

Power Tools Maker Inspires Dealers with Online Training

Customer Case Study



STIHL uses Cisco WebEx technology to create more engaging training environment, sees dealer attendance increase by 23 percent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: STIHL

Industry: Manufacturing

Location: Melbourne, Australia
(Headquarters: Waiblingen, Germany)

Number of Employees: 90
(10,000 worldwide)

Challenge:

- Keep geographically dispersed dealer network knowledgeable on company offerings
- Increase training attendance
- Find online training solution that fosters dynamic learning environment

Solution:

- Cisco WebEx solutions engage dealers with interactive video and animated presentations
- Video enhances virtual interaction, enabling dealers to see actual products and parts
- Q&A and polling capabilities provide added level of dealer participation

Results:

- Increased number of training sessions by almost 40 percent
- Improved training session attendance by 23 percent
- Strengthened relationship with dealers, resulting in more enthusiasm for products

Challenge

Founded in 1926, STIHL is the world's leading brand of chainsaws and a market leader in the outdoor power equipment industry. Headquartered in Waiblingen, Germany, STIHL has a presence spanning more than 160 countries. The international STIHL Group, with more than 10,000 employees worldwide, has made a concerted effort to establish itself as a pioneer in power tool technology. In 1971, STIHL Australia was established as the first subsidiary company outside of Europe. Today, the Australian network has more than 90 employees and manages a distribution network of 430 retail dealers.

STIHL relies on its dealers to continually increase sales and provide technical and mechanical support to customers. Keeping this dealer network motivated, involved, and knowledgeable about its product range is key to the success of the company. "We need to be regimented and smart in our communication with the dealers, so they remain excited and informed about our products," says Rob Baker, technical manager for STIHL. "We used to rely on in-person training sessions to do this. But with a large network spread across rural and metropolitan areas, we found that only one person from each dealer outlet would typically attend a session. This meant we couldn't guarantee that the whole sales team would receive our information."

In 2004, the company began to substitute part of its in-person training program with online training sessions that could easily be attended by entire sales teams. Although this e-training program met the initial intention of eliminating the need for travel, STIHL wanted to take its online training approach to the next level.

"We felt it was time to set the benchmark a little higher in terms of the training experience we were providing dealers," says Baker. "We wanted to use things like voice-over-IP, video, and animations in our sessions to keep people engaged." Because these features were not available with STIHL's previous web conferencing service, the company started looking for a more dynamic alternative.



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Rob Baker
Technical Manager
STIHL

Solution

After lengthy research, STIHL decided on Cisco WebEx® Training Center and WebEx Support Center. “Out of all the solutions we looked at, WebEx technology offered us the most functionality,” says Baker. “It gave us the ability to include things like video, real-time polling, and animation in our training sessions. And the best part is our dealers only need a phone and Internet connection to take part.”

Today, STIHL conducts its online training sessions from an in-house video studio at its Australian headquarters in Melbourne to add a more polished production quality. A team of three presenters hosts the session, a format that helps keep dealers engaged. “We usually start with some agenda slides, and then incorporate live video to bring in some personality,” says Baker. “Once we get into our presentation, we’ll use a webcam to actually show the dealers particular equipment or parts samples. Towards the end, we address the specific issues our dealers are facing in a Q&A session, and sometimes poll them about the product or issue to make sure they’re responding to what we’re talking about.”

According to Baker, feedback from STIHL’s dealers has been fantastic. “They really enjoy receiving the information in a fun and creative way that doesn’t require them to leave the shop,” he says. “Overall, it’s been a very positive experience both for my team and our dealers. The WebEx team is always very supportive of our needs, and is responsive whenever we have any questions.”

Thanks to its Cisco® WebEx implementation, STIHL now keeps its dealer network up-to-date and enthusiastic about its products without incurring enormous travel costs. The company continues to bring new material to its training sessions, which are conducted on a state-by-state basis to help ensure content is relevant to the environmental and market needs of each region.



Results

“At the heart of this was our drive to keep an edge on our competitors,” says Baker. “And I’m happy to say that WebEx Training Center has helped us maintain that advantage.” Over the past 12 months, STIHL Australia increased its yearly training sessions by almost 40 percent. “We can now inform our dealers of new products and news in real time,” says Baker. “And by making our training sessions more easily accessible and engaging, we’ve been able to improve our training session attendance by 23 percent.”

Although STIHL tries to limit its virtual classroom size to 15 people per session, Baker estimates that they could be presenting to about 30 people at any given time because of unregistered staff that often gather around to view the presentation. “Some of our dealers even make an event out of the sessions,” he says. “They have a data projector in the staff room, so they’ll bring in some drinks and pizza, and get the whole team together to join the session.”

Baker contributes this uptake to the social appeal of its online training sessions. “WebEx technology is a great relationship-building tool,” says Baker. “It allows us to stay in constant contact with the people who are fundamental to the success of our business. It’s this personal approach and deep knowledge-sharing that breeds enthusiasm, and in the end, it’s the enthusiasm that sells.”

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The success of STIHL’s online training programs in Australia has since encouraged its American counterparts to adopt WebEx technology as well. “A picture is worth a thousand words when it comes to explaining complex, new technology,” says Baker. “And WebEx technology gives us a way to engage our audience and get our message across in a unique fashion. I definitely see us expanding the use of these tools in a big way.”

Next Steps

Eager to share STIHL Australia’s success with the rest of the company, Baker is currently in talks to make his office’s training sessions available in other international locations. “We’re planning to put together a series of pre-recorded training sessions that international teams will be able to access anytime, anywhere,” says Baker. “If it wasn’t for WebEx technology, we wouldn’t even have the opportunity to innovate and share in this way.”

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webex>.
- To read other success stories, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webexcasestudies>.
- To provide feedback or participate in the WebEx customer reference program, email: real.results@webex.com.

Product List

- Cisco WebEx Training Center
- Cisco WebEx Support Center



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