Integrated Workforce Experience Case Studies

Learning and Development Organization: Global Virtual Team Program

Collaborative community environment produces significant gains in productivity and new product launch bookings with faster time to content by the salesforce.

Executive Summary

Business Situation and Challenge:

- Keep more than 20,000 salespeople in 87 countries up to date on hundreds of Cisco products, solutions, and architectures
- Lack of centralized access to new product information and other critical sales content
- Lack of ongoing peer-to-peer knowledge sharing among the salesforce and subject matter experts

IWE Solution and Benefits:

- One-stop shop and intuitive navigation within the community environment makes accessing and finding critical information faster and easier
- Integration of well-known, existing internal and third-party search tools eases user adoption
- Consistent branding and framework used throughout all virtual team communities

Business Impact and Metrics:

- Estimated US$35 million increase in sales teams' bookings per new product launch
- SEs and PSSs gain access to critical new product information in half the time

Looking Ahead:

- Continue to promote virtual team community usage and develop new training content

Business Situation and Challenge

Cisco's salesforce consists of more than 20,000 people in 87 countries. Keeping them up to date on the hundreds of Cisco® products, solutions, and architectures that span several technologies is a critical task. Essential to getting all this information to the field is the Global Virtual Team Program, a sales-oriented branch of Cisco's Learning and Development Organization. Virtual team members are primarily systems engineers (SEs) and product sales specialists (PSSs) with demonstrated experience in their areas of specialization. The members bring together subject matter experts from various Cisco business units to provide just-in-time product and related training directly to the salesforce via Cisco WebEx® conference calls, webinars, mini series (bundling of recorded content on a shared topic), hands-on labs, and live events.

Presentations during live events and WebEx conference calls are recorded and loaded into an internal, third-party tool called vSearch, which streams video, slides, and transcriptions of the presentations, and allows users to search presentations down to the spoken word. Because attendance at the live events is restricted to nominated Global Virtual Team Program members, this tool allows anyone at Cisco to be able to consume the content. For more than ten years, vSearch has been the primary product knowledge management tool provided to the Cisco salesforce.

The Global Virtual Team Program is widely known for its large-scale, multiday events that are held twice a year for each virtual team at Cisco's headquarters campus in San Jose, California. Multiple Cisco TelePresence® screens are used during the live events to allow groups of remote members to attend and present content. The sense of community, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, and ongoing dialogue generated at these events is invaluable.

Program organizers sought ways to keep the collaborative learning momentum going between live events. "Getting content to learners in the field wasn't a challenge," says Barry Shields, manager, Learning and Development Solutions Group, Cisco. "Getting people to collaborate and share their thoughts about the content with the larger virtual team communities wasn't quite as easy."

The only options for learners were disparate internal tools located in different places, such as wikis, discussion forums, and Cisco blogs. Users communicated mostly through emails and mailer aliases, where discussions might go back and forth but eventually vanish due to high volume and the need for employees to clean out their email inboxes. Global

Virtual Team Program organizers wanted to move learner conversations online, where they could be archived and searchable by everyone. They wanted a single, collaboration-based solution that would scale globally and allow virtual team members to share documents, presentations, other related content, and even their thoughts of the day with each other and all interested learners.

Like most of Cisco, the Learning and Development Organization already had a community presence within Cisco's internal enterprise collaboration environment, the Integrated Workforce Experience (IWE), powered by Cisco WebEx Social. As the primary interface for employees to manage their career development, users in the Learning and Development community can search an extensive catalog of offerings in IWE, set their preferences to obtain personalized learning recommendations, and get customized views of their transcripts and enrollments, among other services. In step with Cisco's collaboration culture shift company wide, the Learning and Development Organization wanted to explore ways to drive collaboration in IWE further, to make it part of the instructional strategy for all learner solutions.

IWE Solution and Benefits

In IWE Global Virtual Team Program members could consolidate and organize the various forms of social content (e.g., discussion forums and blogs) and learning assets within a centralized space, and use Cisco WebEx Social software functionality to enable asynchronous collaboration throughout the learner's experience before, after, and even during the actual events. In the IWE environment, program members could:

- Create communities of technical interest for each virtual team area of specialization (collaboration, borderless networks, data center and virtualization, etc.), providing the salesforce and other learners with just-in-time exposure to Cisco products, solutions, and architectures
- Facilitate best practice sharing and lessons learned, both peer to peer and between business units and the field
- Aggregate content from vSearch and Cisco Show and Share® video platforms
- Provide learners with a single place to access, share, and collaborate about content, get the latest virtual team program news and announcements, and collectively transfer their knowledge

To share best practices and accelerate skills attainment, the first Global Virtual Team Program community in IWE was used as a model, in look and feel as well as information design, for the subsequent virtual team communities and the more than ten other "sponsored" communities that support collaborative learning for defined learner programs (Figure 1). Architects of the Global Virtual Team Program community environment had several specific goals in mind:

Organize content differently to make it easier for the field to access and find. Users have access to all program content for the last two fiscal years, visible on a single page, categorized by content with the newest information always presented first. Community architects worked with the individual virtual teams to create information categories based on content topic (borderless networks, collaboration, etc.) instead of delivery type (event, conference call, etc.) and date. A standard naming convention was chosen for publishing the categorized listings to vSearch, making it easier and faster for learners to find content within a specified category. Document folders and discussion forums are also organized for each virtual team by fiscal year. This forward-looking approach allows each team to purge or archive older content easily.

