

Outsourcing

Avaya University

Avaya University and Accenture pioneer comprehensive, end-to-end enterprise learning outsourcing


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When Avaya—a global leader in business communications software, systems and services—embarked on a plan to grow and improve market share with an aggressive schedule of new product launches, a critical success factor was ensuring that its workforce and channel partners were ready to sell and service those products. The spotlight fell upon Avaya's learning organization, Avaya University, as a key to actually delivering on those aggressive goals and, ultimately, to help drive efficiency and high performance for the company.

The challenge was significant. Avaya possessed an extremely talented learning team, but did they have the capacity and scale to transform the learning organization for these new strategic initiatives in less than 12 months, all the while supporting the deployment of new projects critical to Avaya's future? According to Suellen Roth, vice president of Global Workforce Diversity, Employee Excellence, Global Policy and Avaya University, a number of capabilities essential to a high-performance learning organization were not in place. "We lacked the infrastructure you need to run a world-class learning organization and, as such, we suspected we were spending too much to produce too little impact," Roth said.

To remedy the situation, Avaya had several options. It could augment the capabilities of its learning organization by developing and hiring talent; yet this long-term strategy would not help meet its immediate marketplace challenges. It could outsource parts of its learning

infrastructure such as the learning management system and administration responsibilities; however, although such a plan might deliver incremental cost savings, it would not actually increase the competency and productivity of the training organization and enable it to achieve the required business results.

Instead, Avaya made a bold move. In November 2001 it outsourced its entire enterprise learning function to Accenture Learning BPO Services based on Accenture's global scale and expertise, and its proven track record in delivering enterprise-wide learning solutions that drive business performance and growth. The scope of the transformational outsourcing agreement included the development and delivery of all product and service training for employees, customers and business partners in more than 90 countries, as well as employee development and skills development training.

Why choose a radical solution?

Avaya's senior business leaders were convinced that a comprehensive outsourcing partnership was the only way the company could achieve strategically aligned, rapidly available, innovative learning that would drive growth and revenue. According to Avaya CEO and Chairman, Donald Peterson, "This was not a cost-reduction exercise; this was a value creation exercise. What we needed was transformational capacity within our learning processes."

How Accenture helped

Working closely through the initial planning phase, Avaya and Accenture leadership identified five priorities for the transformational outsourcing arrangement:

1. Increase the scale and reach of learning delivery, for both internal and external audiences.
2. Support Avaya's strategies for rapid technology introduction and management development.
3. Deliver superior learning content.
4. Help drive revenue growth.
5. Create a more flexible organization and culture that could adjust more rapidly to changes in business needs.

And, ultimately, these business goals were to be achieved at a cost equal to or less than Avaya's pre-outsourcing learning costs.

To support Avaya's business priorities from a learning perspective, Accenture planned to deploy its integrated design, development and delivery processes, and roll out its patent-pending business interlock methods for aligning learning activities with Avaya's business strategy.

The first task at hand was how to transition an entire organization from one operating model to another. As part of the outsourcing agreement, more than 200 people from Avaya's original training organization became Accenture employees. Because of their subject-matter expertise—their knowledge of Avaya policies, products, services, delivery channels and sales approaches—these employees were critical to maintaining continuity of service. But this kind of organizational change is always challenging to the employee population to be transitioned. One employee recalls, "A change like this involves much more than just the 'working' side of a person. The work itself, in fact, may be the thing that

changes the least. What you think about is the change in colleagues, in culture and in all the day-to-day presumptions by which you may have interacted with people for years."

Accenture's deep experience in change management helped the transitioned Avaya workforce and their Accenture colleagues to "hit the ground running." An Accenture methodology, called Transition Services, helped move people into new roles with a deeper understanding of the new operating model, including tools, processes, role definitions and performance measures. The methodology focuses in particular on ensuring that all understand their new roles, and it demonstrates a commitment to the workforce and attention to their concerns. Covering areas such as communications planning, leadership and career management, Accenture Transition Services is a key to achieving high performance through an outsourcing transition.

In less than four months, Accenture put in place both content and structure to enable learning solutions to Avaya employees; in six months, end-to-end learning services were available to more than 50,000 learners across the globe, including employees, business partners and customers. Over the course of the first twelve months, as Avaya deployed the most new products in its history, the sales, service and channel workforces were prepared to help the company drive toward high performance.

A proven learning operating model deployed by Accenture—covering content development, delivery, infrastructure and alignment of learning with the business—was one of the keys to build a successful outsourcing relationship. This model included:

Content development

A Course Development Center of Excellence, created by Accenture, has enabled a structured design and development process for solutions ranging from instructor-led training to high-end, Web-based solutions. Accenture and Avaya conducted a thorough evaluation of existing curricula for the company, analyzing the relevance of content to business requirements, the degree of focus on desired employee behaviors and the appropriateness of media to cognitive level. The team then established curriculum requirements, and enabled the achievement of those requirements through rapid creation and migration of content.

