

Announcing... the winners of

Here are the
23 organizations
that made it into
the winner's circle
by demonstrating
that they foster,
support, and leverage
enterprise-wide learning
for business results.

And we've
selected
six of these
outstanding
organizations
to profile in T+D.

Read on.



ASTD's Annual BEST Awards!



THEY
GET
IT!

Seventy-four organizations in six countries stepped up to the plate in ASTD's first annual BEST Awards, accepting the challenge to demonstrate that they are Building talent, Enterprise-wide, Supported by the organization's leaders, fostering a Through-and-through learning culture. Twenty-three organizations will receive awards, chosen by the BEST advisory committee, recognizing stellar learning and development across industries. The selected organizations represent the government, nonprofit, and private sectors, and range in size from 92 employees (Army Management Staff College, Ft. Belvoir, Virginia) to 317,000 (IBM, Armonk, New York). In the pages that follow are profiles of six of the winners, giving an in-depth look at their learning and performance programs.

BEST was initiated as a complement to ASTD's other awards programs, which recognize individuals and discrete programs. Through BEST, ASTD furthers its mission to identify and recognize excellence, and the award demonstrates the importance of recognizing learning's contribution to organizational performance. The BEST online application, based on ASTD's demanding Benchmarking Service survey document, asked such questions as

- What percentage of your organization's VPs and above support learning through public statements, participation as an instructor or a speaker, or inclusion of learning objectives as part of their performance goals?
- How does your organization capitalize on failure as a learning opportunity?

BEST

- What process do you use to link learning to individual and organizational performance?
- How has your organization leveraged a successful learning initiative to broaden the impact of learning and development?
- What is your most innovative e-learning initiative?

Respondents also answered quantitative questions about delivery methods, process improvements, qualification of their t&d staffs, and other areas. The BEST advisory committee, composed of industry experts and chief learning officers (page 49), assessed the applications in a rigorous, blind review process. Their comments included ones like these:

"This organization lays out an insanely good story about its education system, and so much good has been done within two years. Learning is very well positioned and zeroes in on the business-critical opportunities. Outrageously exciting application of e-learning to build skill in hiring."

"There are a number of remarkable, innovative, and engaging strategies employed by this organization. Of the nine I reviewed, this is the only one that took 'enterprise learning'

to its true meaning. Many results and documentation back up the claims stated."

"This submission is truly extraordinary. The learning system described is exceedingly comprehensive, and I love the creative blend of technology tools and highly innovative face-to-face executive education tapping into learning from [other groups]. This presentation has a high WOW factor! Well done!"

From a real estate firm in Chicago to a mass transit concern in Hong Kong, all 74 applying organizations share a deep commitment to learning and development, a curiosity about benchmarking their efforts against others, and a sincere desire to recognize the important contributions and hard work of their training and development staffs. In sum, the global picture of learning and development that their applications paint indicates the realization of a long-term goal within our industry: to demonstrate that learning is vital to organizational performance, that training is not a discretionary item, and that even in times of uncertainty and downturn, continued investment in employees is the key to future success.

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 support learning enterprise-wide

Organization	Ranking	Organization	Ranking	Organization	Ranking
Delta Air Lines, Inc. Atlanta, GA Employees: 70,000 Industry: Airlines	1	TELUS Vancouver, BC Canada Employees: 24,700 Industry: Communications services	7	Harleysville Insurance Harleysville, PA Employees: 2450 Industry: Property and casualty insurance carrier	10
Orkin, Inc. Atlanta, GA Employees: 7730 Industry: Miscellaneous services	1	AmeriCredit Corp. Fort Worth, TX Employees: 4000 Industry: Non-depository credit institutions	8	Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Durham, NC Employees: 3336 Industry: Insurance carriers	11
The Schwan Food Company Marshall, MN Employees: 25,500 Industry: Food	2	Booz Allen Hamilton McLean, VA Employees: 13,700 Industry: Business services	8	Health First Melbourne, FL Employees: 5967 Industry: Hospitals	11
Equity Residential Chicago, IL Employees: 6250 Industry: Real estate	3	The Dow Chemical Company Midland, MI Employees: 50,000 Industry: Chemicals and plastics	8	Infosys Technologies Limited Karnataka, India Employees: 19,120 Industry: Information technology services/consulting	12
IBM Armonk, NY Employees: 317,000 Industry: Computer technology and information services	4	MTR Corporation Limited Hong Kong, China Employees: 6800 Industry: Mass transit	8	Internal Revenue Service Human Capital Office Washington, DC Employees: 100,000 Industry: Administration of human resource programs	12
Marriott International, Inc. Washington, DC Employees: 128,000 Industry: Hospitality	5	PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP New York, NY Employees: 23,438 U.S. Industry: Professional services	8	Sandia National Laboratories Albuquerque, NM Employees: 8411 Industry: Space research/technology and national security and international affairs	13
Sterling Bank Houston, TX Employees: 1103 Industry: Financial institutions	5	Dewberry Fairfax, VA Employees: 1600 Industry: Engineering and architectural design services	9	Army Management Staff College Ft. Belvoir, VA Employees: 92 Industry: Educational services	14
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L) Defense Acquisition University Ft. Belvoir, VA Employees: 132,593 Industry: National security and international affairs	6	NIIT, Ltd. Atlanta, GA Employees: 3446 Industry: Information technology services/consulting	9		

