. To meet this need, the workforce development team created a blended approach for the consultants that includes a set of defined competencies, a competency assess-

ment tool, and a personalized development program and map.

The program is designed to encourage self-paced learning and use classroom time only for the reinforcement and application of key consulting skills. The program consists of web-based courses that are linked directly to the competencies. Upon completion of the competency assessment, participants are expected to enroll in courses that target areas needing improvement. Courses are short, focused, and easily accessible via the LMS.

A classroom training component allows participants to practice consulting skills, obtain feedback, and exchange ideas with peers and facilitators. To simulate an actual working experience, participants bring an existing consulting challenge to class and, through role-playing exercises, leave the session with a practical solution.

To test their learning, participants complete a self-paced, interactive online simulation test on their newly acquired skills. The scenario replicates an actual consulting engagement in which students must make a series of strategic decisions. If performance in the simulation is poor, participants are sent back to the beginning and prompted to try again. The online simulation addresses the organization's core competencies, tallies scores in specific areas, and allows participants to practice their skills in a secure environment.

"By optimizing all customer interactions with skillful questioning, listening, probing, and validation, consultants will be able to effectively apply industry business knowledge and problem-solving techniques," says Andy Young, an NCR learning consultant. "They can articulate the different benefits of our solutions and will be able to deliver the professional services that fully satisfy the customer and create the demand for additional solutions and services."

Caterpillar

In October 2005, Caterpillar embarked on a bold initiative. A new enterprise strategy was unveiled to propel the company into the top position in every market and region it serves by the year 2020. The strategy's foundation was an updated version of the company's worldwide code of conduct, which was already in place. The real challenge, however, was getting Caterpillar's more than 80,000 employees on board quickly.

Under direction from the CEO, the corporate university partnered with key organizational groups to deploy the updated code's new enterprise strategy with "leaders as teachers" as a critical component. In less than three months, all of the resources, materials, and support structures were in place. The code and strategy deployment began with the CEO and five top executives teaching 600 leaders over two days in six locations around the world. The 600 leaders then taught other leaders who, in turn, taught their employees, thereby spreading the learning throughout the organization.

Every leader was expected to gain commitment from their employees, who realigned their personal performance goals according to the new code and strategy. This was vital not just for alignment but also to gain the commitment necessary for successful execution of the new strategy.

EMC

Training is a vital function for this information lifecycle company where employees once needed to learn just a single product line. As EMC grew exponentially through the acquisition of smaller companies and the expansion into software offerings, employee knowledge demands increased. Each year, approximately 125 new products and product revisions are introduced. Training delivery

needed to become consistent to meet the ongoing product knowledge demands.

A new training approach reduced integration times from six months to 90 days. Within 30 days of a new company acquisition, content is transferred to the company's learning management system. When senior management discovered that high-level technical teams were performing too many lower-level functional tasks, a new hire, fast-track training program was implemented to groom junior level staff to manage less complex functions.

Every job in the company has a corresponding technology path whereby the lower, 101-level training path can be delivered via online learning and the more advanced 201 and 301 paths combine classroom and lab-based instruction.

A new product readiness team works with the engineering department to develop core educational content for training before a product is released. The multi-layered approach has become part of the corporate culture and has significantly reduced time to readiness.

Equity Residential

Creating a waiting list for apartments and condominiums is customary for the real estate company, but creating a list for training programs is not. But that's exactly what Equity Residential must do to satisfy its frontline supervisors, who are seeking to become better managers and leaders.

The company's certified manager program, nicknamed the "Flight Program," is more than a typical management or leadership training program. Participants must apply and be accepted into the three-year program. Also, each applicant's supervisor must commit in writing to fully support their employee's participation.

In addition to attending 172 hours of classroom instruction, participants are required to contribute to online discussions on topics covered in the classroom, take part in a book club, and record their thoughts in personal journals. But the crowning touch to the Flight Program comes through a partnership with Rio Salado College in Phoenix, where participants can earn 12 hours of college credit toward an associate's degree in business, which can be completed online.

Florida Department of Revenue

In 2005, process improvement projects yielded a savings of \$2.5 million, excluding productivity. The return-on-investment for web-based quality leadership trilogy training and instructor-led knowledge-based leadership training is estimated at \$23 for every dollar invested in training.