Enhance the vSearch experience within IWE. Because vSearch had been a large part of the Global Virtual Team Program for many years, community architects knew it would take time to drive adoption to IWE from vSearch as the place for the field and other learners to go for content. Enhancements included allowing integration of vSearch content into IWE (while still being able to maintain business continuity). Users can embed a list of presentations or individual presentations anywhere that HTML can be used, including the company intranet and internal web-based platforms such as wikis.

Global Virtual Team Program members also use Cisco Show and Share to deliver videos that provide an overview of what they learned during a day at the live event. The videos are recorded on Cisco TelePresence and specifically tagged so that they can be pulled into the Cisco WebEx Social Video Visualizer portlet in IWE. This portlet allows learners to access and watch the videos from within the community at their leisure.

Establish a social brand and framework for the virtual team communities. All the virtual team communities follow standardized guidelines for content organization, naming, and tagging, and a structure for discussion forums and

document sharing. The design, functionality, configuration, and content layout across the communities are mirrored, and templates used, to deliver the same experience regardless of which community the user is in. Each virtual team has its own page to display content and link to related places in the community for easy, quick collaboration.

Figure 1 Virtual Team Program IWE Community
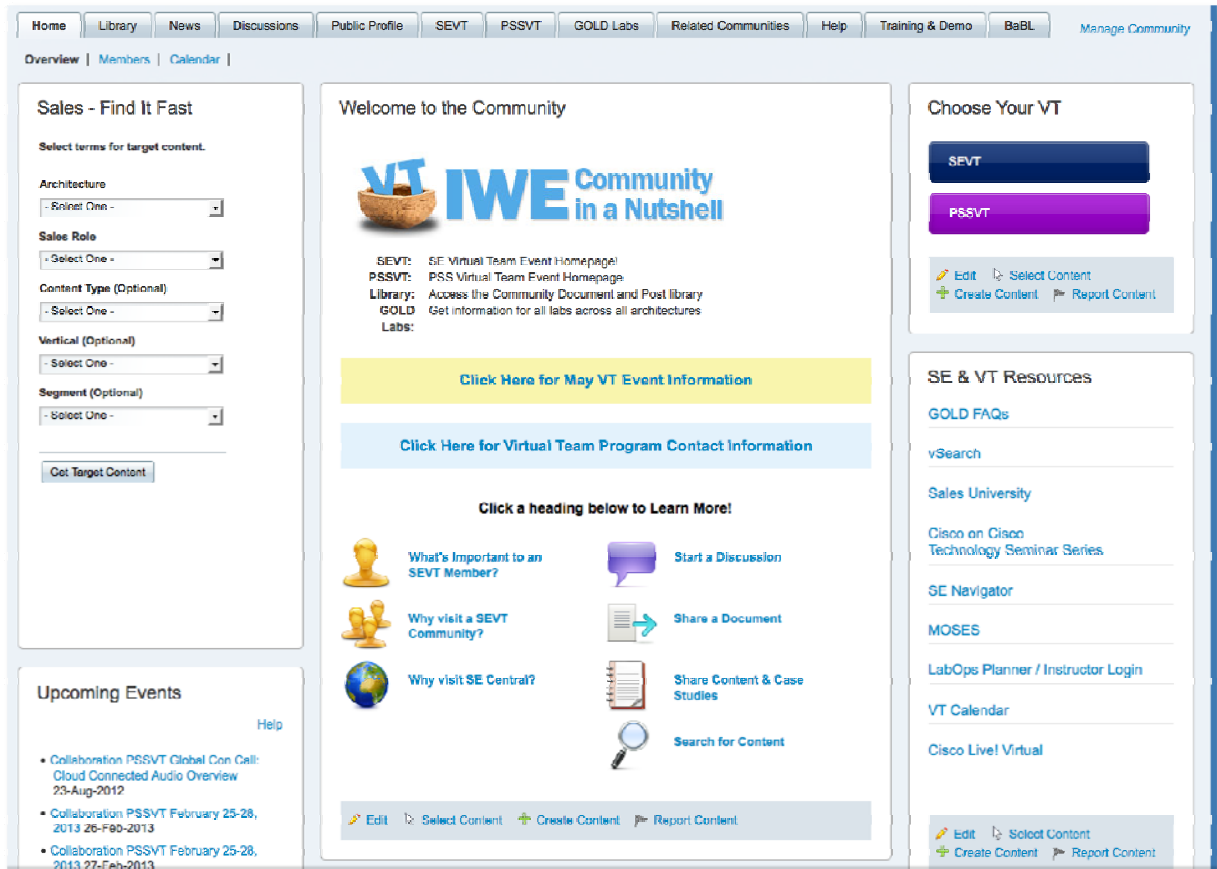
Develop a social promotional strategy for generating community adoption and educating users about IWE. Traditionally, announcing new virtual team content, upcoming events, and conference calls was done via emails or on the corporate intranet. Now communications can be shared with community members using IWE features such as community announcements, calendaring, blogs, posts, and discussion forums, while also being tagged and searchable. According to Shields, in the early stages of adopting a new collaboration tool, constantly promoting community usage in conjunction with developing new content is critical. Using custom-designed slide decks for delivering content at the live events along with consistently publishing new content in IWE will drive greater adoption over time.