✓ 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



Changing at the Speed of Flight

Delta Air Lines, Inc.
Atlanta, Georgia

A sign hangs on the breakroom door in a nondescript building on the fringes of Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta. The building houses the training technology center for Delta Air Lines. The sign reads, "Business Elite Lounge."

Ouch. Business Elite was Delta's US\$100 million move to meet customer demand in merging first-class and business-class service on international routes into an upgraded business class called Business Elite. The new product missed cost and quality targets but became the leading business-class product on Atlantic routes.

The humor of the sign on the breakroom door is a subtle indicator of enormous cultural change at Delta that predates even the September 2001 terrorist attacks that decimated the airline industry. Delta's 21st-century culture is one that recognizes the value of failure as a learning opportunity, values and leverages learning throughout the enterprise, and addresses learning needs in ways that are both resourceful and smart.

In the old days, Delta's corporate culture could best be described as one of entitlement. Employees were told—perhaps not in so many words—"You take care of the customers, we'll take care of you." Due to its Southern orientation as an Atlanta-based company, Delta often attacked a problem by "overwhelming it with people," says Bill Kline, vice president of HR, marketing, and chief learning officer.

In the past four years, since Kline joined Delta from General Electric, employees are increasingly be-

ing given the tools and the opportunity to take ownership of their careers. In the wake of the terrorist attacks, even greater change became necessary; Delta made the first layoffs in company history in 1994. Delta has the lowest union membership of any major U.S. airline, and hopes to keep it that way. One of the keys to persuading employees to accept change was to help them to understand the reasons why.

Delta rolled out its award-winning "Our Airline, Our Business" program in May 2002, in response to the 9/11 event and which drove a sea change in the airline industry. OAOB is a business literacy program, a one-day simulation on Delta's balance sheet, income statement, and financial information, that was made available to all employees on a cross-functional and voluntary basis. Forty-eight facilitators delivered more than 1100 sessions in 32 cities between May and December 2002; a total of 33,000 employees participated in the workshop. The program has received recognition from *Training* magazine and SHRM, and has been featured on CNN and in *USA Today*.

As Delta's training and learning activities became centralized under Kline's leadership as chief learning officer, these core areas of emphasis emerged: talent management, organizational effectiveness, e-learning, and corporate training, which includes compliance training. Competencies are defined and developed, and succession planning is rigorous. Operational areas have input through a matrix organization of functional learning leaders in each of the company's key divisions: airport customer service, air logistics (cargo), flight operations (pilots), in-flight services (flight attendants), marketing, technical opera-

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Profiles by
Jennifer J. Salopek



Training the Orkin Man

Orkin, Inc.
Atlanta, Georgia

"People here tend to want you to be a bug expert," says Jennifer Evans, director of instructional design at Orkin.

The learning and development function at the company has faced some significant challenges during its four-year migration from a mostly technical training concern to Orkin University, the umbrella under which all offerings are designed and implemented. "Previously, Orkin training focused on meeting technical requirements," says Bob Price, vice president of training. "Now we are concerned with performance improvement, leadership development, and creating employee careers."

Granted, much of the training for the company's 7730 employees has a compliance aspect; 60 percent of total annual training is technical and entomology-based, Price says. Branch offices and technicians are licensed by the individual states in which they operate. In the past, field employees migrated to the training function. However, as Orkin has professionalized its t&d function and linked training to individual and organizational performance, the results speak for themselves in terms of cost-savings and ROI. Through its conscientious use of entomologists and other subject matter experts, the learning remains technically accurate but is delivered in smaller chunks and more varied ways. Orkin University professionals work with a corporate curriculum review board to determine relevant and necessary instruction.

Employees no longer seem reluctant to leave

behind the days of sitting in a classroom while one of their counterparts scrolls through 100 PowerPoint slides. Evans reports that internal customer satisfaction is surveyed annually, and results show that "people's experience in the classroom has changed."

Further, she continues, "Once we showed we were all about partnering, we got greater acceptance. We are now being seen as consultants and helpful in the change process."

As Orkin implements its new Click2learn Aspen learning management system, "we are working on competencies and on developing individual development plans," which are offered to 92 percent of employees, says Price. All employees have annual performance reviews, and their training history is tracked and assessed. Much of the 30 percent of annual training time that emphasizes employee development is designed to cultivate business unit managers for Orkin's 400 locations across the United States and Canada. The goal is to develop "bench strength," according to Price; 110 employees participate in management training yearly, a six- to nine-month course that progresses through online testing and culminates in an 11-day classroom experience.

