



Real Results: The True Opportunity of Online Learning

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Introduction

With the advent of online training in the late 1990s, many companies viewed the opportunity to incorporate e-learning into their training mix as simply leveraging technology to reduce costs. Online classrooms, it was rightly reasoned, allowed organizations to save travel time and money associated with live, in-person classrooms, replacing it with trainers delivering e-learning to internal and external audiences remotely from the desktop.

For most organizations, the original goals of online training were realized: trainers were saved the exhaustion of constant travel to reach geographically dispersed offices, participants didn't have to waste valuable days sitting in classrooms, and companies saved the associated costs for travel. However, the true opportunity of online training lies in what happens after it is adopted into an enterprise. These concomitant benefits extend far beyond the training department to transform the very character and capability of the business itself.

Online Training: The Catalyst for Business Change

Organizations that routinely use e-learning to deliver training to their constituents are better able to adapt to and implement business change. Because they can more rapidly disseminate information, including new product iterations, selling strategies, and operational knowledge, they are better prepared to make nimble course corrections that, over time, result in cost efficiencies, increased revenues, and competitive returns of a significantly higher order.

Further, the more live online and pre-recorded "on demand" training is adopted by the enterprise, the more its constituents will come to rely on it, continuously increasing the organization's ability to leverage e-learning for greater benefit. For example:

- Geographically-dispersed sales teams are routinely trained in days instead of weeks or months, enabling faster delivery of products to market and sustainable competitive advantage.
- Internal users come to expect rapid access to targeted libraries of relevant training, taking perhaps 15 to 20 minutes out of the work day to consume new information and then immediately apply it, reducing operational delays and decreasing time-to-performance.
- External customers are encouraged to seek online, self-training modules on new products, resulting in relieved demand for phone support and subsequent reduction in staffing requirements.
- Training departments leverage pre-existing content by selling subscriptions to libraries of online training sessions, creating new and sustainable revenue streams.



"There is growing support from operational leaders who see learning as the key to creating winning value propositions for clients and prospects because learning efforts can be used to develop not only employees but also clients and markets."

"Education Marketing as a Business Tool,"
Jeff Snipes and Liz Becker, *Chief Learning Officer*, June 2007

Those businesses that have actively fostered deployment of e-learning into all points of the enterprise are now in the enviable position of experiencing geometrically increasing levels of operational and strategic efficiency. And those corporate learning officers and training managers that went through the potentially arduous process of developing a business case in support of e-learning are now raised to the level of key strategic players in their organizations.



Reaping the Business Rewards of Online Training

How can an online training solution go from a simple cost and time-savings initiative to a key driver of business advantage? Because the advantages of e-learning can be leveraged into a much broader range of transformative capabilities:

One-to-many scalability – The economies of scale online learning delivers enables organizations to dramatically increase the ratio of learners to trainers. Companies can grow the number of employees, add training requirements, and increase the amount of training offered without having to grow the training budget correspondingly—and can further extend these resources to the very edges of their customer base and supply chains using the same resources. This scalability garners greater results when applied to the re-use of training materials, either for serial delivery in live online sessions, or as self-served, on-demand modules, created once and consumed multiple times.

Matching information delivery to business goals – Online learning enables cost-effective delivery of targeted training – mapping training objectives directly to the business goals of the company. Training specialists can now replace all-day, multi-topic training with briefer, live online sessions targeted to specific subject, function, or job role, improving information retention and rapidly delivering business benefit.

Capturing performance metrics and compliance – Unlike traditional learning methods, online training offers a wealth of easily tracked data on users and the training information they interact with. This allows training organizations to, perhaps for the first time, track compliance with learning objectives and to visibly demonstrate the efficiencies and cost benefits of e-learning. Organizations can further document how, when, and on what subjects training was conducted, supporting compliance with regulatory and corporate requirements.

Extending working capital – By enabling organizations to effectively train more people and create and deliver more training content with less resources, online training frees up working capital that can be applied to other business areas and allows the training organization to provide ever greater results with less budget.

Creating new revenue streams – Organizations can productize training classes or modules as cost-based offerings to generate additional revenue, even leveraging previously internally-focused trainings for consumption by external audiences. The training organization is transformed from a cost center to a revenue center.