A team was organized to study field technical support to improve customer service, workload management, and customer service. A needs assessment collected information on performance, resources, and knowledge.

Performance standards were updated to provide a clear focus to field staff. Now a web-based standards manual describes the responsibilities of each staff member.

Communication between field technicians and the program improved because field staff have more input in the decision-making process and participate in weekly conference calls with management. New technical staff members receive training and guidance at the time of hire.

Hewlett-Packard

To enhance senior leadership's ability to improve forecast accuracy and manage-

ment behaviors, Hewlett-Packard's senior leadership team created Business Excellence, a management development program. This training program, led by the business unit's senior vice president, focuses on ways to improve business management skills.

The curriculum evolved out of the needs of the business subgroups. Data was obtained from leadership team meetings; interviews; and complete surveys by support function financial leaders, the marketing department, HR, and employees.

Course participants learn about company and business sector strategy, financial management, operational inspection, and the regional and business unit priorities. Managers also gain knowledge about how to leverage training solutions and how to deliver all constituencies of business.

In the first nine months, the program's homepage received more than 8,500 visits. In the first 11 months of the program, more than 3,000 employees enrolled in web lessons and live business webcasts, and 81 percent of participants expressed satisfaction with their training.

Hindustan Petroleum

According to Hindustan Petroleum, its employees' knowledge of competitive intelligence sets the company apart from its competitors. Consequently, it put a premium on improving the knowledge base of its employees.

With the help of India's economic experts, the company created a web-based employee information portal called "Knowledge on Demand." This portal organizes data under categories, such as the nation's economy, crude oil and petroleum products, international trends, competition,

and fuel consumption. The sections are extensively researched and analyzed by outside experts, who update the portal's data each month. In addition to learning about those categories, employees can use the portal to request specific information that is not already provided as well as participate in online certification programs.

Since its inception, the portal has registered 78,440 hits, approximately seven hits per employee. It has become particu-

larly popular with frontline officers, and business development and planning teams who rely heavily on its information for daily operations.

Merck & Company – Merck Manufacturing Division

The company's enterprise leadership learning and development team designed

five web-based courses on lean manufacturing. The goal was to provide 15,000 employees in 25 different sites with a consistent message on the concepts and application of lean manufacturing.

The goal was to streamline operations, thus reducing overall costs and inventory. All courses required development within 90 days. Each course lasts between 60 and 90 minutes, and reinforces the contents of the other four. Knowledge verification

Ruby Tuesday

One of the restaurant's new commercials features a close shot of a chef lovingly placing tiny fried-onion pieces on top of a burger with a set of tweezers.

The ad campaign represents a sea change in the way Ruby Tuesday does business. The methods by which its employees create, learn, and sell hamburgers, as well as the physical surroundings where they work, all represent a new competitive spirit that is fueled by innovation and supported by learning and development initiatives.

Just a couple of years ago, Ruby Tuesday was facing negative sales and guest counts because of a change from a coupon-based marketing strategy to the launch of its TV advertising campaigns, according to Max Piet, vice president for quality execution and innovation.

"We took on the overwhelming task and heightened costs of retraining every team member, manager, and multi-unit operator on basic food and service procedures," he says. "Our goal was simple: to increase guest count by providing nothing less than flawless food and flawless service every time."

The "back-to-basics" initiative began with multi-unit operators attending training sessions at corporate headquarters in Tennessee. Those operators were then expected to provide training, coaching,

and modeling of the "flawless food and service" concept to their teams at home. Piet's staff developed weekly training activities and a communications network that was to be used by general and assistant managers. They also prepared leaders' guides and support materials for the train-the-trainer classes.

A strategic component of the initiative included empowering hourly employees, such as bar and wait staff, to make decisions that affected guest satisfaction. For example, if a customer's meal was under- or overcooked, the server could decide whether to recook it, take the charge off the bill, or offer a free dessert.

"Our stance is that their decision cannot be wrong," says Piet.

The results reveal a substantial improvement in overall service. Managers, who used to have to be consulted regarding every decision at a table, are free to run the restaurant, and employees often earn more money.

