Atlantic Link
Collaboration - A revolution in rapid e-learning

Case Study

Achieving Content Development Mastery
Without Flash Development or Programming Skills…

(How Capital City Bank Transformed Their Training Department
Into a Cost-Effective, Development Powerhouse.)

Background

During their 113-year history, banking has changed in profound ways - yet the Capital City Bank (CCB) way of doing business has remained constant. They are a banking organization that really appreciates the opportunity to protect the assets of their clients and they truly value the relationships they have built with clients along the way.

Capital City Bank is a super-community bank providing a full range of financial services at 70 banking offices, two mortgage lending offices, and 80 ATM locations throughout the states of Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

They are a unique financial organization because they focus on communities where banks can make a difference — and where bankers make a difference. Their associates live in these communities. They coach softball, serve on the city council, and participate in the Rotary Club.

Because of the personal stake the team members have in the communities they serve, the team is eager to support hometown neighbors and businesses. When you walk through their doors, you can bank on knowledgeable, caring and nice associates to help with your financial needs.

Much of their success is directly tied to the emphasis the company puts on corporate training – a core value that manifests itself first in on-the-job training for employees, especially new hires, and in practice at all locations. The organization has an extensive employee training program and the level of training each employee is expected to undertake has an impact on both customer satisfaction and employee job satisfaction.

In recent years, Capital City Bank has expanded outside of the Tallahassee area, serving a geographic circle inside Jacksonville, Atlanta, Birmingham, and Orlando. With acquisitions such as First National Bancorp, select Florida and Georgia offices of First Union, and First National Bank, Capital City has grown its client base in Taylor, Madison, Hernando, Pasco, Washington, Bradford, Clay, and Putnam Counties in Florida, as well as Burke, Troup, Chambers, Bibb, Grady, and Laurens counties in Georgia and Alabama.

The Challenge

Historically, Capital City Bank has outsourced much of their course development to third party vendors and organizations. From interactive training module creation, to off-the-shelf, ready-made training presentations

to Flash course development – all electronic training collateral was chosen, blueprinted, planned, developed and purchased outside of their organization.

The reality was that many of the off-the-shelf courses were not only expensive, some were outdated. In principal many of those courses would cover some of the educational information the team considered important to their training program, but the reality was that they weren't really specific for their needs and couldn't be customized.

Building those courses from scratch was not only resource-intensive, requiring many hours of review, issue management and QA – but even more expensive that OTS courses.   Emails were typically sent back and forth to the vendor discussing next steps or identifying issues that have crept up or changes that needed to be made.

Managing vendor relationships with internal staff proved to be a challenge as well. At times reviews were done on site at the vendors location – and because each project typically involved 5 or more team members (everyone from trainers to subject matter experts (SME's) to HR needed time for reviews)... Capital City's training department often had resource management issues.

In addition – updates and changes to existing custom courses also proved to be an expensive endeavor.

Bottom line – outsourcing, although a viable concept... took more time and money on many occasions to deliver practical courses... and the organization was ready to take a hard look at changing how they looked at e-learning and the possibilities of bringing course development in-house.

A major, compelling event was also driving the decision to bring the development in-house. The team needed a reliable way to quickly train associates who had never used their client relationship management (CRM) tool on inputting critical data. Because of limited staff resources to help in training and the overall administration of the CRM – something needed to be done as soon as possible.
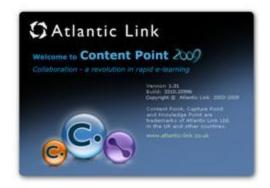
The Solution

In recent months, the company began to take a hard look at improving their efficiencies and lowering their overall training costs.

The company had never considered developing their electronic training material and e-learning course material in-house, as like many – they didn't believe they had the expertise to do so.

They began their research into looking at several authoring tools and had presentations from several vendors.

The solution they would inevitably choose had to be cost effective, require very little assistance from their internal IT staff and had to be easy to use.

But even more important and specific... it had to be easy for a trainer or an instructional designer to use – who had little or no experience developing or programming online, e-learning courses.

Each vendor was matched up in terms of ease of use, features and functions, and cost. After a thorough comparative review of various leading, respected solutions... the company made a decision to move forward with Atlantic Link.

"Atlantic Link's set of tools were not only comprehensive, but they were easy to use and allowed my current team to get up and running after just a minimal amount of training", said Denise Wilson, VP of Corporate Development.

In the long run, however – one important feature helped in the decision making and that was the tool's collaborative functionality.