An innovative program developed as part of the relationship with Accenture has been the establishment of the Avaya Professional Certification program, developed and managed by Avaya University. This program has strengthened the Avaya brand globally and continues to enhance the ability of Avaya channel partners to deliver on customer expectations, from Internet Protocol (IP) telephony and messaging solutions, to integrated contact center applications that enable world-class customer support.

Content delivery

As an acknowledged leader in technology-delivered learning, Accenture helped Avaya lead an aggressive drive toward blended learning—combining electronic courses with classroom and individualized coaching. Prior to the outsourcing relationship, 80 percent of Avaya's classes were instructor-led. Accenture put in place plans to migrate increasing portions of content to online channels, giving employees and channel partners access to learning wherever they are and at their own pace, with online support from instructors who monitor their progress and achievements. An instructor certification program was put in place by Accenture to improve the effectiveness of classroom instruction.

With nearly 50 percent of training now conducted online at Avaya, a blended approach to delivery has made learning more flexible and effective, and has cut down on time away from the office. Instructors have gained the freedom to contribute what experts uniquely do—solve problems by analysis and by applying judgment. With blended learning, students use online training to understand product features and capabilities, and they work with instructors in the classroom to develop more advanced diagnostic and troubleshooting skills.

Global learning systems infrastructure

The learning infrastructure put in place by the Accenture-Avaya team included the learning management system, state-of-the-art e-learning technologies, development and delivery tools, and content hosting for Avaya employees, business partners and customers. The Avaya Learning Centre, the company's essential learning and communications portal with 144,000 registered users, is visited by more than 5,000 users each week to schedule training, catch up on news, pursue Avaya certification credentials and manage their individual career development paths.

The Avaya Learning Centre is also the centerpiece of a distinctive marketing and communications strategy, enabling Avaya University to promote learning opportunities and programs. These marketing capabilities help to lessen the risk of under-utilization and poor take-up of learning. They also help to generate revenue and new business for Avaya by creating demand for training by business partners and customers.

Alignment of learning with the business

What sets the Accenture approach to comprehensive learning outsourcing apart, however, is more than the high-quality learning experiences. It's also the processes and governance structures put in place to align learning investments with business results, and then to measure those results to keep investments continually aligned with business need.

Accenture accomplishes that goal of business alignment through a unique governance model and an innovative, proprietary method, called business interlock, which links Avaya's business and Avaya University in a systematic and ongoing fashion. Business interlock, a structured set of processes and relationships, helps ensure that learning initiatives are "locked onto" the strategic business priorities of the company. It also helps the Chief Learning Officer and staff to measure results from a business perspective to prioritize investments, directing them properly for maximum impact, given both business strategy and affordability constraints.

As Suellen Roth notes, "There's so much more to learning outsourcing than just transitioning learning administration functions to a third party. The power is in using learning to transform the business proposition. We were looking for faster and better alignment with the business. When there are product changes and new releases, we need our courses to be updated quickly and efficiently."



High performance delivered

Under the management of Accenture Learning BPO Services, Avaya University has become a premier global example of how learning can drive high performance for organizations today. In the first year of the outsourcing arrangement, Avaya University successfully supported the largest release of new communications products in Avaya's history, with learning costs lower than pre-outsourcing levels.

The quality of the learning programs developed by Accenture for Avaya University has been extremely high, supporting Avaya's product launches, sales force and channel partners with a measurable impact on employee performance. The learning programs cover new products, executive selling, sales certification and employee skills development. Feedback from employees and business partners is evidence of the power of the new learning programs at Avaya. As one business partner in Mexico wrote, "This training program was the best Avaya has offered in the last 10 years. We were able to convert the efforts invested in training into new projects, increased revenue and more satisfied customers. The program helped us to double our revenue, and the knowledge will help us to be one step ahead of competitors, because our sales engineers can design the best solution for our customers."

Quality is essential, according to Suellen Roth. "The Avaya brand is on all materials that an employee, client, distributor or business partner sees associated with Avaya's learning offerings. The quality of the training, the content and the actual learning experience must be excellent and reflective of our brand. While we were pleased with our in-house team, Accenture has raised these programs to a new level."