Although new locations were outperforming expectations, sales at existing restaurants were falling short. The learning and development staff determined that the problem stemmed from inadequate maintenance. The staff devised a new set of standards and communicated the new corporate philosophy of preventative maintenance. Again, multi-unit operators received training at headquar-

ters, and then transferred the learning to their own teams. The corporate headquarters bolstered the new initiative by adding \$5 million to the budget in the course of a year for restaurant repair and maintenance.

To counter the high turnover rate in the industry, Ruby Tuesday altered the nature of its training to be more prescriptive—as well as more fun.

"Formerly, we would train on objective A, then objective B," Piet explains. "Over the past three years, we have simplified our approach, attempting to get to the essence of the knowledge and build it into our culture."

Team-member training is still broad, but it is now based on assessments and can be accelerated to more advanced levels. Training materials are nearly 100 percent electronic and are delivered through in-store electronic pictorial systems called the kitchen display system and the bar display system.

All of the investment in training has paid off in terms of improved service. Positive guest comments have increased by 20 percent. Guest complaints have decreased by 30 percent. Giving more responsibility to hourly employees has increased morale and reduced management turnover by 7 percent. As a result, the company saved more than \$1.5 million on management training costs.

processes were integrated into each course to ensure that the material is absorbed by the learner. Participants needed to score 80 to receive course credit.

Four different vendors were selected to develop the curriculum to meet the aggressive program implementation timeline. The material was presented using a variety of technologies. Interactive knowledge tests were used for theoretical applications, while case studies were utilized for applications and proficiency tasks.

Every level of the organization received information that emphasized the importance of these programs. The entire initiative was supported through a succession of Flash messages, targeted emails, and senior management endorsements.

Nemours

During 2005, the children's health system implemented many learning initiatives, including state-of-the-art medical simulation labs and emergency code trials. The initiative with the greatest impact was the Super User program.

The goal of the program is to provide timely information, coaching, and feedback to different target groups in multiple locations with varying skill levels.

In 2005, seven super user meetings were conducted at nine sites in four states. Each meeting was designed to meet the needs that were identified in Level 1 evaluation surveys. Fifty

topics were presented during the seven meetings.

In addition, Nemours created 25 new job aids, just-in-time learning documents, standard business practices, and other support documents to address the learning opportunities identified by the super users.

Since the program began, there has been an increase in end-user proficiency and a decrease in support requests. Super users demonstrated new workplace procedures to colleagues, and as a result, they were able to streamline business processes, increase customer and patient satisfaction, and provide efficient communication among end users, system developers, and various departments.

QUALCOMM

At QUALCOMM, emphasis is placed on creating value. The company not only looks at financial return but also at the cost of not developing employees in certain areas. For example, how much would it cost if employees did not provide good customer service or meet product schedules?

This value approach is rooted in the philosophy of the executive team, which places a premium on continuous and effective development and education.

Before providing any solutions, the learning team conducts a thorough needs assessment. Each program is evaluated to enhance development opportunities. For technical and engineering programs, the executive team administers tests to determine where and how participants are gaining the most knowledge. In addition, executives use the feedback from climate surveys to recognize the programs' affect on the organization.

What distinguishes QUALCOMM from its peers is the organization's attitude about assessment and evaluation. Management believes that the time it spends evaluating learning initiatives is worthwhile because it ensures that solutions will have a positive impact on the business.

Reliance Industries Patalganga Manufacturing Division

When new plants are commissioned in various locations, plant managers with specialized skills relocate, leaving less experienced employees to operate the existing facilities. Company leaders sought to develop a training initiative to fill the gap, by training more employees to handle day-to-day plant operations.

The company employs 50 performance facilitators who identify the needs

South African Breweries

One of the philosophies of human resources development at South African Breweries is "to assist in ensuring the organization's ability to compete."

Sometimes, that requires more than offering learning opportunities. It means having an ability to look critically at the working environment and assess what's really going on.

Founded in 1895, South African Breweries is an elder statesman in the business world. Now comprised of seven breweries and distribution centers, the company employs 4,000 people. It has suffered its own growing pains because it has changed right alongside the rest of the nation.