The mix of training delivery methods is appropriate for Orkin's uniquely distributed and mobile workforce. "We have 3000 employees in trucks every day," explains Price. As a result, most technology-facilitated learning is done on the employees' own time.

Employees are provided with business-critical information through multiple means. Each branch

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Rapid Deployment

The Schwan Food Company
Marshall, Minnesota

Sometimes, radical change is inspired by the most practical—even prosaic—events. For example, in the 1950s when Marvin Schwan was working for his parents' dairy company, he quickly figured out that he could sell ice cream for more than he could sell milk. He loaded up his 1946 Dodge panel truck and sold all 14 gallons of ice cream in the first day. The Schwan Food Company was born.

Marvin is deceased, but Schwan lives. The company employs 25,500 people, makes 2 million pizzas a day, and operates in 67 countries worldwide. The company produces such recognizable brands as Edward's and Mrs. Smith's frozen pies, Freschetta, and Red Baron pizza. Human resources and training materials are produced in 16 languages. Home delivery of frozen foods in the company's signature yellow trucks represents the company's largest division, employing about 11,000 people.

Practical considerations have also driven the radical change in Schwan's learning and development philosophy and programs. When Arnie Strebe, now president of Schwan's University, arrived at the company two and a half years ago, he discovered a company that supported several different training departments, each reporting directly to the division or business unit it supported. The departments rarely communicated, and were unable to share resources or maximize efficiencies. Fortunately, Strebe brought along his experience as a training officer in the United States Army, which he describes as having "the

most sophisticated learning and development system in the world."

Moving with precision and marshaling his forces, Strebe began to realign Schwan's training resources to eliminate duplication of effort and realize efficiencies. In December 2001, Schwan's University was chartered. And in less than two years, SU has changed the nature and impact of learning and development at Schwan considerably.

Strebe and SU's 85 employees operate according to a DEPT philosophy—that is, SU is responsible for providing products and services in four major areas: development, education, performance improvement, and training. "We are an organization that has truly accepted learning as a key to our future success," he says. While SU operates on a model of centralized planning, products and services are delivered where employees need them most—close to the job.

Development refers to defining competencies, creating individual development plans, and creating bench strength. Those efforts are aided by learning councils, which represent every business unit in the organization. The councils are made up of leaders and employees from the business unit and staff from SU. They work together to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate SU's products and services from the internal customer's perspective. Personal development courses in such topics as situational parenting and fitness are also offered, though the learning councils aren't involved in personal development activities.

A great success in the development arena, and one that leveraged failure as a learning opportunity, is *Schwan continued on page 45*



Canada Calling

TELUS

Vancouver, BC, Canada

TELUS, a Canadian firm providing voice, wireless, and data/IP communications solutions to businesses and consumers, is focused on creating a high-performance culture. Such rhetoric sounds impressive, but how does that look and feel on an individual level?

Imagine that you're a TELUS employee. You would take part in a four-step process called Growing for High Performance that TELUS has integrated to align individual performance objectives with corporate strategy. In step 1, you learn what that is through a clear explanation of corporate strategy, business expectations, and what the company expects of you personally. You're provided with business-critical information through a variety of means, including

- monthly or quarterly performance meetings conducted by the team leader, including vice presidents and directors
- TeamVision, a weekly online video
- TeamZine, an online magazine
- the Team TELUS portal, which provides information on the business units, human resources, top stories, share price, and other headlines
- Infosource, an online reference database
- weekly e-letters from the CEO
- company-wide emails and voicemail messages.

You'd also learn about the TELUS values, which indicate how the company expects groups and individuals to approach their work. Prominently located in the corporate profile at telus.com, here are those values:

- We embrace change and initiate opportunity.

- We have a passion for growth.
- We believe in spirited teamwork.
- We have the courage to innovate.

And you would learn about the corporate competencies that drive excellence.

In step 2, you'd have the opportunity to assess yourself against the set expectations so that your growth and developmental opportunities can be determined. You might use a TELUS self-assessment tool, a 360 feedback survey tool, discussions with your manager, or a combination of those. Your third step is to plan for your own high performance. Using TELUS's performance management system, the online e-Performance tool, you'd collaborate with your manager to create a Customized Career Development Plan and set Personal Performance Objectives.

The fourth step would be to pursue learning options such as e-courses through the Learning Gateway, instructor-led courses specifically mapped to the TELUS values competencies, job shadowing, mentoring, and individual coaching.

