Client background
Telstra is Australia's leading telecommunications and information services company. It offers a full range of telecommunications services, including more than 8.3 million Australian fixed line and 12.2 million mobile services to customers in the country. Employing more than 39,000 people worldwide, Telstra handles more than 300,000 calls daily at its contact centres, and operates and maintains more than 11,000 telephone exchanges. In fiscal 2011, the company handled 3.6 billion local calls, 5.4 billion national long-distance minutes, 9.9 billion text messages and more than 13 billion mobile voice minutes – reaching A$25 billion sales revenues.

Business challenge
Telstra is creating a customer-centric organisation and simplifying customer interactions to provide a best-in-class customer service experience. This transformation requires customer-facing staff to be skilled in the company's ever-expanding range of products and services, made possible only by incorporating learning and development in the company's growth strategy.

Telstra Customer Service & Sales (CS&S) manage a contact centre workforce of 8,000 people across Australia and the Philippines. Under the previous program, new staff was inducted into the organisation through a 30-day training session, which was not consistent across all centres. As the program provided limited scope for the trainees to be exposed to a live customer environment, they experienced a "job shock" once on the phone with customers. High attrition within the employees' first few months hampered operational efficiency. Telstra also realised that the time to competence for trainees exceeded industry best practices, resulting in significantly higher spending on hiring and training.

To increase speed to competence, enhance customer service and improve staff retention, Telstra CS&S partnered with Accenture to redesign the induction program for its contact centre workforce.

How Accenture helped
The Platinum Induction program developed by Accenture introduced an innovative blended solution that included a mix of delivery methods and a "nesting" process where trainees were inducted into a live calling environment.

Accenture redesigned the curriculum through more than 40 workshops with 30 Telstra subject matter experts and a series of business focus groups in different call centres across Australia. While the
workshops generated critical buy-in from the business and defined the scope of the solution, the focus group discussions helped identify best practices and improvement areas that would become part of the future induction solution.

Over three months, a highly experienced team of Accenture consultants reviewed more than 160 courses and nine curricula consisting of several weeks of training content. They then drew up a learning needs analysis across the 3,000-strong internal call centre teams.

Accenture leveraged its global call centre training best practices that formed the basis for selecting the various delivery mechanisms of the program. Specifically, these included:

- Modular training sessions for easy updates, enhanced reusability and reduced maintenance.
- Integration of soft skills, process and system training to reinforce key concepts and improve learning outcomes.

Accenture introduced the unique nesting process, where trainees took live customer calls in a supported environment. The solution allowed a subset of daily call traffic to be diverted to the trainees. The trainees answered these live calls under the supervision of an experienced consultant, who was supported by a nesting team leader. This process, which successfully helped reduce job shock, was consistently rated by Telstra as one of the most effective induction elements.

High performance delivered

The Telstra-Accenture Platinum Induction program was recently awarded the “Best Implementation of a Blended Learning Solution” at the 2011 Australian Institute of Training and Development (AITD) National Training Excellence Awards.

The program helped Telstra reduce external training delivery spend by 50 percent in fiscal 2011 – saving the company a substantial amount of money. These savings will continue to accrue in fiscal 2012. The program enabled more than 90 percent of new consultants to halve the time taken to achieve customer satisfaction metrics.

Telstra also recorded a 21 percent drop in attrition within the first six months of operations post training and nesting. In addition, the modular nature of the program enabled operational maturity to enable rapid redeployment of the training program.

By managing its service costs and enhancing the quality of customer service, Telstra is closing in on its vision of providing best-in-class customer service and is on its way to achieving high performance.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with more than 244,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$25.5 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2011. Its home page is www.accenture.com.