

Comprehensive Hardware and Software Training Prepares Pharmaceutical Sales Force for Improved Productivity

Profile: Pharmaceutical Company

A US-based pharmaceutical company has established franchises in therapeutic areas of the central nervous, cardiovascular, and respiratory systems.

Situation: Dual Implementation – Hardware and Software Training for a Large Pharmaceutical Sales Force

Being a pharmaceutical sales representative gets tougher every day. Regulatory guidelines require detailed records of every meeting and transaction, and signatures for pharmaceutical sample distribution, which can take valuable time away from what sales people do best—sell. Sales force automation tools and customer relationship management software applications are helping to streamline this extra work, but they require a significant time investment to learn and deploy.

That's why when a major pharmaceutical company decided to arm all of its 2,800 sales reps with new Toshiba Tablet PCs and implement SAP's CRM and Sample Management software applications, the company's training team knew the task was too large to handle internally. The company issued two requests for proposals (RFPs) to support the rollout of (1) the Toshiba Tablet PC hardware; and (2) the SAP CRM software application. It was their hope that a training organization would respond with the vision and expertise required to successfully launch these two distinct initiatives.

Shared Vision: Finding the Right Partner

The RFP outlined the need for a phased approach to the two implementations, beginning with the Toshiba Tablet PC rollout in February 2005, to be soon followed with a comprehensive SAP CRM software implementation, targeted for September 2005.

Global Knowledge, well-known for deploying successful hardware training initiatives, had implemented similar programs for large customers such as Nortel and Cisco. For this reason, Global Knowledge was identified as the partner of choice to help train the pharmaceutical sales force on the Toshiba Tablet PC.

Competition became fierce when the time came to select a training partner for the CRM rollout. Several candidates responded with bids, but only Global Knowledge demonstrated an understanding of the nuances of the pharmaceutical industry and the comprehensive nature of the proposed training solution. Global Knowledge successfully secured both the Tablet PC and CRM application rollout training program contracts.

The pharmaceutical company noted that the Global Knowledge solution complemented its vision of the project and that our expertise, pricing, and ability to manage the project uniquely met their needs.

The Solution: Hardware First, Then Software

Hardware Training – Toshiba Tablet PC

With 2,800 reps to train, the customer wanted Global Knowledge to implement a 'train the trainer' program to get the sales force up-to-speed on the new hardware. This approach allowed us to train the sales management team on the hardware, who would then teach the 2,800 end-user sales reps.

Global Knowledge quickly set to work, and spent January 2005 developing a comprehensive training curriculum designed to teach the management team—comprised of Regional Sales Trainers (RSTs) and District Managers (DMs)—how to operate and care for their new Tablet PCs, as well as how to utilize the software loaded onto the device.

A week prior to the train the trainer program, Global Knowledge and the customer gathered for a 'dry run' working session to ensure the training would run smoothly during a four-hour training course scheduled for the following week in Scottsdale, Arizona. On February 16, 2005, Global Knowledge delivered 14 concurrent instructor-led training sessions to approximately 330 RSTs and DMs.

Global Knowledge also developed two hours of self-paced e-learning courses that were made available to all 2,800 end-users on the sales force after they were trained by the DMs and RSTs. Delivered through Global Knowledge's learning management system (LMS), these courses could be taken at the convenience of individual sales reps.

Detailed learning materials were developed to complement the training program, including a user reference guide and quick reference card. Comprehensive evaluations for both the management team and the end-users were also provided, offering valuable feedback to the customer on the success of the training.

Software Training – SAP CRM

Organizations that have implemented a CRM software application are well aware of what a challenge it can be. Promises of improving sales force effectiveness and optimizing product launches fail to address the challenges associated with teaching the new application to thousands of users. Fortunately, both Global Knowledge and the customer understood that the often overlooked key to a successful CRM implementation is training.

By February 2005, while simultaneously working on the Tablet PC training program, Global Knowledge began working on a comprehensive CRM training curriculum for the September rollout. An unanticipated change in the timeline came when the customer learned of a setback related to a pending FDA approval on a new product indication. In preparation for the new indication, all 2,800 sales reps planned to travel to Anaheim, California for a national sales meeting in June 2005. To avoid a wasted sales conference, senior management decided to fast-track the software implementation so the sales meeting could be used to train the reps on the new application.

With only five months to develop and deploy a comprehensive CRM training program, Global Knowledge quickly accelerated its timeline and applied the appropriate level of resources to get the job done.

The Global Knowledge team developed custom pre- and post-training e-learning courses and training reference materials to support the initiative. Distinct learning tracks were developed to meet the individual needs of various groups within the sales organization such as district managers and diverse sales rep groups, including primary care, hospital, and senior care sales representatives. The training was designed to teach sales reps how to use the CRM application, including how to search for physicians in their territory, record sales calls and speaker program calls, manage and track sample distribution, maintain and update calendars, and review and share call history.

To deploy the training, Global Knowledge selected more than 150 talented instructors who would teach concurrent sessions during the two-day sales rep meeting in Anaheim. The customer was quite impressed with the quality and consistency of the instructors, which helped alleviate concerns that there would be discrepancies in the level of training each rep received.

With course materials finalized and instructors selected, the training program was ready for implementation. In April, key players gathered for a 'dry run' session to validate the content prior to the sales meeting. In May and June, Global Knowledge hosted pilot training sessions for all curriculum tracks with a select group of end-users to test timing and get feedback. The feedback from the pilot training was incorporated into the curriculum and then finalized and shared with the instructor team at the train the trainer session. The five-day training course, held in mid-June, required all 150 instructors to complete a comprehensive certification process administered by key project team members from Global Knowledge and the customer. Prior to the full sales field rollout, Global Knowledge also hosted sales management team training, which included 16 concurrent sessions for approximately 330 management team members.

Results: Seamlessly Training Sales Force

By the national sales meeting in Anaheim on June 27, 2005, Global Knowledge was fully prepared for what turned out to be an extremely successful two-day training session for all 2,800 end users.

Following the training, Global Knowledge concluded the project with training course evaluations and the deployment of the post-training e-learning course. Delivered through the company's LMS, all course materials were available after the rollout for new hires or for reps that needed refresher training.

The customer felt that delivering more than 100 concurrent training sessions to 2,800 people in just two days constituted a monumental effort by Global Knowledge. We received high praise for our ability to seamlessly manage two major training initiatives, which significantly contributed to the success of the customer's sales force.

About Global Knowledge

Global Knowledge is the largest privately held provider of training, enterprise learning services, and software solutions for information technology (IT) and management professionals. We offer a broad array of hands-on IT, project management, and professional skills training featuring proprietary core and custom curriculum as well as content from leading companies, including Cisco, Microsoft, Nortel Networks, and Red Hat. We provide comprehensive solutions and services that support enterprise-wide learning initiatives including customer, channel, and employee education; software migrations; product launches; regulatory compliance; and business application adoption.

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