Following nearly a decade of restructuring, the leadership of South African Breweries recognized that its workforce was experiencing "change fatigue."

"We needed an organizational development philosophy that would lead people to their own wellsprings of resilience and would anchor the learning in everyday life," explains Rob van der Schyff, human resource development manager.

Vanessa Fourie, an organizational development consultant, selected appreciative inquiry (AI) to guide the company through this exercise.

AI's questioning approach suggests that people can choose how they create and respond to the world. Through AI questions, the development staff sought to change employees' images of themselves, the organization, and change itself. To guide the exercise, they developed a framework of attributes that help people thrive on change, which included compelling dreams and a sense of purpose, flexibility and resourcefulness, membership in a supportive community, and the ability to thrive.

Two-day programs, conducted for cross-functional groups of 12 to 16 people, allowed development staff to

conduct hundreds of one-on-one interviews using AI methods. Workers were encouraged to share their stories of resilience. Probing questions helped them gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and identify sources for resilience. Practical-skills training focused on building emotional intelligence. Facilitators offered tools to confront and change the limiting patterns and beliefs ingrained through life experiences. Simple stress-relieving skills were also shared.

Although employees developed an inherent capacity to cope with change—a certain resilience—company executives wanted to ensure that workers had the coping skills necessary to deliver on future visions.

The collected stories were taken to one-day "summits," during which employees created "resilience charters" and drafted blueprints for a workplace in which people could thrive. Many of the suggestions led to practical changes at South African Breweries, including a new HR corporate identity and slogans; company-funded volunteer projects in the local community; and new communications vehicles. Resilience attributes have been folded into new employee orientation and performance management processes.

The results of the initiative have been positive and measurable. Participants who completed the AI resilience program reported higher morale and demonstrated greater efficiency. The program has been introduced to all 4,000 employees.

"Six or seven years ago, we had a strong course orientation that offered formal set-piece programs aimed at getting eight days of education to each employee every year," van der Schyff says. "Now, our value is directly linked to business results and strategies. We connect to shareholder value, and can confirm those linkages."

of each plant and the performance requirements for each position. Individual, highly qualified employees with technical skills were sent to a management institute to learn conceptual and behavioral skills. Intensive training created a new crop of managers. It also created a culture that encouraged employee development.

Called "structural capital," the initiative was pilot tested at one of the plants. Employees with less specialized knowledge learn problem solving skills to handle equipment failures, waste generation, and productivity issues.

In addition to training, the company created a climate that supported the new quality paradigm. Articles on total quality were posted on the company intranet, and multiple Six Sigma sessions were scheduled.

Thanks to the training initiative, the time required for a frontline supervisor to take over a new job responsibility decreased from three months to two months last year. Productivity increased without an increase in personnel or equipment capacity.

sanofi-aventis U.S.

To validate the skills and knowledge of its field sales force, sanofi-aventis created the license to sell program.

To obtain or renew the annual sales certification, a salesperson must complete a knowledge assessment component and performance component. The components, both self-directed and facilitated by trainers and managers, include worksheets, quizzes, situational role-play, interactive physician role-play, and peer reviews.

What makes this program so dynamic is the setting in which it occurs. The program generally takes place at a large sales meeting, so production and flair can be incorporated into the assessment activities.

In a 2005 meeting, the company created regional inspection units with 36 different workstations in them. Driving was accentuated using road-like carpeting, orange safety cones, and road signs. In total, more than 9,000 sales professionals and managers participated in the 2006 license to sell certification program.

This program not only reinforced selling skills, but it also emphasized a learning forum that emphasized one of the company's core values—performance.

Satyam Computer Services

Learning is embedded in every level of the organization. Satyam has the highest number of certified project management professionals (PMP) in its business category. At the beginning of the year, there were 155 certified PMPs, which more than tripled to 500 certified managers by the end of the year. The credential is extremely rigorous, requiring between 36 and 60 months of project management experience, depending upon education level. To support this, Satyam provided 55 hours of instruction for each manager.

To ensure preparedness for the field, every entry-level new hire—which Satyam projects to be 10,000 this year—participates in a rigorous 10-week program. To ensure that staff members maintain the required competency levels, the organization deploys a scored competency plan in six key fields. All associates must demonstrate competencies in skill areas related to their function. For example, leaders are evaluated on business acumen, strategic and people leadership, and executive presence, while junior associates are measured on their grasp of technology and processes.

