

## Sales Performance International expands e-learning courses to meet diverse needs of far-flung global audience

Emperor Augustus Caesar is said to have remarked that he found Rome in a city of brick and left it in a city of marble as the center of a far-flung empire. It is with the spirit of Augustus that Rick Judson, Director of eLearning Services at Sales Performance International (SPI), has taken on the challenge of creating e-learning courses to meet the changing demands of SPI's global clients.

SPI offers sales training and professional development programs for sales professionals, managers and marketers at Fortune 500 companies. Founded in 1988, and based in Charlotte, NC, SPI has helped more than 600,000 sales and management professionals in more than 50 countries and 14 languages achieve higher levels of performance in the hardware/software, professional services, financial services, information/communication and manufacturing industries.

For many years, SPI relied on instructor-led sessions to teach its proprietary sales methodology. In 2002, SPI responded to the changing needs of its global customers such as Microsoft Corporation, IBM Corporation, and Hitachi Ltd., and began offering e-learning programs in conjunction with its suite of instructor-led classes.

By late 2005, three quarters of SPI's customers were taking advantage of the e-learning offering. "It was at this time," states Rick Judson, "we realized we needed to get all of our intellectual property online, and wanted

to improve upon our original e-learning." SPI needed a tool that allowed flexibility in developing, manipulating and delivering course content, while leveraging other e-learning technologies.

"When it comes to the design, content and delivery of training courses," says Judson, "SPI faces a number challenges. We have to keep in mind our diverse audience, varying levels of experience, various sales methodologies, and content. Simply put, we end up doing customization."

SPI went looking for an integrated solution – a learning content management system (LCMS) and learning management system (LMS) that would meet all of the company's requirements. It chose a LMS provided by GeoLearning Inc., a leader in Managed Learning Services and hosted learning and performance platforms based in Des Moines, IA, and an LCMS by dominKnow Inc., a learning systems provider based in Perth, ON.

"No one else offered what dominKnow and GeoLearning had to offer," says Judson.

dominKnow's flagship product, dominKnow LCMS 5.1, is a feature-packed learning content management system for creating, managing and delivering high-quality learning.

dominKnow easily integrates with existing human resource, learning management, and performance support systems — reduc-

ing implementation costs and time while increasing user adoption.

SPI's core offering, the Solution Selling® Suite, is comprised of six courses offered through a blended learning approach of both online and instructor-led components. Courses typically consist of two to five hours of online training and a one to three day instructor-led component. Even though the online portion is shorter in terms of hours, learners actually complete a minimum of 80% of the course content online followed by the final 20% delivered in a classroom setting with an instructor.

"The benefits that come from the SPI's blended learning offering are two-fold," says Judson. "With the online courses, a client organization can save 40-60% or more on travel related costs. Learners can work at their own pace, at a time that is convenient for them. They're not trying to jam a whole bunch of learning into a few hours. As well, they get tested along the way to find out how well they've retained the learning material. The result is that they seem to integrate the content more thoroughly and are better prepared for the instructor-led component."

According to Judson, there are several 'must have' features in the dominKnow LCMS. SPI is making strong use of the LCMS authoring tool, the design notes and multi-media capabilities, multi-domain capabilities, reusable learning objects (LOs), and delivering the course on multiple platforms (other LMSes, offline and the Geo LMS).

SPI content developers create and update e-learning content easily with dominKnow's authoring tool. They can generate learning content by importing content from Microsoft Word and PowerPoint documents, HTML pages, PDF files and Macromedia Flash files and re-purposing it into easily accessible, reusable learning content available.

"SPI courses are developed by a global team, so when we do content review in a foreign language, our reviewers who may be in South America or Europe can use the design notes feature for comments and to provide feedback on the course. These comments are captured in a central repository in the LCMS and accessed by the development team in India and others in the US. Our international team can work efficiently and collaboratively towards a common goal using domin-

## dominKnow Success

Know's Web-based LCMS," says Judson. "Because SPI's instructor-led and e-learning courses are object-oriented, content developers can modify and customize the courses without taking away from the power of the methodology itself."

SPI also makes use of the testing features. Instructors have access to post-test results and, once SPI is making full use of dominKnow LCMS, students will be able to link back to the learning objects from test results to enhance their learning. SPI also has plans to integrate dominKnow's survey and podcasting capabilities as time goes on.

SPI is moving all of its major courses online and revamping its existing online courseware while keeping the instructor-led component. In a continuing effort to meet the diverse needs of its customers, SPI is also in the process of taking the English version of each course and offering it in foreign languages. Judson states, "The plan is to develop the versions in parallel so that our foreign language teams can easily cut and paste their language versions into the English version. Our reviewers will make design notes regarding any changes in translation needs, and then we'll have our developers turn out reports for discussion. Being able to use dominKnow's LCMS to do all of this is pretty unique."

SPI is very pleased with the overall experience and support from dominKnow.

"There has never been any down time with the dominKnow LCMS," says Judson.

"The support has been excellent. We get a very quick response to our concerns and always get results sooner than expected. The dominKnow team has reached out to ask for our suggestions and implements our feedback as soon as possible. We feel listened too. It's a great kind of partnership."

"Overall, dominKnow LCMS has allowed us to design courses that can be easily customized and localized," Judson says. "As we go forward I'm confident we'll be able address our growing global client base with effective, interactive e-learning, tailored to meet their needs."