Because the Atlantic Link rapid e-learning and authoring solution, Content Point - is server-based, it allowed for ongoing collaborative development in real-time from any location... a very important feature.
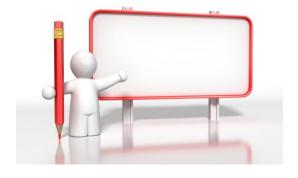
Seeing how this aspect would help their team manage their resources in a more productive way eased their decision.

In addition, Content Point contains built-in issue-management and QA functionality that allows each team member to log their notes, comments, concerns and tasks directly into the presentation for ease of retrieval and review – a powerful real-time communication benefit unmatched by competitors.

Implementation & Training

Capital City was hoping for a smooth transition into implementation and training and that's just what they received.

"Thom Tate, Director of Technical Services for Atlantic Link came down to Tallahassee and conducted a two-day training session in our training room," said Denise Wilson of Capital City Bank.

"Day one was spent covering all aspects of the tool. Day two was spent applying what we learned the day before – and we all created a real-world course from scratch," continued Wilson.

Six team members were introduced to the tool in a thorough training session. In no time, the team had much confidence in the tools – not only in what they could do, but how to use them and accomplish certain objectives (e.g., add a video, add an audio track, import a PowerPoint presentation, record a software simulation and add to a course, etc.,)

Once Capital City's trainers began using the tool regularly, the Atlantic Link team continued to be responsive to their needs and questions.

Benefits and Overall Business Impact

- Powerful software tools allowed the team to create professional e-learning courses without any prior programming or development experience

- A fast learning curve – the team was up and running in a matter of hours
- Improved speed of QA, issue management, communication and review
- Improved speed of development and deployment of courses
- Enhanced time-to-competency for learners
- Dramatic reduction in overall training and course development costs
- Ease and flexibility to update and customize courses as needed

An example of a Content Point course

"The decision to move our e-learning inside became a reality when the need surfaced to quickly train our associates on our CRM Tool. They needed someone or some way to help them learn how to use the tool efficiently and enter their community involvement notes directly into the CRM for our reporting needs," said Denise Wilson.

The training needed to be up and running immediately and be thorough enough to significantly minimize support questions as the team had only one associate administering and supporting the CRM.

The organization was not staffed to handle the anticipated volume of phone calls and emails from the field. They needed a simulation course developed that would handle most of the training-related questions and kept their staff engaged in how to use their CRM system.

Capital City developed the course first using Capture Point – which basically recorded a user's experience as they walked through the CRM and entered in their data.

Then the simulation was imported into Content Point – where the team continued developing the course. Once the development was completed – they published the course and made the link available throughout their corporate intranet.

Return on Investment

Overall, Capital City's decision to incorporate a new, e-learning development strategy has proved to be an excellent one. All things being equal – to properly measure the value of a solution or software tool – strong metrics must be put in place for evaluation. As part of their analysis, Capital City looked at "speed" and "costs" as their two biggest metrics which were broken down into 5 categories:

- Learning curve – how quickly they could begin using the tool
- Cost
- Speed of QA/collaboration
- Speed of delivery
- Time-to-competency of the learners

Content Point, by Atlantic Link has proven to be one of the most cost effective solutions that the training team at Capital City Bank has employed to date. Because of how quickly they were able to begin, create, review, publish and deploy their courses – they've realized a tremendous boost to their bottom line. With Atlantic Link's rapid e-learning solutions the team has been able to utilize a process of outlining a course up-

front and having each member provide quick feedback before they begin development, transforming how they approach their course development.

Scope Expansion in the Future

In many ways, the decision to leverage Atlantic Link's solutions has paved the way for a strong training foundation.

- Implemented a new authoring solution and put development capabilities into the hands of trainers and subject matter experts (who previously had little or no development experience).
- Potential expansion of the use of e-learning to new applications (marketing overviews, communication plans, classroom conversions, rapid training overviews)
- Decreased costs for ongoing development, course upgrades
- Improved flexibility
- Decreased timelines for development, review and deployment, making new courses of all sizes... economically viable to create.

In addition, by implementing a server-based collaborative authoring solution – they've realized even more advantages.

- Sharing a small number of end-user licenses across a large pool of authors (something that doesn't exist with locally installed, desktop authoring solutions, which are typically restricted to a single user)
- Centralized storage and management of training courses and media assets, such as audio, video, Flash, etc.,
- Source files are never misplaced or lost (because they are stored in a central location)
- Centralized assets also streamline course updates
- The use of a standard authoring tool (in lieu of using multiple tools to accomplish different tasks) allows everyone tied to the development process to be able to maintain the courses and application (if someone leaves the organization, the 'knowledge of tool use' doesn't leave with them).

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