

Cisco Systems Incorporated

Cisco Systems primary activities are to design, develop, manufacture and provide technical support of networking products and services. Cisco products include Routers, LAN and ATM Switches, dial up access servers and network management software. The main customers of the Group include corporations, government agencies, utilities, educational institutions and other consumers. Cisco has operations mainly in the United States, Japan, Middle East, Africa and Asia. Switches accounted for 42% of fiscal 2001 revenues; Routers, 34%; service, 11%, access, 9% and other, 4%. (Corporate, 2001) In a constantly changing industry, the need for frequent employee training is high and Cisco was among the first in the mid 1990s to provide training to its staff via the web. (Cisco, 2001) Cisco has a variety of programs that are housed as a part of their elearning site (www.cisco.com/go/e-learning).

Live E-Learning Sales Team Training

Cisco wanted to reduce costs and streamline operations in their field sales and partner training for their hundreds of new products introduced annually via internal development or company acquisition. Previously, Cisco presented new product road shows in multiple cities and countries around the world to train about 5,000 field sales staff and thousands of Cisco partners. Often it would take 2 to 3 months to disperse the new product information to the people who needed it. In March of 2001 Cisco decided to eliminate the face-to-face training meetings for its sales staff and instead launched a four-day training broadcast via Cisco IP/TV Broadcast Servers. It was estimated that nearly 2000 Cisco employees viewed the broadcast per day and the training was later saved as a web-based training archive for additional Cisco employees. The total savings of this elearning web broadcast was estimated at \$600,000 and it resulted in the training of larger audience than would have otherwise been possible. (Cisco, 2001)

In addition to this one time broadcast, Cisco developed the Field E-Learning Connection (www.cisco.com/go/e-learning) an online intranet for the company's global sales force and support staff where they can plan, track, develop and measure their skills and knowledge. The site links to tens of thousands of searchable web-based learning aids that are job specific and correspond to an individual's history based on past online assessment results and certification exams. Learners have access to video on demand, online virtual labs where they can conduct hands-on experiments, access to e-mentors who can walk them through an exercise, an online bookstore and a new employee orientation kit. In addition, the sales managers can monitor an

employee's development and progress. On average, the Field E-Learning Connection system gets 125 thousand hits a month which Cisco believes reflects a 100% percent usage of the program among its employees and a it resulted in a 40% increase in time available to spend in quality face-to-face time with customers. (Cisco, 1999)
Today, Cisco's sales force gets about 80% of its job-related information through its Field E-learning Connection training portal. (Khirallah, 2000)

E-Learning for Manufacturing

Cisco also determined that its manufacturing processes needed to undergo process improvement, including the need to standardize and automate the virtual manufacturing process responsible for 80 percent of Cisco's orders. After conducting a cost accounting study it was determined that 30 percent of the errors that occurred with their new Web based materials management applications were due to a lack of training. The manufacturing department was given three months to develop and implement a training program for hundreds of Cisco manufacturing employees and key suppliers and they quickly turned to elearning as a solution. The elearning initiative was created with a mix of self-instruction web courses, virtual coaches (who conducted online demonstrations), subject matter coaches, and real application exercises. Using elearning, Cisco was able to save \$1million per quarter in reduced training costs, a 50% reduction in support time required on the part of live coaches and support people after one month of launch, and a 80% reduction in subject matter coach's training time. Cisco now uses the tool to certify all of their manufacturing employees on their jobs and they are looking into using wearable computing devices as a way of delivering just-in-time learning to their shop floor employees. (Cisco)

Cisco Learning Partner Program

Beyond providing elearning for its staff, Cisco also provides elearning content for its student customers. Cisco developed the Cisco Learning Partner program for its student learners that guides them as they progress from the baseline Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) curriculum to the Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) and Cisco Certified Design Professional (CCDP) levels. The Cisco content is made available through multiple formats, including KnowledgeNet LIVE, a live virtual classroom delivered by instructor teams with real-world experience, and KnowledgeNet INTERACTIVE, a self-paced format that provides rich multimedia instructional design through interactive animations, custom graphics, and superior audio. Mentoring is provided along with continual assessment, online

discussion groups, virtual classrooms and labs in support of the highly successful Cisco Career Certifications. (knowledgenet.com) Cisco has been able to leverage this system to provide greater customer support that is convenient for the individual learner.

Forever innovating, Cisco is now beginning to tightly connect its elearning initiatives with its knowledge management strategies and has begun to use its employees as knowledge resources to fuel its elearning portal. Learning initiatives are spread throughout Cisco Systems and the company's recent focus is to collect content for its E-learning systems from the people who understand a given topic best, whether they're in the technical documentation group or the marketing department. Currently more than 40 divisions deliver content to the portal. (Khirallah, 2000) In conjunction, Cisco has begun to "use learning objects that are tagged using a metadata framework, which allow the system to provide dynamically generated learning geared toward employees' specific needs and job functions, says Tom Kelly, VP of worldwide training. "Without that," he says, "personalization will never work." (Khirallah, 2000) Metadata tagging is a high priority for Kelly. His vision: By next year, tagged content will be delivered to employees' personal home pages. That way, a salesperson in Germany with a health-care customer base won't receive updates on health-care developments in China. (Khirallah, 2000) The company is focused on reducing the amount of time an employee spends on trying to find content that is relevant to their learning level and interest by storing enough information about that employee so that the learning content most suited to the employee is delivered directly to their desktop. Cisco began as the leader in the elearning race and with its new strategy toward "smart" personalization for every employee it seems as though they are still leading the pack with new elearning innovations.

References:

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Khirallah, Diane & Swanson, Sandra. 2000. "New Schools Of Thought". 20 November Informationweek.

<http://www.informationweek.com/813/elearning.htm>

Khirallah and Swanson present an overview of enterprises that are reaping the benefits of elearning and advises that enterprises are beginning to realize that technology itself can not replace the benefits and retention that occur with face to face learning.

KnowledgeNet. Cisco Systems. Corporate Case Study.

<http://www.knowledgenet.com/newsroom/whitepapers/newtraining.jsp>

Describes KnowledgeNet's role in the new Cisco Learning Partner program, the Cisco authorized partner channel for the delivery of learning solutions to its student customers.