

A SKILLSOFT CASE STUDY

HILTON HOTELS

Whichever major city you find yourself in, the chances are you'll come across a Hilton Hotel. The company has 380 hotels worldwide and is represented in 66 countries. Its 80,000 strong workforce looks after an average of 8 million guests every year.

ACHIEVED RESULTS

- 88% want access to more e-learning
- 90% would recommend it to others
- 80%+ levels of satisfaction
- 2,500 active users worldwide - representing the total number of licences currently purchased from SkillSoft. The demand is so great that this figure is constantly being increased to meet demand.
- 10,000 courses completed in the first year
- Complete reversal of learning demand. Demand is now driven from the bottom-up rather than the top-down
- Hilton is so pleased with the success of the university that Hilton is doubling its investment in Year 2.

MEASURABLE RESULTS

Hilton selected 70 courses from SkillSoft's management, business and IT curricula, which SkillSoft delivers to the company's worldwide workforce through its in-built learner management system, SkillPort.

Hilton also subscribes to Books24x7 so that it can offer a reference source to its 400+ IT specialists, providing them with access to the latest IT publications.

As well as running and hosting SkillSoft content and allowing Hilton to track learning on a local, regional and national scale, SkillPort also delivers online courses from other learning providers - acting as a branded, customised portal for easy access to e-learning.

Results to date are impressive, not only because of the business benefits already achieved, but because e-learning has proved a truly liberating experience for some employees - especially those from under-developed and developing nations who may not previously have had access to the sort of formal education which is often taken for granted in the West.

By providing e-learning across its 380-strong hotel chain, Hilton has found that staff are happier. And, according to Hilton, happy staff = happy guests.

GOALS

- Introduce a more contemporary and different way of learning. One which would be accessible to all, rather than just available to the chosen few.
- Facilitate an increase in internal promotions across the Hilton group.
- Reinforce Hilton as an employer of choice within the leisure and hospitality sector.
- Deliver measurable benefits to individuals and to the business as a whole.

BENEFITS

- Has the potential to reach everyone - at the same time and very quickly
- Offers a flexible alternative to learning - one that isn't limited to a set training event, at a set time, in a set location
- Encourages the continuation of learning after the event
- Complements and reinforces classroom training
- Offers an efficient and consistent approach to training and a flexible alternative to traditional learning methods
- Proving to be a cost-effective way of raising the skills of Hilton's global workforce
- Contributes to happier staff, reduced staff churn and an increase in potential new recruits

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Open up learning to all
- Improve customer service globally
- Reduce training costs
- Introduce a different and more contemporary way of learning

The quality of the Hilton brand is such, that customer service and operational excellence is higher than in most industries. As with all service businesses, the contribution of people is of central importance to Hilton's success.

Senior executives at Hilton believe that the training and ongoing development of its employees is critical in order for the business to stay ahead in a competitive global marketplace. Consequently, learning is a major part of the company's strategy.

Hilton's ongoing aims are to encourage continuous development and offer a consistent approach to training - one that is available at all 380 locations and for staff at all

levels. Having historically relied on classroom training, Hilton wanted to investigate quicker and more contemporary training methods, at the same time reducing training costs and opening up learning to its employees spread across 66 countries.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Hilton International is totally decentralised; splitting into countries, cities and individual hotels. This meant that hundreds of managers had to be convinced about the initiative - an exercise in which SkillSoft played a fundamental role.

Hilton had previously been very traditional in its approach to learning. The company wanted to move away from dusty old manuals and the culture of flip charts. However, this represented a massive culture change and required a long-term strategy and a consistent approach from everyone concerned.

THE SKILLSOFT SOLUTION

COST-EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Hilton wanted to invest in content rather than costly learner management systems so the company opted to use SkillSoft's built-in LMS, SkillPort. Both SkillSoft's courses and those supplied by other providers can be accessed through SkillPort, which has been branded and customised to Hilton's own specifications.

FULL RANGE OF SKILLS TRAINING

In addition to purchasing SkillSoft's IT training modules and management and business courses, Hilton has also subscribed to SkillSoft's subsidiary company, Books24x7. This offers an unparalleled range of professional referenceware from renowned worldwide publishers. Currently, access to Books24x7 has been provided to Hilton's 400+ IT specialists so that they can keep up-to-date with the latest IT-related developments.

THE HILTON UNIVERSITY

The Hilton University is broken down into seven faculties. Four of these are split across Hilton's four main areas of activity - operations; business development; HR

and finance - reflecting the organisation within the hotels. The other three are the Faculty of Management Skills; the Faculty of Executive Education (aimed at senior managers and acting as Hilton's business school); and the Faculty of Research, which is a library and knowledge resource.

Hilton University's success is constantly monitored through qualitative research amongst users together with team member and general manager opinion surveys. For Hilton the ultimate measurement is a happy correlation between the team member opinion surveys and the way the company tracks customer satisfaction.

GLOBAL DEPLOYMENT

Users either access via dedicated 'learning rooms' within the hotels or at home. Currently, 60% of e-learning is done outside working hours, possibly due to the number of distractions and interruptions people experience in the working environment. Hilton's ultimate aim is for learning to be perceived by all line managers as absolutely critical to business success, so that it is no longer appropriate to interrupt somebody when they are learning in the workplace.

"Friends say of me that I consider Luddites to be a bunch of dangerous modernists so that should give people some indication of how IT literate I was! Where e-Learning is concerned, I used to be a complete agnostic. But, twelve months on, I'm totally converted. Now that we have experienced such measurable benefits, I would have no hesitation in giving e-learning a 100% recommendation to any organisation."

John Guthrie, Head of International Management Development at Hilton International

KEY FACTORS TO SUCCESS

It's crucial that the people at the top of the organisation are on board from the beginning. Hilton was fortunate to have 100% support and commitment - right from the top. For example, Hilton's chief executive, personally sent an email to all employees worldwide to tell them about the launch of Hilton University. This was followed up by local meetings and communications from e-learning champions based in each country.

Hilton University's advisory panel includes the deputy group chief executive, the group finance officer and the head of global HR - demonstrating how important learning is to the business. This level of buy-in is fundamental if learning and development is to become embedded in the company culture at Hilton.

The high level of collaboration with SkillSoft worldwide was critical to the project's success. The SkillSoft team helped Hilton to build a strong

business case to present to senior management in each country. SkillSoft business development managers attended more than 20 meetings with different parts of the business; demonstrated how e-learning worked to Hilton delegates at conferences and exhibitions; and ran a number of training courses.

All the time invested in talking to top management was well spent. The end result was that everyone was on board and enthusiastic about the project. Once management was committed throughout the hotels, the message quickly filtered through to the end users, who were then keen to try it out immediately.

Following successful implementation there is still work to do. Hands-on measurement, follow-up and vendor-support is seen as fundamental to ongoing success. And Hilton believes that its university must continue to be led by the people who actually run the business and who have profit and loss responsibility.

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