Say you're a new employee in the credit department. You'd receive new-hire training in a blended delivery format. Formerly an 11-day classroom session, the new six-day version enables you to participate in group overview, debrief, and discussion sessions, interspersed with interactive e-learning modules that provide the core theory content. Job aids, system exercises, and moderated on-the-job experience would render you a contributing member of the team as early as your third day. To graduate from the program, your score on your final exam must be at least 85.

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A Healthy Dose of Learning

Health First
Melbourne, Florida

A U.S. shortage of qualified workers, high employee turnover, rapid changes in delivery systems, and training needs dictated by regulatory and government agencies combine to make learning and development—especially in support of recruitment and retention—a critical business-survival strategy in the health care industry.

Health First, a nonprofit health care organization, was formed from a combination of several hospitals in 1995. Education was decentralized and somewhat disorganized. “We had much associate [employee] development in place, but we didn’t communicate effectively and direct people to the resources,” says Dr. Brenda Sabbag, director of the Center for Learning at Health First. “The Center for Learning is now the focal point from which all organizational training flows.”

A failed union organizing attempt at one of Health First’s facilities four years ago gave impetus for reorganization. Company leadership regarded the attempt as a wake-up call: “We had always taken pride in the great relationship between management and our associates. The union organizing activities seemed to threaten that relationship. Its gaining ground seemed to be a management failure,” Sabbag says. The situation served as a catalyst, inspiring Health First to reinvent itself as an employer of choice. To that end, leadership created the Positive Workplace Initiative, which includes associate development and management development as two of its

four prongs. The need to link learning to organizational performance and support learning in a centralized way ultimately resulted in the creation of a corporate Center for Learning in 2001.

Associate development takes many forms. All of Health First’s associates (3883 full time, 638 part time, 1401 per diem) are required to participate in mandatory training annually, and that training represents 46 percent of all training each year. Other learning offerings are designed to help associates create and manage their career paths. Through the Windows of Opportunity program, a formal career development program that is open to all full-time and part-time employees, associates pursue a sequence of assessments and planning activities in a face-to-face workshop called Career Power. They are encouraged to evaluate their current job fit and to discuss career goals and developmental needs with their career coach.

Coaches are leaders in the organization who have received specialized training through Career Power for Coaches. This approach to employee development creates a partnership between associates and their managers.

“The workshop leads to a series of discoveries in the eight-hour class that guides associates’ annual development needs. There are no measures and no strings attached, and associates are paid to attend,” Sabbag says. “We have discovered that good job fit has a positive impact on retention and productivity. It’s very exciting to have that effect on people’s lives.”

The organization’s overall annual turnover rate is
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Learning at Every Opportunity

Army Management Staff College
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

Ursula Lohmann, dean of academics (and acting commandant at the time of this interview) of the Army Management Staff College, does a lot of thinking about learning. As the head of the institution that offers the Army's premier leadership development program for civilians—Sustaining Base Leadership and Management, or SBLM—she ensures that AMSC offers rich educational opportunities not only to its participants, but also to its faculty and staff. She and her management team are dedicated to measurement, and are constantly seeking to find out how the institution stacks up against itself over time and against other organizations—one reason she decided to enter the BEST Awards. “We bill ourselves as an educational institution, but there is much crossover in issues with other ASTD member organizations,” she says.

Lohmann says she found the BEST program application “very thought-provoking.” She is somewhat of a results junkie, who has applied for the Baldrige Award “as a learning exercise” and uses the Balanced Scorecard to drive AMSC's strategic plan. For her, the BEST application process was useful and interesting because “it addressed the inside of the institution specifically,” she says.

AMSC was formed in 1987, in order to educate Army civilians and military personnel as leaders and managers in the Army's sustaining base. Aside from the SBLM programs, AMSC also offers Personnel Management for Executives, command programs, and consulting and outreach services. Its 92

employees are divided equally between faculty and administrators.

Expanding skills in number and mastery is central to AMSC employee development. Every employee is encouraged to participate in at least two learning experiences each year—one to enhance current skills and one to build new skills. Rather than employing a dedicated training officer, each supervisor acts as a training officer for his or her unit, helping employees create and follow individual development plans.

In addition to outside learning opportunities, staff and faculty participate in a development week three times a year. Three weeks of dedicated employee development time might seem to be an incredible luxury to most organizations, but as an educational institution AMSC finds it valuable to use that time as a testing environment for some of its offerings. The Team Leadership Development Activity, a half-day exercise offered before each resident SBLM class begins, “gives us a reading on how it will work when we're doing it with students,” Lohmann says. That physically active session provides a problem to solve, gives the team instructions and parameters, and provides feedback on how the team accomplished its objective. Outcomes include increased comfort with co-workers and improved working relationships.