The comprehensive metrics put in place thanks to Accenture's business interlock governance and management model have given Avaya extreme precision in measuring progress toward high performance. Mapping outcomes of the outsourcing relationship with Accenture against the five strategic goals identified at the beginning of the arrangement, results show that Accenture has measurably advanced Avaya toward high performance:

Increasing the scale and reach of learning delivery

- Avaya University now delivers more training per employee with a reduction in overall learning investment, compared to its pre-outsourcing organization.
- 81 percent of Avaya's available courses can now be accessed electronically, compared with 23-percent availability before outsourcing.
- In some cases, time to proficiency has been accelerated by 60 percent for customers, channel partners and employees, returning 35,000 workdays to the corporation and channel partners.
- The Course Development Center of Excellence, with its integrated development tools and processes, has helped deliver reductions of development cycles from a period of months to a period of 2 to 9 weeks.

Supporting rapid technology introduction and management development

- A world-class learning infrastructure, the Avaya Learning Centre, has now been established. The site is visited by more than 5,000 users each week to catch up on news, schedule training and pursue Avaya Certification credentials.
- Utilization of e-learning has increased more than 150 percent. The blended curricula allow learners "just in time" learning for baseline information.
- Role-based curriculum paths provide targeted learning experiences to maximize learning time and minimize searching for the right courses. The Avaya Learning Centre lets users manage their own individual career development paths.
- A custom, leading-edge employee and management development curricula has been created.

Delivering superior learning content

- Course curricula have been streamlined, allowing employees, customers and channel partners to become proficient faster, with less time away from core responsibilities. In some cases, proficiency has been attained in 60 percent less time.
- Courses are consistent, modular and linked to curriculum and learning objectives.

Helping drive revenue growth

- To support revenue growth in the IP telephony space, Avaya University created a "Fast Track" learning program in the Caribbean and Latin Americas region to support the rapid development of a select group of pre-sales and systems engineers. The program helped these individuals produce a 35 percent increase in revenues in six months.
- To enable the Avaya sales force to sell total solutions to customers, rather than individual products, Avaya University created a sales certification program to build core sales competencies and to establish a standardized sales discipline and methodology. The program helped to increase average sales funnel size by 13 percent, and close rates by 6 percent in measured control groups.

Creating a more flexible organization

- Avaya University aligned its pricing with Avaya's business volumes and maintained a consistent pricing approach through the use of unit pricing and collaborative annual planning.
- A new Avaya University Employee Excellence Program was designed and implemented to help support a more performance-based culture. Accenture and Avaya restructured the portal and curriculum to support this objective, and attained 100 percent participation in employee excellence training.



The quality of the relationship between Avaya and Accenture has been a key to success. To be effective, according to Suellen Roth, an enterprise learning outsourcing arrangement must be more than a contract; it must be a relationship where trust deepens over time. In the case of Avaya and Accenture, that trust has been built, most importantly, on consistent delivery of high-impact learning programs in line with service level agreements. But beyond that, the ability of Accenture to combine world-class capabilities in learning with an intimate knowledge of Avaya and its industry has been critical. Suellen Roth says, "I have an unbridled respect for the contribution Accenture has made to our success over the last four years. They've earned it."

Developing and maintaining clear roles has also been essential. To enjoy a successful outsourcing relationship, it must always be clear who is running the business. Roth notes, "Avaya is accountable for business strategy and how that business strategy—and changes

to it—affect our learning needs and learning approaches," Roth said. "As long as a business that outsources a key function like this maintains accountability for the major business decisions and works with its outsourcing partner to create seamless delivery—but does not abdicate responsibility—the possibilities to transform the business seem almost limitless."

Industry recognition for the unique learning programs at Avaya University continues. At the 2005 *Chief Learning Officer* "Learning in Practice" awards, which recognize industry leaders who have done the most to add significant value to their organizations through learning and development. Avaya University won two awards: the Gold Award for "Strategic Alignment," recognizing organizations that best demonstrate how to align learning to corporate strategy and objectives; and the Silver Award for "Utilization of Marketing Resources," for organizations that successfully and creatively leverage communications to engage

employees and leaders in learning and demonstrate the value of learning to the corporation.

With the help of Accenture, Avaya continues to push itself to achieve high performance through learning. As Avaya CEO Donald Petersen notes, "One of the things that sets Avaya apart is the way we have built into our operating structure the simple but important truth that it is our people who make it possible for the company to execute strategy, serve customers and grow profitable revenue. We created Avaya University with Accenture for the explicit purpose of enabling our people to continuously execute toward business strategy. The goals of Avaya University are simply another manifestation of the company's goals. And, as our metrics program shows, because learning is closely aligned with our business, we have been extremely successful at producing measurable business benefits based on our world-class learning and workforce enablement programs."

To learn more about Accenture Learning BPO Services, visit www.accenture.com/learningBPO.

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