Here's how the world's fourth largest corporation met government regulations—in two month's time.

By Margaret Raisglid

Shell's Speedy Remedy

The Company

Royal Dutch/Shell Group

www.shell.com

The Supplier

Persistech, LLC

Tucson, Arizona

www.persistech.com

Want to improve the effectiveness of your training? Just add speed. That's the path chosen by Royal Dutch/Shell Group when it selected Infrature, a product of Persistech, LLC, as its training tool. The Royal Dutch/Shell Group is the world's fourth largest corporation, with more than US$201 billion in annual revenues.

In 2002, Shell Exploration and Production found itself in a tough spot. To meet government regulations, it needed to train thousands of employees at diverse locations across the globe. Most of those employees worked on oil platforms in the middle of the ocean—and only two months remained until the deadline.

Shell needed to have the training authored, delivered, and completed quickly in order to adhere to the government's deadline. More important, because government auditors would check its effectiveness, Shell needed training that would ensure that effectiveness. If the government determined that the training was ineffective, Shell would owe millions of dollars in fines.

Shell selects Infrature

Shell E&P turned to Infrature, an e-learning package that uses speed to improve training effectiveness.

Scientific studies conducted over the last 30 years have shown a dramatic increase in the effectiveness of training when it includes a speed component. How dramatic an increase? Retention of information, for example, can be increased from 14 percent to 83 percent. Adding speed to training also ensures that training on simple skills translates to the effective application of composite tasks based on those skills.

Adding speed to training without the help of technology isn't fun. It's difficult to monitor and time-consuming to administer. Shell realized that it would be challenging enough to author all of the material and schedule all of the employees, much less time employees as they took the training.

Infrature provided Shell with a course authoring tool that allowed authors to import preexisting content. Taking PowerPoint and Word documents that were previously used during classroom training, authors were able to automatically generate training with a speed component.

Shell used that same Infrature tool to create new content. No programming or special skills were required, which meant a shorter learning curve. Within half a day, authors had the skill to develop Infrature courses. If they could create a Word document or PowerPoint slides, they could create training with a speed component.

A potential problem when adding speed to training is that some learners resist being timed. To overcome any resistance, course material must be developed carefully and with an understanding of how to use speed in training. Shell realized that. So, it relied on the expertise of the Infrature team at Persistech to help develop speed-based content.

In just a few weeks, custom courses were developed and placed on Infrature servers. Those courses were delivered through standard Internet connections to land-based employees, as well as through Internet connections via satellite to offshore employees. Employees in remote locations who didn't have reliable Internet connectivity were given CDs.

Standards of conversion

The Infrature team helped Shell ensure

that its delivered content was appropriate for an online medium. A frequent challenge for trainers is the process of converting "standard" course content for delivery in an online environment. The gray areas in standard content, which instructors usually handle during classroom discussions, must be added for effective online delivery. For example, you can tell an offshore operator that the limit for oil and grease in the discharge stream is 75 ppm. But what should that operator do when the limit is exceeded? The discussion that would normally follow in a classroom setting must also be included in the e-learning format.

Infrature offered another unique feature: the ability to configure content for different audiences automatically, based on the author's specifications. An author could create a single course and then let Infrature configure that course for different audiences based on his or her specifications.

Shell utilized Infrature's three dimensions of speed:

- the speed components automatically added to training to make it effective
- the speed with which content can be created and deployed
- the speed with which different audiences could be targeted to implement and execute a highly effective training program.

For Shell, the successful outcome was highlighted when government auditors confirmed Infrature's impact. "The auditors were astonished at how successful the Infrature method was," said Jade Q. Washmon, training coordinator for Shell Exploration and Production. "Instead of having training experiences, we were able to have learning experiences. We received measurable results, with greater retention."

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With the successful on-time completion of the regulatory compliance training under his belt, Washmon commented, "With the help of Infrature training software, we were able to deploy a uniquely effective training delivery system for our employees, including those at our offshore platforms. We continue to look to Infrature to help us improve performance through effective and efficient training in important areas relating to technical expertise and regulatory compliance." In fact, Shell has continued to expand the use of Infrature for training in a broad range of areas, including best practices training for drilling new wells for Shell E&P's parent, the Royal Dutch/Shell Group.

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