Additionally, the team uses the IWE community to solicit topics of interest from the salesforce and develop agendas for live and prerecorded events. For instance, through collaboration in IWE, the SEs work with business unit representatives to develop presentations that are highly relevant for the target learner audience.

In a large social platform with a massive amount of user-generated content, tagging is essential for helping users search and filter content, says Shields. A tagging strategy was formed for each virtual team to ensure that all content is tagged consistently and links back to the applicable virtual team program. In addition to the standardized tags, users can also add custom tags specific to their content.

Train and provide virtual teams with the resources to help them maintain their community. One of the most important goals for developing the communities in IWE was to ensure that the approach would be scalable. Moving forward, virtual team organizers had to be able to categorize their content correctly, continue to promote community usage, and easily maintain their communities. Two recorded WebEx training sessions present an overview of the IWE strategy and how it should be applied, and provide Global Virtual Team Program members detailed technical training on

how to maintain their communities. Each community contains a custom, collaborative self-help library with step-by-step instructions and supplementary screenshots for community managers.

Business Impact and Metrics

From inception in IWE, Global Virtual Team Program organizers have been measuring user traffic and community interactions such as comments, document uploads, shared posts, and discussions. In Cisco's FY12 (12 months beginning July 30, 2011), their goal was to achieve 3000 interactions across the virtual team communities. As of June 4, 2012, there had been 6603 interactions, 220 percent above target. User traffic has also been strong. For example, in June 2012 when the Collaboration Virtual Team held its live event, the Collaboration Virtual Team community in IWE experienced a 300 percent increase in user traffic, with more than 5500 page hits to the Systems Engineer Virtual Team content page alone.

To date the IWE solution has yielded a notable increase in bookings by the sales teams during new product launches, and significant time savings and productivity gains for reaching learners faster.

Increased bookings (contract deals that have been signed but not yet shipped). Having up-to-date, comprehensive information available in IWE and easily accessible by sales teams has led to an estimated increase in bookings of US$35 million per product launch. Using the community approach, the Learning and Development Organization can support a minimum of 20 product launches per year, with the potential for US$700 million in increased bookings annually.

"It's really about accelerating sales of new products by ensuring that the sales teams have access to the content they need at the time of launch, in one location, and have the ability to collaborate in real time about the new product features and benefits," says Shields. "Sales teams need to quickly understand the 'why to buy' behind a new product. In IWE they can be more knowledgeable much faster than in the past."

Faster time to content. By providing content in IWE, Global Virtual Team Program members have shortened the time that the salesforce spends searching for new product information. For example, there are currently 5300 SEs at Cisco who spend an average of 4 hours per week searching for information about new products. Of these SEs, 71 percent access content provided by the Global Virtual Team community. Given these numbers, the team conservatively estimates that accessing content in IWE saves the SEs 2 hours per week of search time. In one fiscal year, it is estimated that the 2-hour productivity gain could save Cisco time valued at US$49,343,000. This time-to-dollar extrapolation factors in an SE hourly rate of US$95.00. For the 2900 PSSs, the productivity gain could save Cisco time valued at an estimated US$26,999,000 per year.

Looking Ahead

Global Virtual Team Program members continue to focus on promoting usage across the virtual team communities and developing new content, especially the content used for salesforce training sessions.

They also continue to refine and share community best practices, such as uniform content tagging and use of information design templates to ensure a consistent learner experience. And they will continue to seek new ways of encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing in IWE.

About IWE

Integrated Workforce Experience (IWE) is an internal Cisco collaborative initiative that encompasses business process, culture, and technology.

IWE allows employees to more effectively connect, communicate, and collaborate with subject matter experts, colleagues, and communities, as well as share information to help accelerate growth, encourage innovation, and create sustainable productivity.

WebEx Social, the underlying platform for IWE, is Cisco's own product that is being sold to customers and partners.

For More Information

To read additional case studies about Cisco's implementation of IWE powered by Cisco WebEx Social, visit
http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ciscoitatwork/collaboration/iwe_powered_by_cisco_webex_social.html

To read Cisco IT case studies about a variety of business solutions, visit Cisco on Cisco: Inside Cisco IT
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