“Team members get to see the effect they have on the team's performance. ‘Synergy’ ceases to be just a word,” says Lohmann. “It's a great way to exercise a variety of skills and have fun, which enhances the learning.” An after-action review, facilitated by seasoned faculty who ensure discussion and reinforce
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tions (maintenance), and corporate support. These leaders, informed by their business-unit learning council, work together to create synergies and manage corporate-wide execution. "Previously, we worked as independent tribes," says Jim Smith, director of performance and learning. "Now, there is sharing of resources and material, and cross-pollination of personnel. We track data intensively. Information is used to drive training interventions, and operational metrics measure training impact."

Although OAOB was primarily a classroom event, the functional learning leaders have been working together to experiment with delivery methods (especially blended solutions, which now make up 20 percent of training delivery time), implement a new learning management system, and create a library of reusable learning objects. "We are leveraging e-learning to reach our distributed workforce, and using the classroom for value-added learning that is motivational and highly interactive," says Anne Corry, director of in-flight service performance systems.

Compliance training for pilots is Delta's largest training expense, as airline pilots are required to attend recurrent training at least once a year. Previously classroom- and paper-based, the curriculum was leveraged onto an e-learning platform in 2002. Now, 13 lessons on fleet operations are delivered on CD-ROM to Delta's 9000 pilots; successful completion of a test is required to gain admittance into classroom training through a computer-generated completion code. The training footprint has been reduced from 38 hours of content to 11, and cost-savings exceeded \$10 million in the program's first year.

Learning is made available to the extended enterprise through this program and others like it. Stake-

holders in the pilot compliance training included the Federal Aviation Administration, which must approve the curriculum, and the Air Line Pilots Association. Delta also has an active direct sharing program of leadership development, technical, and compliance training courses with its Sky Team members, which include Air France, Alitalia, Czech Airlines, and Korean Air.

In response to the Business Elite program issues, it was determined that greater competency in project management needed to be developed. A business-wide project management methodology called On-Track was implemented; a community of knowledge for more than 300 project managers and a lessons-learned database were created. Those lessons learned have been incorporated into the project-manager qualification curriculum and in a coaching model that has supported more than 1000 projects and initiatives to date. The curriculum included a blended approach of instructor-led, Web-based, and CD-ROM training delivered over a two-year period that supports the qualification process.

One of Delta's recent uses of Web-based delivery is the training program for in-flight personnel that supports the airline's new "Food for Purchase" product. In an attempt to open up new revenue streams, many Delta flights will be featuring meals for sale from leading fast and casual food companies. As the sales and delivery channel, flight attendants will become revenue producers. A handheld PDA-based system has been developed for taking and tracking orders on board; the new e-learning solution acquaints flight attendants with the business case behind Food for Purchase, as well as the operation of the handheld device. Through rapid deployment in September and October, 14,000 flight attendants were trained in 45 days.



Learning is linked to individual and organizational performance at Delta at three levels. On the corporate level, major business initiatives are aligned for training and development support, and for project management and change management requirements. At the business unit level, the functional learning councils identify, fund, and provide resources for training and development priorities. For the individual, human resource planning processes include annual objectives, mid-year reviews, and annual succession planning activities. The learning interventions themselves are assessed for effectiveness through Kirkpatrick Level 2, 3, and 4 evaluations.

Despite these trying times for airlines, Delta senior leadership made a commitment to engage and invest in its employees after 9/11. Although the company has reduced its overall headcount by 16,000 employees, the learning community has maintained learning budgets and core training programs across the enterprise. Job families for facilitators and designers were created, reducing 64 job titles to six. Curricula and competencies have been designed for each specialty. To attain the most senior levels, a portfolio presentation is required for promotion.

"We have been building a world-class training and development function within Delta's culture," says Kline. "We entered ASTD's BEST Awards competition in order to compare ourselves against other, nonairline businesses. We are proud to be amongst the inaugural group of winners, and are so pleased to be able to recognize Delta's training community and give it visibility." TD

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location convenes its employees weekly to discuss new business initiatives and present new product

information. Once a month, the branches conduct training sessions on a sales- or service-related topic during these meetings, using lesson plans created by Orkin University.

Regional managers host quarterly sales and service meetings that cover varied topics, such as the implementation of new products and an ongoing discussion about improving basic service. "The common thread, however, is always an address about performance improvement and training in order to consistently achieve our business strategy," says Price.

Due to the mobility of its workforce, Orkin isn't rushing headlong into e-learning. For them, what's most effective remains the tried-and-true. The company's most innovative learning initiative was delivered through the branch system by regional and branch managers who received train-the-trainer instruction. Give the Signal: Customer Satisfaction Training was developed to support a strategic initiative to reduce the cancellation rate among residential customers. Follow-up and reinforcement activities last eight weeks.

For Give the Signal, Orkin University developed a five-step process for solving problems, improving customer service practices, and creating a customer-focused work environment. By applying those steps, employees have successfully prevented customer cancellations in hundreds of instances. Recent results from one region show an 824 percent return-on-investment by saving 350 customers. Further, management and employees alike report improved morale and teamwork.