"According to Gartner, e-learning costs are one-third to one-fifth those of traditional classroom training. The savings come from eliminating such costs as the time workers have to spend away from their jobs. Workers take 20 percent to 40 percent less time to complete e-learning courses than comparable classroom training, so workers lose less time learning new skills."

*"Grading the Blended E-Learning Curve,"
Robyn L. Wright, SoftwareMag.com, May 2006*

Increased productivity – With online training, attendees and trainers don't need to leave their desks or travel for training. Learning modules can be consumed at a pace that increases retention, and schedules can be designed to maximize attendance and convenience. Training can also be delivered at a faster pace, so information can be applied to actual business tasks more rapidly. Finally, the training organization is able to replace time spent on travel or all-day training with more productive tasks, such as developing relevant content, which results in better training, and ever more productive employees.



Real Results from Real Organizations

The following case studies present real results from organizations that have moved beyond the initial benefits of cost and time-savings available from online training, and have successfully realized greater productivity, efficiency, and strategic advantage. These three organizations – Canon, Compulink, and Mexico's National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) – are some of the many companies and organizations who have used WebEx Training Center to transform not only how they deliver training, but their businesses as well.



Canon: Accelerating Time-to-Market with WebEx Training Center

A subsidiary of Japan-based Canon, Inc., Canon U.S.A. is an industry leader in professional business and consumer imaging equipment and information systems. With seven regional centers located throughout the Americas, the Imaging Systems Group supports a sales force of 8,000 people in a dealer network.

Overcoming Dealer Reluctance to Selling Software

In early 2000, Canon began reformulating its Imaging Systems Group objectives to address a mature copier market. This involved developing document management and workflow solutions that would provide an additional revenue stream while also driving copier sales. Marketing the new products through its existing dealer network, however, was challenging.

“Our dealers had been very successful selling our copiers and digital MFP’s, but they are hardware-oriented and didn’t have strong software competencies,” recalls Mitch Bardwell, Director and Assistant General Manager of the Sales Training Division at Canon’s Imaging Systems Group. “Since our dealers were not experienced in selling software, they were reluctant to outfit their showrooms with software to conduct training at each Canon dealer location. The only other choice was to send sales reps to a Canon regional training center, a solution that was too inefficient, expensive, and impractical to implement across its dealer network.”

Unique Online Training Capability Provides the Answer

Canon discovered that WebEx Training Center had a unique feature called Hands On Lab. “When I realized that Hands On Lab would make it possible for Canon dealers to access computers with Canon software remotely, I knew it was the answer to our training problem,” says Bardwell. Using the Training Center Hands On Lab feature, Bardwell was able to simultaneously connect dealers across the country to the lab computers located at Canon headquarters and conduct interactive training on both software and hardware solutions.

Canon also uses Training Center to conduct virtual product demonstrations that are key to the sales process with its end customers. When a prospective sale involves sophisticated applications, the dealer calls a Canon field analyst for assistance.



“Because WebEx allows us to train large numbers of dealers effectively, we’ve accelerated our time-to-market at a rate that our competitors can’t match.”

Mitch Bardwell, Director and Assistant General Manager, Sales Training Division, Imaging Systems Group, Canon

“We have been called upon to train 1,200 sales people in 30 days so Canon software products can be included in this quarter’s sales. The only way we can do it is with the WebEx Hands On Lab solution.”

Mitch Bardwell, Director and Assistant General Manager, Sales Training Division, Imaging Systems Group, Canon

“With WebEx, field analysts now conduct detailed online demonstrations that answer dealers’ and end customers’ specific questions. Our analysts perform the virtual demonstrations online from wherever they are, saving Canon a tremendous amount of time and money,” states Bardwell.

Today, 20 Canon field instructors have been trained on WebEx. They deliver one- or two-hour training sessions to approximately eight dealer sales people at a time. Bardwell reports, “Using WebEx, we now train approximately 40 sales professionals at Canon dealers each month, which means we’re training many more dealers in a lot less time at a lot less cost.”

Benefits Exceed Expectations

WebEx has transformed Canon’s training model, increasing the speed with which the company trains dealer salespeople while saving tens of thousands of dollars a year in travel and lost opportunity costs. Bardwell adds “Because WebEx allows us to train large numbers of dealers effectively, we’ve accelerated our time-to-market at a rate that our competitors can’t match.”

