ECi Acsellerate speeds past competitors with value-added training using GoToTraining

ECi Acsellerate, a business unit of ECi Software Solutions, is a provider of web-based sales and business intelligence solutions. The organization’s suite of analytics, advanced reporting and integrated CRM applications is delivered as a hosted service to distributors and dealers in the office products, office equipment, medical supplies, lumber and building supply and janitorial supply sectors.

The challenge: Expand and enhance customer training as a key differentiator

To stand out from the competition, Acsellerate has always relied on customer training, which is included in all subscriptions. “Not only do we deliver a high-quality solution as a service, but we’re the only company in this space to provide the added value of unlimited post-sales training,” said Allyson Szablewski, director of marketing and communications. Acsellerate’s training covers more than features and best practices — it also incorporates the company’s unique expertise in the supply industry. Several staff members formerly worked in the office products sector and bring an insider’s understanding of customers’ challenges to the training sessions. “We act as consultants, not just trainers,” she said. “It’s a huge differentiator.”

However, the training method Acsellerate was using had several disadvantages. One-on-one trainings — although conducted online — were time-consuming and labor-intensive. Updating the corporate training web page and using email to schedule sessions were inefficient, manual processes. Data entry mistakes could be made when composing email invitations. Acsellerate wanted to reserve individual sessions for new customers and find an effective way to expand and streamline the post-sales program.

When Szablewski joined the Acsellerate team in early 2010, she saw immediately that a better online training solution was needed to achieve long-term goals of adding new courses, increasing date and time options and expanding the target audience to prospects.

“ECi Acsellerate is a huge fan of GoToTraining — it’s helping us grow the business to a new level. By educating customers to get the most from our solutions, we drive retention and satisfaction.”

Allyson Szablewski
Director of Marketing and Communications
www.acsellerate.net
Implementing GoToTraining to streamline course management and delivery

Based on the company’s positive experience using Citrix GoToMeeting for web conferencing, Szablewski adopted the new Citrix GoToTraining solution. She quickly used the web-based tool to make a number of positive changes across the training program. First, GoToTraining makes it easy for Acsellerate to present an interactive course to a larger group of attendees instead of just one or two, enabling instructors to teach more customers in a given period. Although GoToTraining sessions can accommodate up to 200 people, Acsellerate limits class size to about 20 to promote interactivity and provide personal attention. Features such as polling, chat and “hand raising” to ask questions make the experience more dynamic. To compensate for the small class size, the one-hour classes are offered frequently.

Equally important, GoToTraining has vastly simplified administration of the training program, starting with creation of an online course catalog. Szablewski noted, “The catalog automates the entire enrollment process and reduces the time required to manage our training program. By linking to the catalog, people can get information, including detailed descriptions, and register online. We no longer have to manually track sign-ups and send out meeting invitations — GoToTraining handles everything via email and even sends out reminders to keep participation high. Also, we can easily copy course information to populate the catalog for upcoming weeks and months.”

As a result, Szablewski has been able to add almost 20 course topics each month, allowing participants to select the classes that focus on their specific business goals. Most product sessions center on live demos and teach participants how to use different features or modules in Acsellerate to grow their business. For customer convenience, she offers a broad choice of dates and times, particularly around major launches.

Stephanie Lewis, dealer training and development representative, said, “GoToTraining is a great product that’s easy to learn and use. It lets me add interactivity to the many classes I teach each week, which enhances learning. I rely on tools such as the class roster to tailor the course for the audience, and the library and recorded trainings to pull details for follow-up with customers. We couldn’t do without GoToTraining, and our dealers also appreciate its value.”

Satisfying customers without sacrificing efficiency

The frequency and variety of the courses Acsellerate now offers via GoToTraining allow the company to respond promptly yet efficiently to customer needs. Szablewski explained, “In the past, when customers added new users or requested advanced training, our staff typically initiated a one-on-one session. Now, in that same situation, we encourage the customer to enroll in an upcoming class. Because there are so many available, customers rarely have to wait more than a few days. While we still have the flexibility to provide individualized assistance using GoToMeeting, GoToTraining reduces the burden on staff while supporting our number-one goal — pleasing customers.”

Another way GoToTraining supports customer satisfaction is through post-course evaluations. “At the end of each course Stephanie asks attendees to
complete the evaluation — we get a higher response rate that way — and in case someone had an unresolved issue, we can immediately follow up.” Evaluations include open-ended questions that prompt detailed responses, supplying valuable feedback.

Driving corporate growth

GoToTraining is playing a key role in Acsellerate’s strategic growth plans. By shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach to training, the company aims to encourage retention and, ultimately, generate new business. Instead of waiting for customers to request assistance, Acsellerate actively markets its courses via email campaigns and on the web. A new tracking initiative identifies users who have not registered for an online course so Acsellerate can reach out to them. “When they realize what we provide, they’re blown away because the training is so important and helpful to their business,” Szablewski said.

The company also plans to use GoToTraining to demonstrate Acsellerate’s benefits to prospective customers. “This is a really exciting time for our business. Our target sectors offer tremendous market opportunity because many supply companies are new to analytics and appreciate education about its benefits. Courses discussing analytics and sales intelligence are a great way to raise awareness and build our reputation as a value-added provider.” Other new-business possibilities include recording GoToTraining sessions and posting them on the web for on-demand access. Recording capability is a major benefit of the solution: Acsellerate utilizes it for recorded video “help” within the application and plans to show prospects online video demonstrations.

Szablewski concluded, “GoToTraining is helping us grow the business to a new level. By educating our customers to get the most from our solutions, we drive retention and satisfaction. GoToTraining optimizes the competitive advantage that training has always provided, but without the resource demands of our old system. We are huge fans of GoToTraining.”