Regional managers in the field also delivered a course on Orkin's mosquito service, a new product offering developed in response to customer anxiety about the West Nile virus. Through rapid design prac-



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tices, the eight-hour, instructor-led course—which is supplemented by four hours of self-directed learning—was developed in just eight days.

Learning is made available to the extended enterprise in a variety of ways. The mosquito service training included a customer education component that was delivered primarily through the marketing materials for the new product. The company operates a training center in Atlanta, which permits trainers to deliver hands-on courses in a laboratory environment. The training center includes a full-scale, wood-frame model house on the back lot that features wall cut-aways to make pest infestation visible. In the “termite pavilion,” another outdoor facility, mockups of various residential foundation and framing options permit trainees to take a bug’s-eye view. A warehouse full of simulated interior environments, such as a commercial kitchen, is under construction and should be completed by spring.

Regulators and suppliers frequently participate in those and other technical training offerings. Orkin also delivers its programs to groups of nonemployees. “Commercial customers benefit from the training by understanding the types of skills that Orkin representatives possess,” says Price. “And they gain insight into our performance standards, helping to align their expectations of service with our standards.”

Exclusively technology-based learning accounts for only 3 percent of total training time at Orkin. However, Orkin University provides a number of Web-based training programs through its Online Learning Center, which cover topics from uniform ordering to using new payment processing software. Programs are delivered synchronously in real time by a live trainer. Employees also have the opportunity to learn

from their peers via online forums. A recent discussion centered on the previously unknown effectiveness of honey mustard as pest bait. (You’d have to have been there to appreciate the enthusiasm this discussion engendered.)

Orkin knows what delivery methods best suit its employees and refrains from pursuing technology for technology’s sake. An amazing 68 percent of annual training time is delivered through methods other than classroom or technology. The initial training course for new pest control and termite control employees is a 15-day course delivered in the branch and on the job. Five days of self-directed learning supplemented by videos are followed by 10 days of on-the-job training with a certified field trainer. The correspondence course remains a popular and appropriate method for the company; customers, regulators, and suppliers also enroll in these courses, which were developed by some major universities in partnership with Orkin for Orkin employees.

The branch-based nature of its employees is driving Orkin’s next foray into distance learning: satellite TV. Building upon the successes demonstrated by such companies as Coca-Cola, Safeway, and General Motors, Orkin University hopes to use satellite TV in its branch locations to deliver real-time, interactive learning.

Learning at Orkin enjoys significant support from top leadership. The company boasts that 100 percent of executives at the vice presidential level and above make public statements in support of learning, participate in learning events as an instructor or a speaker, and include learning objectives as part of their performance goals. TD



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the Senior Executive Development Program. "Our programs in the past were event-focused, not process-focused," says Strebe. "People attended 'educational experiences.' There was no application of learning back on the job." Changes to the program were driven by Schwan's new four-component "success profile" of potential leaders, which evaluates them on the basis of competency, experience, organizational knowledge, and personal attributes such as cognitive ability. Once those profiles are complete, individuals are targeted and selected for the program, and sent to a DDI executive assessment center. An IDP is then built collaboratively with the learner and his or her manager, and implementation steps are taken. Most important, results are measured and documented.

"The new program has not only been a big success, but also has enabled SU to create a level of awareness in the organization as we introduced the company to development as an important strategic philosophy and pursued a very structured approach," says Strebe.

By contrast, education refers to English as a Second Language instruction, GED preparation, and the associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees Schwan employees can pursue. SU offers a two-year online degree program to employees, spouses, and family members in partnership with local educational institutions and an MBA short course.

Converting the old decentralized training model to one that focuses on performance improvement was "one of the most challenging situations in my career," says Strebe. Although he attempted to retain as many of the existing staff as possible, he acknowledges that most of the director-level people at SU have been hired from outside the organization.

In their new consulting role, SU staff are expected to conduct a needs assessment every time training is requested. "One of the things SU has helped the company do better is to make decisions about when to invest in training and when not to," says Strebe. "We've helped the company understand that training isn't the answer to every business problem."

But when it is, those programs fall under the "T for training" portion of SU's mandate. One such success is the new employee training program for home delivery route managers.

Customer relationships are crucial to the success of Schwan's home delivery service. Customers will frequently give copies of their house keys to their Schwan's route manager, or leave their doors unlocked so deliveries can be made while they're not at home. Clearly, this degree of trust is developed over time, but Schwan's was experiencing a disturbing level of turnover among its home delivery employees. Previous training programs for those employees were incomplete. Under SU's new offering—informed by a best-practices team working on distribution, recruitment, and retention in the division—new route managers engage in a five-week program of structured on-the-job training that concludes with a certification process.