Canon has taken advantage of WebEx to adopt a new, blended training approach that leverages different learning methods according to content type. This approach has accelerated training rollouts, made learning more manageable for trainees, and improved the overall quality of training Canon delivers. “We cut our instructor-led application workshop from three days to one by creating a hybrid event that’s much more effective than the original multi-day in-person event,” says Bardwell.

Conducting virtual demonstrations with WebEx helps Canon improve the knowledge of its instructors while optimizing its field experts’ time. WebEx avoids lost opportunity costs that constant traveling can create. “Now our field experts spend their time doing more important things than traveling,” he says.



Compulink: Growing the Customer Base and Increasing Revenue with Online Learning

Established in 1985, Compulink is a market-leading developer of practice management software for healthcare professionals. The company's software solutions fully integrate the financial, clinical, and administrative components of healthcare practices, maximizing business efficiency and patient care. Thousands of practitioners across the US, including ophthalmologists, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, psychologists, and physicians, use Compulink solutions to empower their businesses.

The Customer Training Challenge

In 2000, Compulink wanted to offer its customers more affordable and convenient training. "In the past, we conducted up to five on-site training classes per month, each lasting two or three days. We had several trainers constantly flying to customer locations, which meant we lost a lot of time in travel, and the cost for our customers was huge," states Sheila O'Kane, Administrative Manager of Client Education Services at Compulink. Because the company continually upgrades its software to meet customer needs, clients also found it difficult to stay current with the products. Compulink needed to find a reliable online solution that would enable the company to deliver training effectively to a broad customer base.

Online Learning Means More Cost-Effective and Timely Training

When O'Kane began researching other online meeting solutions, she found WebEx right away. She says, "Although I intended to evaluate other solutions, I was so impressed by WebEx, I didn't have to." The WebEx application sharing feature, combined with the solution's low latency, made O'Kane's decision easy. "The experience WebEx provides our customers is the same as if we were running our software in their offices, on their networks. Sharing our software and other applications is completely seamless," she explains.

"The quality of our WebEx training helped us attract larger clients and increased our referral base."

Sheila O'Kane, Administrative Manager of Client Education Services, Compulink

"We started off with three group classes per month. Today, we conduct between five and ten group classes per day, and we have ten full-time trainers dedicated to delivering training via WebEx," says O'Kane. WebEx group sessions cover all of the software's practice management capabilities, including electronic medical records, appointment scheduling, and inventory systems. Individual customer training is also popular. "With WebEx, we can train a customer's entire staff all at once," she says.



"Implementing WebEx had a mushrooming effect on our business growth. Now, many clients choose to work with us because of our superior online training program. We couldn't have achieved the growth we've had in the past five years without WebEx."

Sheila O'Kane, Administrative Manager of Client Education Services, Compulink

Improved Training Capabilities Deliver Far-Reaching Benefits

WebEx helped Compulink create an industry-leading training program that increased revenue in all areas of the business.

"Implementing WebEx had a mushrooming effect on our business growth. Now, many clients choose to work with us because of our superior online training program," says O'Kane, adding, "And because of the WebEx training offering, customer demand grew for on-site training. We couldn't have achieved the growth we've had in the past five years without WebEx." Today, Compulink offers a blended training approach that is known in the industry. "The quality of our WebEx training helped us attract larger clients and increased our referral base. Now, we also use WebEx training to prepare clients for on-site training," she states.

In addition to growing revenue, WebEx enabled Compulink to educate clients better while streamlining the company's business processes. With WebEx training, the company now reaches many clients who did not receive training before. "WebEx training has made our customers more savvy on our solutions so they depend less on our support department. But whenever there is a customer support issue, we resolve it quickly with WebEx," explains O'Kane. As a result of using WebEx, Compulink's support calls have dropped while customer satisfaction has increased.



Mexico's National Institute for Public Health: Creating an Exceptional Distance Learning Program

Established in 1922, the National Institute of Public Health (el Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública or INSP) in Mexico is one of Latin America's principal centers for public health research and education. Offering continuing certification to healthcare professionals, and masters and doctoral programs for public health students, the Institute graduates practitioners who advance the health and well-being of the diverse Latin population.

