



E-LEARNING FOR THE WORKPLACE: CREATING CANADA'S LIFELONG LEARNERS

AIR CANADA **CASE STUDY #2**

SEPTEMBER 2001

Effective practices in developing and supporting Internet-based corporate learning, training and development initiatives.

BACKGROUND

The knowledge and skills of Air Canada employees are a matter of productivity and safety. Basing its e-learning business case on core, frontline business processes, Air Canada has committed to improving the skills of its employees. Today, e-learning is taking off at Air Canada.

DRIVERS OF E-LEARNING AT AIR CANADA

Employees on the ramp—the tarmac where airplanes dock to their terminal gate—are critical to the maintenance of aircraft, the safety of passengers, and the loading of luggage and food. Just-in-time training, through e-learning and online knowledge management systems, gives employees at Air Canada's Halifax operations an opportunity to learn and access workplace knowledge on an "as need be" basis.

AIR CANADA'S USE OF E-LEARNING

E-learning at Air Canada is all about building community. It's about integration, not forced implementation. It is about delivering timely and relevant training to those who need it, when they need it. It is predicated on a value proposition that says, if learning technology is a good thing, then people who use the technology will decide for themselves if the learning is meeting their needs. It is also predicated on all stakeholders—including employees, union leadership, and frontline management—being treated as equals.

- ▶ The Ramp Performance Safety and Support System (RPSS II), for example, is made up of a number of kiosks, located on the Halifax airport ramp. The kiosks offer employees an opportunity to access information on a number of learning activities, when needed.
- ▶ Beyond the e-learning technology itself, Air Canada has integrated its e-learning efforts within the overall organization. Today the support from senior managers goes a long way toward achieving learning success. Management has supported the RPSS through two iterations over a 3-year time frame.

KEY CHALLENGES

- ▶ Building a learning system that trains employees outdoors in harsh weather conditions.
- ▶ Initially, Air Canada found it difficult to engage employees in the learning kiosks—because of basic literacy problems and comfort issues some employees had with the computers. To



overcome these issues, the company installed gaming software so employees would become comfortable with the technology before installing the e-learning programs.

- ▶ E-learning content found in the ramp kiosks needs to be upgraded on a regular basis to meet the constantly changing needs of the aviation industry. De-icing criteria, for example, is constantly changing. The RPSS's electronic and modular form allows for updates to take place in an efficient, timely, and effective manner.

PRIMARY BENEFITS

Through the RPSS, and other initiatives, Air Canada has realized many benefits:

1. Greater level of safety awareness in the operational (ramp) environment.
2. Higher level of maintaining regulatory compliance (safety).
3. Improved operational performance.
4. Reduced costs associated with accidental damage and injuries to people.

Today, Air Canada's RPSS is used as the company's tactical intervention process for testing changes in the workplace.

More specifically, the benefits realized through Air Canada's e-learning initiatives include:

- ▶ A reduction in classroom time learning. For example, currently 90 per cent of all certification for handling dangerous goods and workplace hazardous information system (WHMIS) is accomplished online.
- ▶ A reduction in the time it takes to communicate to all employees current best practices for accomplishing safety related tasks—from weeks to days.
- ▶ Employees are able to refresh their job knowledge on a self-directed basis rather than having to wait for an instructor-led intervention.