Satyam introduced a career planning development initiative to foster greater

growth from within. The first phase informs staff of available opportunities; the second phase includes mentoring and learning for succession; and the third phase focuses on identification of strengths for potential promotions.

The Schwan Food Company

Schwan expanded its onboarding program for new customer service managers in its home delivery business. The blended program includes structured on-the-job training and certification and culminates with a 3.5-day classroom experience. The learning unit reports weekly on the program's results, and management bonuses are affected by the weekly report card scores.

Schwan also launched two new development programs. One involves recruiting college interns and placing them in a 16-week training program in preparation for an introductory management position. The program involves both classroom and on-the-job training. The other new initiative targets existing employees or external candidates with management experience and prepares them to become general managers.

Schwan's learning unit also led an online certification effort in which 99 percent of nearly 9,000 sales staff achieved certification over a two-month period. The efforts saved the company millions of dollars in potential fines and lost revenue.

In addition, a "skills for life" program was offered in the manufacturing division. This program provided employees with important knowledge and skills in both their personal and professional lives. For example, Schwan helped many of its employees obtain permanent citizenship, learn second languages, obtain GEDs, and learn basic computer skills.

Vermeer Manufacturing

Stretching both mind and body is part of the routine for employees at Vermeer Manufacturing.

In an effort to promote employee safety, the company brought in a physical therapist several years ago to design stretching routines based on job type and setting.

The catchphrase around the office is "creativity before capital."

"The training function commonly looks for innovative ways to implement learning programs without a lot of expense," says Debra Smith, Vermeer's training and development manager.

Vermeer is a family-owned business. This Iowa-based manufacturer of industrial and agricultural equipment operates seven plants and employs 1,900 people. Since Smith joined the company in 1999, the training and development philosophy has evolved from lecture-focused training to a value-added operation that supports corporate objectives and receives management support.

In 2004, when company revenues were recovering from a drop in the telecommunications business, learning was viewed as a way to communicate annual strategic objectives. Smith's team created "training camp," a one-day session that involved all employees in a highly interactive learning event focused on those objectives.

Last year, employees attended sessions on market-based strategy, job-specific quality, and standard work. Company leadership provides full support by shutting down production areas and attending and facilitating sessions, thereby allowing managers and employees to attend training together.

Production, administrative, and supervisory employees examined consumer products that define a market, analyzed their strategy, and discussed how the strategy affected the product

and its market. They also reviewed Vermeer's history and discussed its unique role in defining markets. To learn about standard work, they participated in an exercise that simulated the manufacturing of paper cups.

Training camp is held at the beginning of the fiscal year, and it illustrates the organization's support for learning, Smith says. It also broadened the impact of the training department throughout the company.

"Training camp has really helped the training organization demonstrate its value and alignment with the business," she says.

Vermeer's most innovative learning initiative in 2005, according to Smith, was a joint project with the human resources department to educate employees about their health insurance benefits and plan options. The group devised an interactive board game that groups employees into "families" and leads them through a series of decisions, spending imaginary money along the way.

At the end of the game, the "families" compared their experiences, health insurance costs, and wellness activity savings. A facilitator wrapped up the session by sharing information on common healthcare issues within the company and ways employees can control their own healthcare costs.

The advantages of the exercise extend beyond the individual employee.

"What started as a way to help our employees make better healthcare and benefits decisions has turned into a strategic plan to become more focused on wellness in our organization," Smith says. "In 2006, Vermeer went tobacco-free, opened the Vermeer Family Pharmacy, and is conducting regular wellness screenings and educational seminars through the company-sponsored Health Services Center."

Tata Consultancy Services

Globalization has been a key driver for a number of learning initiatives in the organization. Learning systems have been tailored to meet the particular needs of working in diverse cultures. The organization prepares employees to be part of a global community by providing a suite of leadership development programs that teach how to manage transnational teams and work with diverse cultures. The company also launched a global internship program that allows interns to gain full-time employment with the company.