Providing Equal Learning Opportunities Regardless of Location

In 2005, the National Institute of Public Health (INSP) wanted to better address the challenges facing its geographically dispersed student population. Many students and healthcare workers interested in public health education were unable to enroll in full-time programs due to professional or family commitments. For other applicants, the cost of moving to Cuernavaca was not affordable. "Prospective applicants began asking if we had a virtual education program we could offer them," says Laura Magaña Valladares, the Academic Dean of INSP. She says, "We immediately began to consider developing an Internet-based educational program. We wanted to make our resources accessible to all students, including those located in rural areas that have the greatest need for quality education."

An Exceptional Distance Learning Program

Magaña assembled a task team to identify and examine the different models used by universities with successful e-learning programs. "After thorough research, we knew that combining synchronous and asynchronous educational approaches would provide the greatest contact with our students," explains Magaña. "We needed a solution that would give us the ability to create a real-time online curriculum." The task team discovered WebEx at Emory and Tulane Universities. "We evaluated several other solutions, but they didn't provide the complete capabilities that WebEx offered," says Magaña. The Institute chose WebEx because it enabled real-time classes and also provided strong voice, video, and application sharing capabilities. Magaña adds, "WebEx was also very easy to use and offered interactive features that would keep our students engaged."



"We chose WebEx so we could provide the highest quality e-education program for public health in Latin America."

Laura Magaña Valladares, Academic Dean,
National Institute of Public Health, Mexico

"Since we launched the program last year, more than 1,000 students have already completed our online courses. And we are now offering a complete two-year masters program...through WebEx."

Laura Magaña Valladares, Academic Dean,
National Institute of Public Health, Mexico

INSP used WebEx Training Center to develop five virtual education programs that include more than 50 interactive online courses.

"WebEx helps us deliver on our mission to provide a high-touch, accessible e-learning environment," Magaña says. Instructors use the WebEx desktop sharing capability to present documents, student work, and PowerPoint slides in real time. WebEx whiteboard and pointer features enable them to illustrate examples on-the-fly and emphasize particular points as they speak. Private and public chats between students and teachers further simulate the in-person classroom environment.

To personalize instruction, INSP assigns one dedicated tutor for every 12-15 students participating in an online course. As the professor teaches—up to 35 students at a time—the tutors observe the sessions. By watching the students' interaction, the tutors decide if further instruction is necessary and easily arrange smaller WebEx sessions to supplement and reinforce the material. In addition, INSP records all WebEx sessions, enabling students to review them at their own convenience.

Online Learning Enables High-Quality E-Education

WebEx made it possible for INSP to develop a high-quality e-education program that not only expanded the Institute's student reach, but also enabled the creation of a high-touch learning environment. "Since we launched the program last year, more than 1,000 students have already completed our online courses. And we are now offering a complete two-year masters program, geared towards high-level healthcare administrators, through WebEx," remarks Magaña. "We continue to survey our students who say they are completely satisfied with the program. Thanks to WebEx, they feel engaged and part of a student body, even if it is virtual," she says.

Incorporating WebEx improved the quality of teaching at INSP, and gave the Institute a lead over its competition. Magaña explains, "It took three months for our instructors to evaluate their teaching techniques and design our online materials." With 100 WebEx-trained teachers, INSP is the only public health institute in Latin America using the solution. "Until now, Spain was our greatest competitor," says Magaña, adding, "While they offer similar programs to ours in Spanish, the quality doesn't compare. We chose WebEx so we could provide the highest quality e-education program for public health in Latin America."



Conclusion

The evolution of online learning to an agent for business change is complete. As these and many other examples demonstrate, organizations wielding online learning as a strategic tool for business innovation are significantly better prepared to outmaneuver competitors, expand product offerings, react to market changes, grow the organization, and improve customer satisfaction.

Online training is infinitely scalable not only in scope but in terms of delivery. It can be successfully deployed or initially rolled out as a blended training solution, one that combines live e-learning with strategically deployed classroom training. Or online training can be leveraged as the sole solution for an organization implementing their first training initiative. Whatever the model, online learning delivers the means to achieve greater business results, by doing so much more with less.

WebEx is the leading provider of online training solutions in the world, guiding organizations to discover radically new ways of doing business. The WebEx Training Center solution and other web meeting products have been used to train hundreds of thousands of people across the globe.

For more information about how WebEx Training Center can help your organization improve its training, contact 1.877.509.3239 or visit online at www.webex.com.

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