Results are demonstrable. In just one region, the rolling 12-month retention rate had increased by more than 22 percent, saving the region US\$10 million. Each dollar spent by the region to support SU returned \$13 to the business, based solely upon the impact of new employee training.

Schwan's is moving equally rapidly into e-learning. "We've gone from zero to something," Strebe says. In the past two years, the company has added 200 online courses to its catalogue, and its e-Campus



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garnered 1400 course registrations in its first six weeks. Courses are available to members of the extended enterprise, and SU provides external consulting services.

Having moved so far so fast, Strebe needed to take a step back and see how SU was doing. "My key motivation in entering the BEST Awards was to benchmark against other organizations."

Strebe notes that a lot of people are responsible for the impact of the role of SU on the Schwan Food Company. "For starters, our CEO Lenny Pippin believes strongly in the power of education, and that has been evident in the support he has given to our efforts. We're able to make an impact only because he, the executive committee, and other senior leaders believe we can," says Strebe. "In addition, we were fortunate enough to assemble a quality staff at SU. Our employees are not only talented and hard-working, but are also passionate about improving the business. Each and every one of them has helped earn the BEST recognition. Collectively, we are a very proud team.

"We are very excited to be named an award winner. The BEST Award establishes us as a credible provider. It's great to be recognized in our move towards becoming a learning organization." TD

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In addition, as a salesperson you'd be motivated by TELUS's stated goal of becoming a premier sales organization. To accomplish this goal, TELUS developed a strategic selling workshop for the sales staff designed and implemented by two of TELUS's leading vice presidents, Andrew Turner and Richard Hoy. Based on real-life simulation role-plays, salespeople are taught how to sell strategically. This workshop allows for immediate feedback and high-impact learn-

ing for all participants.

Level 3 evaluations tie learning to your performance. You and your manager are surveyed 30 to 90 days after completion of the program, and the changes in your behavior on the job are measured. The measures reflect the rate at which your knowledge and skills have increased due to the training, and the rate at which the training has enabled you to enhance your job performance.

You'd also participate in e-ETHICS, TELUS's most ambitious corporate training program. Completed by 17,000-plus employees, the course incorporates guidelines and theory with review questions and case study scenarios as it strives to take the ethical standards from the conceptual to the specific.

All of those initiatives, and many others, are driven by TELUS's corporate commitment to learning, development, and performance. "The training and development function is now more than ever linked to improving the performance of individuals and the organization as a whole," explains Viki MacMillan, director of HR strategic partnerships and training excellence. This new approach pairs centralized components for strategic alignment and decentralized groups in the business units. Learning partners and strategic program managers do "up-front analysis work to flush out strategic and mission-critical training needs with their internal clients," MacMillan says. In addition, internal training resources leverage learning technologies to meet those needs.

"All of our programs are tied to TELUS's values competencies and future direction," MacMillan notes. Key strategic programs such as the e-ETHICS course cut across the entire enterprise, and have helped refocus the organization and provide a new framework for value and performance. A Senior Learning Investment Forum creates and monitors a



common vision and approach, says Josh Blair, vice president for employee development.

To deliver a high level of leading-edge expertise, TELUS embraces strategic partnerships with CDI, Cisco, Global Knowledge, MICA, Thomson NETg, and select Canadian universities and colleges.

"TELUS has really changed its focus to performance excellence as our guiding light," says Blair. "We are ecstatic about receiving a BEST Award. Training and development is a huge passion for our company, and ASTD is the world leader in that field."

"Every member of our employee development team has contributed commitment, energy, and excellence," concurs MacMillan. "The BEST Award is really an acknowledgement of their hard work."

In our post-World.com environment, a company like TELUS that wears its values on its sleeve is a breath of fresh air. TD

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9.7 percent—among the lowest in the state for health care providers. However, the turnover rate among associates attending the Windows of Opportunity program is an impressive 1.2 percent.

Once the PWI initiative was firmly in place, it became clear that the development prongs needed to be coordinated and strategically linked. And the key to competitive advantage was in providing learning environments that not only encouraged employee growth and development and aided retention, but also could play a vital role in associate recruitment.

The Center for Learning was created to expand the traditional role of corporate education to include other developmental and learning experiences targeted at other sectors of the enterprise. It provides training to medical field personnel, community health care providers, and the lay public. The center serves as an

umbrella for corporate clinical education, corporate computer systems training, corporate OD training, and the Training Center, which houses a licensed EMT-paramedic program. It offers continuing post-graduate courses to the EMS community, who are not necessarily Health First employees, and advanced clinical education programs to Health First associates and the health care community at large.

Professionals within the Center for Learning perform needs assessments in response to requests for training about 95 percent of the time. They take a consultative approach, supported by the Human Resource Partnership at Health First. This community of practice, created several years ago, consists of about 25 HR team members who have been trained in the consulting process. They meet monthly, sharing their own learning and proactively extending to meet the needs of more than 100 leaders within the organization. Each consultant also has five to six partners with whom he or she meets twice a year for formal discussions.