An innovative learning initiative consisting of a series of internally-driven technology conferences was also implemented at multiple locations across the globe. The conferences included papers based on innovative work done by various technology groups and on projects that were executed in the organization. The conferences provided a forum for exchange of ideas and innovation.

Given the demands of entering new markets, many associates need to acquire new skills in a short time period where internal expertise is not readily available. Thus, the organization chose to outsource many learning functions, notably the teaching of foreign languages.

Telkom SA

To implement company strategy at all levels, Telkom SA designed a senior management program referred to as the "implementing strategy and managing corporate performance" initiative.

The program builds a competitive culture within the management team to implement a plan for conducting business in emerging markets. The focus for the initial reporting period was on doing business in Africa.

The program is based on the company's current business in the next two years, and includes five modules: the ICT industry and markets, customer management and service quality, marketplace leadership, technology innovation and evolution, and functional best-in-class global research and team learning.

The program incorporates presentations by external experts, seminars by internal top managers, individual and team research projects, and company visits and tours. It created a pool of senior managers—85 percent of whom were certified against the national qualifications at a level seven out of an eight-level framework.

The success of the program is measured on its application within the organization. Results of the current program, which was evaluated by a team of Telkom SA executives, proved to be such a success that a business case will be presented to the board of directors to seek future funding and implementation.

Wipro Technologies

An aggressive project manager training initiative was developed to offset cost overruns in multiple fixed-price projects. Seven "path finder" courses were offered to company leaders. The company chairman made the training mandatory for all project managers. More than 1,000 project managers received training. As a result, productivity increased by 12 percent and a 5 percent savings was achieved compared with last year.

To counter turnover rates among front-line supervisors, the organization launched a future management program. Candidates were selected based upon results from a competitive exam. Upon completion of the six-month course, candidates could obtain the equivalent

of an MBA with 15 months of future study. The attrition rate among this group dropped from 12 percent to 9 percent.

The organization implements a learning intervention based on feedback from surveys on customer satisfaction, employee perception, and quality and cost audits. There are more than 70 behavioral programs available for interpersonal skills, personal effectiveness, and self-realization.

Deloitte & Touche USA

Deloitte professionals are constantly on the move, especially the leaders who balance client involvement with managerial roles. With heavy client service demands and internal responsibilities, time to participate in formal learning is limited. To no one's surprise, the same technologies that are speeding the business pace are also fueling the organization's learning solution.

Several years ago, Deloitte's learning and development team identified mobile learning as an important component of e-learning. They developed a plan to integrate m-learning into a solution that provides easily accessible and digestible content to the entire workforce. Participants can download mini-modules that require about 15 to 30 minutes to complete and executive summaries of relevant business books in either PDF or MP3 format.

Deloitte chose senior leaders, who represent the greatest number of older learners with the broadest gap in mobile technology adoption, as the initiative's change agents. That's because as decision makers and primary examples of the corporate culture, they offer the highest potential return on efforts to embed m-learning.

Verizon Communications

While completing an online course, learners expect a seamless experience without delays. By taking a proactive stance on technical problems, Verizon has promoted a successful e-learning initiative and significantly increased its usage.

In the past when employees attempted to use the company's in-house learning management system NetLearn, they would report any technical problems to support staff. In the first year of use, company leaders noticed a pattern among the technical problems and reprogrammed the LMS to anticipate issues and to improve the learning experience. Now, when participants log on to NetLearn, the system determines their configuration and bandwidth and guides them through successful resolution before problems occur.

With a more user-friendly LMS in place, the organization has experienced an 87 percent increase in participation for nonrequired, noncompliance courses. Another major accomplishment, which has helped make e-learning more practical, is wider access. For years, NetLearn courses could only be accessed through the company's intranet. Now, employees can log on to the NetLearn database from any location with web access.

Johnson Controls

When the company restructured one of its business units in 2005, it also drastically changed some employee job requirements.

To help salespeople learn to deliver the new marketing messages, the company combined virtual instructor-led distance learning with local, manager-led

activities. As a result, one instructor was able to simultaneously train 284 participants in 15 locations without sacrificing consistency, practice, feedback, or quality.

