Using Digital Technology to Train a Multi-Generational Sales Team

Pella Corporation, designs and makes distinctive windows and doors for architects, builders and homeowners, and has always been an innovator, not just in product and processes, but also in internal learning and development. To support the needs of team members across the organization, and stay on top of their competitive field, they constantly seek innovations to support their sales team and managers.

Problem
Existing “off the shelf solutions” didn’t meet Pella’s needs for sales training. Their goals were to offer cutting-edge, mobile training to differentiate their sales field from the rest of the industry. This includes training for solving customer problems and positioning the integrity of Pella products against the competition. In addition, Pella Sales Managers are trained to focus on the development of people, not to push papers. So, an additional goal was to empower Sales Managers as coaches. To do all this, Pella needed to meet their team where they were through learning that was engaging, social, and mobile.

Solution
To create their new training program, Pella contacted CD2 Learning, a SaaS learning and development platform with a successful record of working with specialty industries and providers of professional continuing education. Pella worked with CD2 for instructional design and authoring tools to create their online learning solutions.

Pella’s support of this endeavor is evident from all levels of the organization and is founded in their culture of striving to continually improve their people, products and processes. Cross functional teams had input on content and learning goals. Consistency of Pella Products is key to their organization, so is the consistency of branding and sales messages. Having their organization speaking the same language is a benefit internally as well as to suppliers and end users. How did Pella address change management for this learning initiative?
Following the decision to make this technology update a priority:

- An internal team was established to oversee content and to ensure Pella’s message was on track.
- A change in “voice” and message delivery was consciously made to appeal to the modern learner, as well as a heavily branded new look.
- Internal processes were automated and developed to assure consistency with the training received.
- Additional content was developed to be launched along with the new site.
- Created a sense of urgency to go back and audit past material and content to the new site was populated with updated and accurate messaging.
- A rollout plan was calculated and implemented to aid in the transition

The first solution was to create a Mobile App for On Demand Learning, meeting Pella’s needs for their constantly on the go sales force. The mobile app allows for real-time delivery of immediate “flash courses” that sales reps might need to review prior to the next sales call or meeting. The app also allows for learning to be custom branded by Pella and for easy access to all learning developed specifically for their sales force.

Micro Learning through Flash Courses - Pella’s latest innovation in delivery targets today’s modern workforce. In addition to a roll-out of new courses, game-based learning, simulations and assessments - Pella has implemented frequent delivery of short videos and brief assessments. These microbursts of learning consist of short three-minute videos followed by assessments. This form of delivery and engaging learning is highly effective for the diverse age mix within Pella’s sales force. Internally they refer to this delivery as “Flash Courses” – short flashes of timely/topical information that is easily created, consumed tracked and retained.

“Having a platform that was more intuitive and allowed for self-service was a big start. We are also much more focused on making sure the courses build upon each other and include more real-life examples to strategically influence the recipients. There is a greater focus on developing the managers instead of delivering content directly to the associates.”

- Ken Robison, Selling Process Manager
Highly Engaging Lessons - Pella set the standards for the industry by developing online learning and development products that benefit not only their team, but their partners and customers. The level of engagement achieved through the new courses are groundbreaking within their marketplace. With a reputation for details and design, Pella is not a lower price option in their industry, as such it is critical that the sales team is well-informed about each Pella advantage and the ways Pella is superior to the competition. In addition, for their market position, customer service needs to be beyond expectation, so much of their learning focuses on situational lessons.

Almost every product Pella makes is made-to-order and that goes for their CRM as well. Although it is not integrated into CD2’s system – the new training includes usage and lessons on how to use Pella’s CRM.

Results

Pella is committed to implementing L&D innovation and has a history of proven results and ROI. This includes:

1. Increased impact on sales and sales person success
2. Impact on retention and on internal promotions and opportunities
3. Savings from an in-house sourced customized training program
4. Retention and expansion of third-party partners/vendors/retailers
5. Faster onboarding of new hires
6. Tendency for learning to be conducted on mobile devices while on the go
7. Partnering with a professional organization helps to keep our efforts focused, with more engaging and effective means of delivering content.
8. Efficiencies are gained when all the training material is in one location and kept in an organized manner.

“...It’s been a successful partnership with great customer support from CD2, from the customization to our organizational needs to engaged interaction from the participants...”

- Ken Robison, Selling Process Manager