"We started out with problem solving and retrofitting," says Sabbag. "Through the partnership, we have increased our capacity to be proactive. Our HR areas had been segmented by invisible barriers, but those barriers have melted. There's a lot of synergy when we meet, instead of silos."

The Center for Learning reached out to the extended enterprise on the heels of the recent passage of HIPAA legislation, which pertains to patient privacy and the appropriate handling of records and information. Subcommittees were formed to represent stakeholder groups, including physicians, contract employees, travelers (transient health care workers), volunteers, vendors, and students. The potential learner population numbered in excess of 8000. As the legislation was brand-new, there were no existing materials or models on which to depend.



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An e-learning solution was developed that featured Web-based applications designed specifically for each of those extended partner groups. Training activities are automatically recorded, retrieved, and updated in real time. Still, Health First is moving into e-learning cautiously. Because much of its training involves mastery of hands-on procedures, 75 percent of training is still delivered in the classroom. However, a review of its new-hire employee orientation program turned up several concerns, including vague objectives, high cost, a lack of integration with defined competencies and the larger education picture at Health First, and time and space constraints that made attending the training difficult for employees working on shift schedules.

Sabbag describes the decision to use a blended approach in the revamped orientation as “a blinding flash of the obvious.” By focusing on a systems design, Center for Learning staff were able to reduce a full day of classroom orientation to a program that uses asynchronous e-learning for required courses, reserving corporate citizenship and customer satisfaction competencies for synchronous classroom instruction. “It is a win-win for all of us because the new program meets mandatory [training] needs and improved compliance, and it reduces orientation time, thus reducing costs,” she says. Cost-savings of US\$63,000 were realized in the first year, and compliance rates rose from 68 percent to 95 percent.

Sabbag, who has been at Health First for 10 years, says the BEST call for entries “really struck a chord with me. We wanted to see how we’re doing when compared with for-profit companies.” As one of 23 organizations honored this year, Health First appears to be in the pink. TD

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the learning, concludes the program. Other development week activities might include software instruction, sessions on facilitation skills, certification in Myers Briggs, and so forth.

The United States Army has a reputation for reporting on and learning from its engagements and activities. AMSC also embraces that concept, using many types of situations as learning events. For example, faculty and staff completed case studies about student evaluation and remediation. In the process, they developed better working relationships, uncovered new solutions to problems, and came away with new energy for cooperation. After completing AMSC-funded educational activities, participants are required to write after-action reports and place them on AMSC’s intranet for others to read.

Failure is viewed as a learning opportunity. For example, when beginning the development of each unit’s Balanced Scorecard, staff found they lacked the skills to manipulate the required statistics and formulas. So, they engaged in two days of interactive training to acquire the necessary skills and now apply those lessons learned three times a year as the Balanced Scorecard is updated. Completing the Balanced Scorecard also drives the need for measuring performance against AMSC’s stated goal of “recruit, develop, and retain the best-qualified staff and faculty.” One way this is done is through an Electronic Management Tracking System (eMTS), which provides automated desktop time and attendance capability. Employees record their labor hours for a variety of applications, one of which is training and development, as well as time spent by faculty to publish and consult.

Most training delivery is accomplished in the classroom, due to the participatory nature of the three development weeks. About 20 percent of employee training is technology-based; 15 percent utilizes blend-



ed solutions. The Learning Curve is a Web-based initiative that provides an anyplace, anytime learning environment. Designed to leverage education throughout the enterprise, it is available worldwide to all constituents. Based on a collaborative software tool, the Learning Curve lets users push and pull information. They can make use of nuggets provided under “hot topics,” “tutorials,” or “learning vignettes.” The Learning Curve contains student research projects and also hosts online discussions.

The ongoing development of faculty and staff is crucial to AMSC's accreditation, which makes it possible to extend its offerings to new populations. The American Council on Education College Recommendation Service approved the Personnel Management for Executives program in 1981, and has reviewed and evaluated the SBLM program since 1987. Those reviews mean that students can receive college credits from participating universities for their work at AMSC. AMSC has developed articulation agreements with five universities: Strayer University, the University of Maryland University College, Central Michigan University, American Military University, and Webster University.

Faculty and staff recognition is also crucial to AMSC's recruitment and retention goals, and learning is conducted—and rewarded—in multiple, informal ways. For example, each new employee gets a sponsor, not necessarily from the same unit, who provides small creature comforts and an introduction to the computer system. The SWAT award—Small Wins Award for Technology—can be bestowed by an employee upon any other for solving a problem or mastering a new skill or process. The recipient chooses an award from the “treasure chest,” which includes items such as t-shirts, water bottles, and mouse pads. Three times a year, Lohmann bestows the Team Player Award on the organization's best mentors. TD

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