Johnson's technicians also needed to acquire a new set of skills, but they were unable to take time off work for training. The solution consisted of a series of instructor-led webinars and local, hands-on lab practice. Designers also scripted discussion topics to guide troubleshooting scenarios, structured situations for on-the-job practice, added formal assessments, and created an interactive learning map to guide learners, coaches, and managers. A computerized virtual host provided verbal instructions to help participants locate information on the supporting website.

The results of the initiative were impressive. Follow-up evaluations showed that 91 percent of sales training participants implemented the behaviors and 53 percent implemented the tools within four weeks of their training. In addition, 60 percent of technicians are enrolled in the program, which was implemented in less than 12 weeks.

Avnet

Avnet is committed to building a culture that drives value through profitable growth and operational excellence.

Dedicated to a culture that is grounded in a set of core values, Avnet initiated a campaign to educate its employees on the need to clearly understand and actively reflect the company's values of integrity, customer service, accountability, teamwork, and innovation.

Avnet designed job aids, posters, and supplemental materials with world-

wide input from the business groups, support teams, and employees. The materials, translated into several languages, were sent to every employee and company facility.

Feedback about this initiative was positive. During the company's annual global employee survey, understanding of the company's core values increased from 63 percent to 67 percent.

The core values are embedded in company newsletters, job postings, and new hire orientation programs. All employees also receive a core values handbook.

This program has raised the bar on expected business behavior and strengthened the corporate culture.

Computer Sciences Corporation

With the aging population, succession planning is a key business issue in most organizations. To combat the potential loss of knowledge and the skills shortage, Computer Sciences Corporation has created a blended learning curriculum designed for executives and future leaders.

The senior leadership development program, sponsored by the CEO, COO, and the company's board of directors, was revamped in 2005 to align the curriculum with the company's business needs. The improvements were aimed at three specific goals: tying the program to strategic priorities, focusing more on depth of learning, and leveraging the expertise of a wider variety of members.

The program has several facets. Each quarter, internal company leaders discuss business topics as part of a leaders' roundtable, and external thought leaders give business in-

sights during live, facilitated thought-leadership broadcasts. The broadcasts are also made available either on DVD or webcast, so managers can communicate key messages and share the learning with their teams. Within the program, a peer discussion forum has been developed to promote peer learning and collaboration.

Infosys Technologies

With goals of improving efficiency in production and enhancing learning effectiveness, Infosys Technologies created industry reference models to equip employees with standard business processes for a specific industry segment.

The reference models are used to educate the teams on domain and business skills, reduce the time needed to complete the process phase of the project, decrease the time needed to capture business requirements for building systems, and provide best-in-class solutions by incorporating global best practices.

This global information technology consulting firm created a methodology to customize each industry model. Using a core team that collaborated process flows across existing knowledge sources, Infosys refined each process flow to build an industrywide reference model and to enhance the repository with product comparisons, market trends, and metrics.

A typical reference model contains industry functions, processes, documents, checklists, data metrics, and process metrics.

Internal research prior to implementation found that these models would enhance learning effectiveness, share

industry best practices among clients, reduce system appreciation efforts in projects by more than 10 percent, and reduce the time needed to gather project requirements by 10 percent.

CheckFree Services

Learning has been integrated throughout the company's operations by identifying the training needs of each associate and offering e-learning opportunities to providing an experiential leadership training program.

Customer service employees can consult the company's new knowledge bank, an application that provides advice on protocols for customer inquiries that were formerly shared by email or word of mouth.

The organization created a supervisor academy to train individuals to become leaders in the company's call centers. The academies allow future supervisors to learn the role from experienced managers and certified coaches. The trainees are given an opportunity to lead a team before being held accountable for the team's performance. At the conclusion of the 90-day program, trainees are graded, and if they are deemed ready, they move into a supervisor position when one becomes available.

As a number of online courses are made available to staff, officials noticed a high vacancy rate in some classes, which contributed to a 20 percent cancellation rate. Development staff surveyed the training database and designed a training curriculum based upon the five most requested training courses at each location. With renewed outreach efforts, capacity increased and the cancellation rate was reduced.

U.S. Security Associates

With the implementation of a centralized enterprise-level training initiative, the company turned what was traditionally a compliance exercise into a performance improvement strategy. The strategy, which supports the company's philosophy that innovative thinking and continuous, effective training is the key to quality service and employee development, resulted in 50 percent company growth during 2005.

This initiative involves a state-of-the-art training studio, where certified trainers deliver new employee basic training, management and leadership programs, terrorism and maritime training, and state- and client-specific training.

The live interactive training programs are delivered via web-based conferencing. The centralized location ensures consistency and high quality. In 2005, the employee turnover rate dropped, and the company saved hundreds of thousands of dollars by initiating this training strategy.

The training has passed the rigorous ISO 9001:2000 standards and is an ISO certified process in the Quality Management System. U.S. Security Associates offers the only virtual security officer training center approved to conduct the state-mandated training requirements in California and North Carolina. In 2005, more than 15,000 officers participated in the courses.

Reliance Industries, Jamnagar Refinery Division

In what required a monumental effort, the company planned to shut down a facility to make improvements. In prepa-

ration, the organization's learning center and safety department conducted workshops in a number of crucial areas, including CPR, confined space entry, transportation of hazardous materials, and crane safety operation. Training was delivered to more than 8,000 contractors. The shutdown was successfully completed without any fatalities.

Competency certification was introduced for individuals who serve as day-to-day operators. A catalogue outlining the knowledge required for the specific division is given to each employee, who must pass a written test as well as an on-the-job skills test. More than 80 percent of the operators passed the certification.

Operating the plant carries a costly fuel bill. Searching for ways to conserve energy, company officials trained 100 employees to reduce energy consumption. For the past three years, consumption has declined, including a \$20 million savings during 2005.

Skills training and professional development opportunities are available for all staff members who currently have high school diplomas. Employees take the courses on the weekends over a two-and-a-half year period. Upon completion, graduates are awarded degrees as "certified company engineers." A total of 120 employees are enrolled in mechanical, electrical, and instrumentation programs.

Equifax

While many companies view performance management as a basic process that links individual and organizational performance, Equifax values performance management as a critical process in organizational success.

The company created an online program to enhance individual and organizational performance. Equifax's customized performance system strengthens the link between organizational and individual performance, increases accountability, and improves follow-up.

Managers must create annual objectives in four key areas: strategy,

operations, people, and finances. Those objectives are weighted along with needed competencies for daily workplace duties. A mid-year evaluation is entered into the system to determine if they are meeting objectives, evaluate whether any objectives need to be modified, and assure that managers are discussing performance with their employees.

Specific ratings are not given at this mid-year review. At the end of the year, final reviews are given by two levels of supervisors to ensure alignment with the organization's strategy. As part of this performance management program, employees must include a learning objective. The objective counts for 10 percent of their overall evaluation and includes how and when the employee intends to accomplish the objectives and apply them to their job or career development.

Randstad United States

Seeking to address the company's attrition rate and create more opportunities for promotion, Randstad launched a new onboarding process that provided local managers with greater authority over employee orientation. The previous onboarding program lasted six weeks, including two weeks of classroom training at corporate headquarters. The scheduling stretched the training department and affected its ability to respond to other learning and development needs.

Expanded to 16 weeks, the new process requires only one week of training at the headquarters. Additional learning methods include e-learning, leader-led instruction, manager coaching, and structured on-the-job training. The new program saved on travel and lodging expenses for participants and reduced the number of staff required for the training organization.

A certification program created in tandem with the operations division is also reducing turnover and increasing internal promotions. The program defines and builds core competencies, strengthens operational knowledge, and provides

a gate for promotions. In the first year of the program, 49 percent of participants were promoted, and the annual turnover rate among participants was 35 percent below that of the general population. **TD**

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BEST 2006 by the Numbers

Key Benchmarks	BEST Winners (2005 average)
Training expenditure per employee	\$1,615.81
Learning hours received per employee	43.46
Expenditure as percentage of payroll	2.72%
Percentage of expenditure outsourced	23.93%

What sets the winners of the 2006 BEST Awards apart from other organizations in the business world? It's a deep commitment of time, money, and attention to the learning process. How does your organization stack up in these key areas?

Source: 2006 ASTD State of the Industry, Leading Enterprises Edition



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